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THE OSWALD Review Undergraduate Research and Criticism In the Discipline of
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*An International Journal
Of Undergraduate Research and Criticism
In the Discipline of English*



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Of Undergraduate Research and Criticism
In the Discipline of English*

Editor:

Douglas Higbee
Professor of English
Anonymous Endowed Chair in the Humanities
Department of English
University of South Carolina Aiken
Aiken, South Carolina 29801
douglassh@usca.edu

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University of South Carolina Aiken

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Address correspondence and inquiries to Dr. Douglas Higbee, Editor, **The Oswald Review**, Department of English, University of South Carolina Aiken, 471 University Parkway, Aiken, SC 29801.

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Git vs Ge: The Importance of the Dual Pronoun in *Beowulf*

Kenneth R. Sikora, III
Norwich University

T Old English (OE) dual pronouns *git*¹ and *wit* (and their declined forms) are scattered throughout the OE textual corpus, appearing often in both poetic and non-poetic works, some examples of which are *Christ and Satan*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *Guthlac*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, etc. (Seppänen 8–9). The use of

the dual² in place of the typical plural pronoun is often recognized by scholars as a way of adding nuance (Hall 140)—these words are used in many texts to signify closeness between two otherwise disconnected people or beings, or their relatedness in an activity. There is a most notable example of dual-pronoun significance in *Genesis B*, where the various forms of the dual appear more than forty times, with far-reaching effects on our understanding of the text. Applying similar import to dual pronouns in other OE texts is debated (Seppänen 9); however, ignoring the precise meanings of these words is to “overlook an aspect of the poet’s art, for [the meanings serve] ... to define character and action in the narrative” (Hall 139). Furthermore, although Seppänen debates the significance of these pronouns he does establish their deliberate, purposed use and untainted transmission in the copying of manuscripts (15–18). Their appearance in the narrative of *Beowulf* is of particular interest because of *where* they appear—in the

literarily rich, and relationally tense, scenes of Unferth and Beowulf’s flyting, Wealhtheow’s defense of her sons’ inheritance, and Beowulf’s pre-battle speeches.

In the oral culture of *Beowulf*, where unlocking the “word-hoard” was as significant as a king dispensing treasure, every aspect of a speech is key to its meaning and intended effect (Magennis 73–74). This is of heightened importance in a flyting; as Carol J. Clover points out, the “flyting is ... itself the oral equivalent of war” (133). Despite the potential significance of dual usage, in the various scholarly renderings of *Beowulf* these words are often translated simply into an unmodified modern English second-person plural form (Table 1), without comment. Therefore, various indirect associations between characters (for example, Unferth and Hrothgar) are lost—so what the poet is saying is altered. In fact, most of the dual pronouns in *Beowulf* are stylistic elements deeply embedded in the themes and storyline of the epic. As such, they are meaningful

in many ways (detailed below) and this should be expressed in translation.

Lines	OE	Translations			
		<i>Liuzza</i>	<i>Heaney</i>	<i>Hall</i>	<i>Raffel</i>
508	<u>git</u>	you	you	you, ye	<i>both of you</i>
510	<u>inc</u>	<i>you two</i>	<i>the pair of you</i>	you	you
512	<u>git</u>	you	you	you	you
535	wit	<i>we two</i>	we	—	—
537	wit	we	we	we	we
539	wit	we	each of us	we	each of us
540	wit	we	—	we	—
544	wit	<i>we two</i>	we	<i>we two</i>	—
545	<u>unc</u>	us	us	us	us

Table 1. Selection of prominent scholars' typical translation of the dual

The OE dual pronoun is declined as shown in Table 2. Six of the seven forms are found in *Beowulf* (all but the second-person dative), with twenty-four total appearances. The second-person accusative and genitive each occur once, while all other forms occur at least thrice. Since alliteration, the “matching initial sounds of stressed syllables” (McGillivray 92), was central to OE poetry, with words carefully chosen to fit the meter, Figure 1 offers a convenient categorization of

the ways in which *Beowulf*'s dual pronouns alliterate.³ The following categories are used: 1) non-alliterative 2), non-essential alliterative, and 3) essential alliterative, whereby “essential” indicates that the dual pronoun is involved in an alliterative pattern that a plural pronoun replacement breaks, while “non-essential” means that the plural pronoun replacement maintains alliteration. The OE words *wit* and *uncran* are the only dual forms involved in alliteration, *wit* twice, and *uncran* once; every other use of the dual is non-alliterative. In both cases of *wit*, the use of the dual is non-essential, as the first-person

	First Person	Second Person
Nominative	wit	<u>g</u> it
Accusative	<u>u</u> nc	<u>i</u> nc
Genitive	<u>u</u> nc <u>e</u> r, <u>u</u> nc <u>a</u> ran	<u>i</u> nc <u>e</u> r
Dative	<u>u</u> nc	<u>i</u> nc

Table 2. Declension of OE dual pronouns

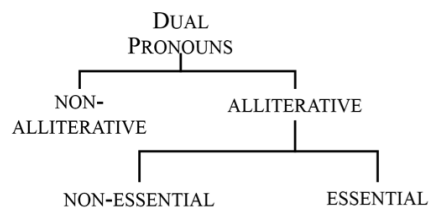


Figure 1. Categories of OE dual pronouns

plural *we* could have been used and the (consonant) alliteration left unchanged: “**w**it þæt gecwædon

cnihtwesende” (535: we two had bargained, being boys) versus “we þæt gecwædon cnihtwesende”, and “hwæt wit tō willan ond tō worðmyndum” (1186: what we two purposed for his honor) versus “hwæt we tō willan ond tō worðmyndum.” In the line containing *uncran*, the vowels alliterate according to OE usage: “uncran eaferan gif hē þæt eal gemon” (1185: the children of the two of us, if he remembers all that), and substitution of *ure* or *user* for *uncran* does not produce any change: “uncran eaferan” versus “ure earferan” or “user earferan.”⁴

In short, the dual pronouns are far more important thematically in relation to the politics and character development of the epic than they are metrically.

The dual is used in three ways: 1) to condemn an individual, 2) to praise an individual, or 3) to equate two individuals. The use of the dual pronoun is pertinent to understanding three types of situations, all involving interpersonal tension: 1) confrontation between Beowulf and Unferth, 2) confrontation between two

close individuals, and 3) confrontation between Beowulf and a monster. Lines 508–16, where Unferth (a notable thegn of Hrothgar) is speaking contemptuously of Beowulf’s adventure with Breca (Liuzza 85fn3), contain the first type of dual usage. Fourteen (over half) of the dual-pronoun occurrences in *Beowulf* appear in the flyting between Unferth and Beowulf, and Unferth’s eight-line portion contains six. The quarrel begins when Unferth unleashes “his battle-runes”, the text of which is transcribed by Zuptia as

eart þu se beo-wulf se þe wið Breca
 wunne on|sídne sæ ymb sund flite
 ðær git for wlenca wada cunne
 ond for dol-gilpe on deop wæter aldrom
 neþdon (506–10) ⁵

Art thou the Beowulf who
 struggled with Breca
 On the open ocean with
 swimming-strife?

There you two with pride
 waded, explored,
 And in deep water with
 vain-glory risked life!

Line 508 contains the first occurrence of the dual (*git*) in *Beowulf*; the non-dual *ge* could have been used, but was not, and again, this indicates non-metrical/-alliterative intention. Unferth continues using the dual in his description of the sea-adventure, applying it to Beowulf and Breca. His main goal seems to be a test of Beowulf's mettle (Clover 460–61), and there are multiple ways that he could accomplish this with the dual. First, he could be insinuating that Beowulf is a follower and/or a pushover, dependent on his companion—that once the two are separated, Breca accomplishes a great deed, while Beowulf falters in the ocean despite his bravado in taking on the risk. If this is so, it would follow that Beowulf's challenge to fight the monster alone should be scorned. Second, Unferth

could be tempting Beowulf to deny his friendship with Breca by exaggerating their companionship. If Beowulf fell for the trap, his men could have lost faith in him as their captain, proving his ineptness as a leader and making him into a warrior unsuited for the quest he proposes. Finally, one of the hallmarks of a flyting is the reference to disgraces committed by the person under attack. Clover gives a list of categories into which insults regarding these disgraces fall (134), and notes that in the Beowulf/Unferth episode the “only conspicuous irregularity is the absence of a sexual element” (146), since accusations of perversity are nearly universal in the flytings. The duals may hold the answer to this: these pronouns are very often used for the husband-wife relationship, and Unferth may be hinting at an inappropriate intimacy between Beowulf and Breca.

In each of these cases (or any combination of them) Unferth’s obvious hostility is intensified through the dual pronoun; more importantly, the political

barriers to Beowulf's mission are much more apparent, which highlights the hero's diplomatic abilities. Clover suggests that the flyting was, in the Anglo-Saxon era, an integral part of how Germanic courts received outsiders. In this case, Unferth may not be *hostile*, but he is still a threat to the continuation of Beowulf's mission. The tension of the confrontation is heightened (rather than being raw accusation, the dialogue contains traps), and the reader is given a glimpse of what may have been a typical political procedure of the Anglo-Saxon "court." Beowulf responds to Unferth in kind (lines 535–84), using the dual, playing along with what Unferth has been saying, all in the style of a flyting. Beowulf then uses the dual himself to accuse two warriors—Unferth and another, discussed below—of cowardice:

no ic whit fram

þe swylcra searo-niða secgan hyrde

billa brogan breca næfre git æt heaðo-

lace. ne|ge-hwæþer incer *swa deorlice

dæd gefremede fagum sweordum (581–85)

Not a whit of you
 in such a skill-contest have I heard,
 of blade terror, or yet ever of Brecaat
 battle-play. Nor has either of you two
 so boldly performed a deed with bright
 swords[.]

For a guest in the court, this is a surprisingly bold declaration, especially as, up to that point, Beowulf has been conceding to Unferth, supplying only minor corrections to the Dane’s account of the contest (Clover 462). As mentioned above, it also raises the question of who is meant by “you two”—is Beowulf speaking of Unferth and Breca, or of Unferth and Hrothgar?

This question is left unaddressed by the current English scholarship, but the dual pronoun *incer* makes it significant because there is ambiguity regarding who is being addressed, allowing for more than one understanding of the passage. A plural pronoun

would have made the statement speak to all Danes, and a singular pronoun would have made it a direct accusation of Unferth; the dual is the only pronoun that has the capacity to introduce such nuance. If the comment is directed to Unferth and Breca, then Beowulf is swapping roles with Unferth, becoming the attacker. He first demonstrates his superiority to Breca, then joins his current antagonist to his boyhood opponent, stands in the place of the Danish king's advisor, and judges the man before him—with his pronouncement over Unferth (and by extension, conceivably the rest of the Danes) being quite caustic. If the dual pronoun refers to Unferth and Hrothgar (this is intimately connected with the oral tradition: imagine a *scop* gesturing toward an imaginary king), then Beowulf could be employing highly diplomatic tactics to calm his challenger. Unferth used the dual to cast a negative pall on Beowulf, but it is possible that Beowulf has the *opposite* intent; in declaring his own superiority, he elevates Unferth by linking him to

Hrothgar, a great warrior, and appeases his opponent's pride. After all, if Beowulf is analogous to a force of nature (Tripp 157), then his superiority is nothing that Unferth need be ashamed about. Hrothgar, however, is a complex character— he is both an “aged and ineffectual king” (Liuzza 43) and one who Beowulf knows is already established as a hero. A “figure like the biblical patriarchs” (Johnston 122), the old monarch has a reputation set in stone. Therefore, while Beowulf's comments *could* be a compliment to Unferth in the way that they compare him to the “ideal” Dane, they could also be an observation of the Danes' general impotence.

In a general way, though, the effect of the dual pronoun here is the same for any of the interpretations, which it must be said are not mutually exclusive. The use of *incer* lends depth and texture to Beowulf's speech, and gives his retort a complexity that may be the reason for his victory in the flyting. The Dane and the Geat also appear to be reconciled: Unferth later lends Beowulf his

own sword Hrunting, forgetting “what he said before / drunk with wine” (1466–67) and allowing Beowulf to prove himself the better warrior (1468–72). In short, using the dual pronoun allows both the linking of Breca and Unferth, and of Unferth and Hrothgar, with positive and negative associations in both cases—the end result being that Beowulf, through his word-*hoard*, is able to avoid physical conflict with the Danes and instead bring them aid.

The uses of the dual following Beowulf’s defense are similar in their pacifying nature, and are found in the following passages: 1185–6, Wealhtheow about Wealhtheow and Hrothgar; 1476, Beowulf about Beowulf and Hrothgar, and 1707–83, Hrothgar about Beowulf and Hrothgar. These usages share the characteristic that they all link two people who, in an ideal situation, would be on friendly terms. All the characters involved are major players in the epic—Wealhtheow stands out as a woman who plays

the gracious hostess, and also as an active political figure; far from being a “cardboard queen,” she is a moving force with “political possibilities ... [in] her situation and her speech,” her own loyalties and influences (Johnston 118). The use of the dual here seems to be similar to the way Beowulf employed it in the flyting—to emphasize an attempt at some type of reconciliation. The difference here is that the first type of use is in response to an attack, while this usage is more proactive, attempting to re-build the connection between two individuals. Wealhtheow’s speech begins by showing the distance between herself and the king: “I have been told that you would take this warrior for your son” (Liuzza 1175). The clause “I have been told” indicates that Hrothgar is deciding on an heir without consulting his queen, resulting in relational distance between the husband and wife. In explaining that another possible heir (or regent) has been receiving kindnesses, Wealhtheow, who is advocating her nephew

as a temporary stand-in for her sons (1169–91), includes Hrothgar as a giver of kindness by using the dual *wit* (us two) to describe who has been kind.

This is praise, intimacy, and honor rolled into one word—Wealhtheow is verbally joining herself to her husband, as Eve does in *Genesis B* (Hall 143). By not using the plural pronoun *we* she unambiguously excludes the rest of the royal household from the heir-choosing (a nuance lost in Liuzza’s simple rendition “the pleasures and honors that we have shown him” [1186]). Similarly, in line 1476 Beowulf has indirectly caused the death of a soldier, Æscere, beloved by Hrothgar, which understandably estranges the two, while in lines 1707–83 Beowulf has just done what Hrothgar could not do (eliminate the Grendels), placing a barrier of accomplishment between them—at this point in the tale Beowulf will also soon *physically* leave the Danish court.⁶ These instances, all causing separation between the hero and Hrothgar, are in the same way resolved by

reconciliatory usage of the dual as it is employed by the estranged party.

In lines 683 (Beowulf on Beowulf and Grendel), 2002–137 (Beowulf on Beowulf and the Grendels), and 2525–32 (Beowulf on Beowulf and the dragon), we find instances of the last type of usage—the equalization of two characters (Beowulf and a foe). The wording of these passages—“we two will forego our swords ... let the wise Lord ... grant the judgment” (683–86), “what a struggle ... Grendel and I had” (2000–02), and “for us it shall be ... as *wyrd* decrees” (2525–26), etc.—all indicate the equality of the combatants in their strength and/or likelihood of dying in the combat.⁷ Why does Beowulf speak this way? Calling attention to a more powerful or a weaker foe is understandable, as therein lies great difficulty and danger (and thus the potential of greater honor) in the former case, or the certainty of victory in the latter, but one-on-one combat with an equal is just that—there is nothing significant about the fight itself,

and nothing to gain or lose, except life. The dual, in expressing the equality of the contenders, places them in the background, and the *reasons* for the fight in the foreground. Rather than condemn one individual or laud another, as in the other passages, this usage instead removes both individuals from the scene: each has his own reason to fight, to live, to have the other dead, and those reasons are what makes the fights necessary, not the status of the opponents.

While dual-pronoun usage in *Beowulf* is found in the three scenario-types given above, and used in three ways, there is another aspect of its use: the usage frequency has a subtle crescendo effect, following an initial “explosion” (Figure 2). In a poem characterized by “taut, tightly interlaced structure” (Hudson 149), it is reasonable that every aspect of language, including repetition, would be employed to enhance the story. By bombarding the reader with the dual at the beginning of the poem during a flyting, the poet may cause the

audience to associate a conflict or pre-conflict situation with the use of “you two,” “us two,” etc. This connotation

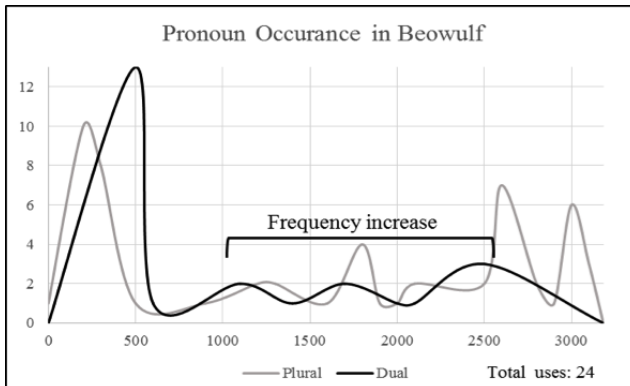


Figure 2. Dual pronoun frequency through Beowulf, compared

is subsequently employed to enrich the narrative with suspense and expectation. When the audience hears the dual, they should expect a climactic scene to follow. The relationship of this to how an oral delivery of the poem was/is received, versus a textual delivery, would be interesting to investigate.⁸ Notably, the plural pronouns do not exhibit such a patterned distribution (Figure 2), although this is simply a visual observation, and no statistical analysis has yet been executed on the data.

In conclusion, the use of dual pronouns in *Beowulf* is an integral, non-mechanical, and artistic facet of the epic: the duals are used to contrast and compare characters, or subtly comment on situations, rather than simply serve as metrical elements. In this way, they speak to the themes and story of *Beowulf* with regard to specific political and personal relationships involving the epic's main characters (Beowulf, the Grendels, Hrothgar, Unferth, Wealhtheow, et al.). Therefore, they have the potential to significantly affect our understanding of both Germanic and Anglo-Saxon politics, familial relations, etc., and our perception of their treatment in the epic. This aspect of *Beowulf* does not seem to have been addressed by the current English-language scholarship, with the exception of a few comments on the unusual pairing of opposites (e.g. Beowulf and Grendel) that these words imply.

R. P. Tripp acknowledges that “these usages [of the dual] carry the same profound implications as do

instances of the dual pronoun for souls and bodies in the doomsday poetry” (157, fn21), but he says nothing about what these implications are. Seppänen observes that “when we find exactly the same variation [between dual and plural] in other OE texts ... we cannot justifiably claim that the variation is unnatural and therefore due to the corruption of the text by copyists” (18). As Brodeur states, “the poet of *Beowulf*...was by no means independent of formula, but was its master ... nowhere else in Old English do we find such splendor of language ... *Beowulf* is the work ... of a great literary artist” (87). The poet’s use of dual and plural pronouns is one aspect of this mastery. Nevertheless, in “hoping to rescue the poem from the obscurity of the past, [the translator] risks plunging it into the obscurity of his own present” (Liuzza 41), and the duals seem to have suffered this fate. Future editions of current translations as well as entirely new translations of *Beowulf* should therefore note the existence of the duals through

commentary, and attempt a literal translation when possible.

¹Note that *git* is also a word meaning “yet” or “still”, as in “*wæron bēgen ðā gīt on geogoðfēore*” (Liuzza 536–7: we were both still in our youth).

²In modern English, there are singular pronouns (I, it) that stand for one object, and plural pronouns (we, they) that stand for two or more objects. An OE dual pronoun stands for precisely two objects; in modern English, there is still a word that retains the concept of duality, the word “both.”

³This system could theoretically be applied to any alliterative text.

⁴For an excellent explanation of alliteration and how alliterative lines are analyzed, described and classified, see Ruth A. Johnston, *A Companion to Beowulf*, 144–45, and Murray McGillivray, *A Gentle Introduction to Old English*, Chapter 12.

⁵Zuptia's transcription of the OE manuscript is more accurate than those that Liuzza and Heaney provide in their bilingual editions. Unless otherwise indicated, OE translations are my own.

⁶“nú ic eom síðes fús gold- / wine gumena hwæt wit
geo spræcon” (1476: now am I ready to go, man's gold-
friend, / to what we two spoke of before) and “ic þe sceal
míne gelaéstan / swa wit furðum spræcon” (1707: I will
give [you] my protection / as we two were speaking of).

⁷That is, apart from supernatural intervention. It could be argued, at least for 683–86, that Beowulf is counting on divine favor in some form (Liuzza 95 fn1).

⁸Are the duals more noticeable/effective when they are *heard* as opposed to when they are *read*?

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“Hät ne forhogode” (“Did Not Despise Heat”).”

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**In Defense of Marianne Dashwood:
A Categorization of Language into Principles of Sense and
Sensibility**

*Ashley Bonin
Lee University*

Critics of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* often perceive Marianne Dashwood as a character in possession of excessive sensibility, as opposed to her sister's cool and efficient sense. Matt Fisher advances this view, claiming that Elinor is "the epitome of reason" and Marianne "an idealistic romantic" (216). Critical judgments of the novel treat Elinor and Marianne

as paradigms of sense and sensibility, Elinor almost always emerging as the superior. Michal Dinkler and E.M. Forster, for example, assert that Austen illustrates her admiration of linguistic moderation through the novel's positive judgment of Elinor (Dinkler 2), and therefore, Elinor becomes the "well-scoured channel through which [Austen's] comment most readily flows" (Forster 146). In effect, the favor shown to Elinor reduces Marianne to one side of the apparent sense/sensibility dichotomy. This categorization is not as intuitive as it first appears, however, because Austen informs readers early that her titular dichotomy demarcating "sense" and "sensibility" does not directly distinguish between her characters. In addition to Elinor's "strength of understanding and coolness of judgment," she has an affectionate disposition and strong feelings; and Marianne, though described as myopic and eager, is "sensible and clever," and has, according to Austen, abilities that are "in many respects

quite equal to Elinor's" (6). While I distrust Austen's dichotomy through her own admission that each sister possesses sense *and* sensibility, I do not mean to imply that it should be abandoned entirely, as it does in fact still play an important role in the novel. This paper will argue that Austen's dichotomy suggests a symbiotic *relationship* between its terms, rather than a sharp hierarchical antithesis.

In Austen's work, "sense" and "sensibility" roughly correlate to reason and emotion, respectively, a distinction she inherits from the Enlightenment. Myra Stokes explains that "sense" is synonymous in Austen's work with (good) judgment (126). Coleridge applied this meaning of the term in a 1809 issue of *Friend* when he wrote about sense as a passive function of the mind, justifying a commonality between Man and animal in the matter of "sensations, and impressions, whether of [Man's] outward sense, or the inner sense of imagination." For Austen and Coleridge alike, "sense"

is a faculty that affects the capacity of innate human response. Similarly, Stokes explains that sensibility relates to a capability or faculty for feeling (129), a meaning William Godwin accessed in *Things As They Are* (1794): “My life has been spent in the keenest and most unintermitted sensibility to reputation.” In *Sense and Sensibility*, these associations are supported through the novel’s own language. For example, Austen writes that Margaret “imbibed a good deal of Marianne’s romance, without having much of her sense” (6), and that Marianne often was “urged by a strong impulse of affectionate sensibility” (194). “Sense” and “sensibility” are terms that Austen repeatedly uses to describe the dispositions and tendencies of her characters—a repetition that ostensibly delineates a divide between the two terms.

Though sense and sensibility contrast, they are not mutually exclusive. When exposed through language, they become value-neutral aesthetic principles

that serve as natural predilections, or channels through which virtues or moral strengths are expressed.

Language is the only effective medium in which to track the moral qualities of Austen's characters because their verbal expressions reveal their deeper motivations.

Ideally, Austen would inform her readers *directly* of the beliefs and motivations that drive her characters—and actually, she does this occasionally with free indirect discourse, which is essentially a merging of perspectives from third person narration and first person dialogue, where the narrator, in effect, takes on the voice of a given character. While Austen's free indirect discourse is the most trustworthy means of insight, however, she uses it too infrequently and inconsistently for it to be a reliable tool. Yet in a character's language, emotion and reason must interact in some way; almost always, language requires some degree of amalgamation of cognition and feeling. In other words, the languages of sense and of sensibility each can include both positive

and negative qualities; to say that a character embodies a language of sense *or* sensibility says nothing intrinsically commendatory or critical about his or her character.

Accordingly, the language of sense will be contemplative, restrained, and often pre-meditated, while the language of sensibility will be primarily pathos-driven. As we discern how Austen's characters naturally appeal to reason and emotion through their language, we will be able to sort them into categories of sense and sensibility. Subsequently, as we understand the moral implications of each character's use of a language characterized by either "sense" or "sensibility" we will be able to judge their characteristics according to Austen's moral standard.

Thus, it is fundamentally illogical to say that Marianne Dashwood possesses an *excess* of sensibility, because sense and sensibility are not evaluated quantitatively. They emerge not as terms of moral judgment but as terms that, for Austen,

enable moral judgment on other criteria. They are aesthetic principles through which moral character exteriorizes itself verbally in the novel, and they serve as the primary intersection between the novel's aesthetic form and its moral content. This analysis defends Marianne Dashwood by means of the novel's judgments of its secondary characters, judgments that illuminate Marianne's own virtues. Marianne emerges as an exemplary character in Austen's novel *not* because she converts from sensibility to sense, but because she possesses exclusively positive qualities of both sense and sensibility by the end of the novel.

Reflecting multitudinous critics' judgments of Marianne as a character in possession of great sensibility, Marianne, more so than any other character, *does* in fact consistently exhibit an accurate manifestation of her emotions through transparent expressions. Whether she is expressing her thoughts to someone she loves (perhaps Elinor) or someone she has

a particular aversion to (Lady Middleton, for example), Marianne's language is *never* contrived. Most often, Marianne uses overtly offensive declarations that exhibit transparency. These declarations, while offensive, illustrate Marianne's sense because they are grounded in logical reasoning. During a party at Barton Park, for example, Marianne displays her capacity for pungent verbal effrontery as she insults several of Sir John's guests. In the first instance, all the ladies at the party, in succession, offer their opinions about the comparative heights of Lady Middleton and Fanny Dashwood's sons. Instead of offering judgment like the others, however, Marianne "offended them all, by declaring that she had no opinion to give, as she had never thought about it" (192). Not one of the other ladies had likely thought about the heights of these boys before, either; however, they all find it propitious to offer some sort of opinion, regardless of its insincerity. Conversely, Marianne faithfully abides by her doctrine of transparency and

says what she is truly thinking—that she feels quite indifferent about the matter.

Further supporting an evaluation of her as a character of sensibility, Marianne’s sincerity occasionally reveals itself in sarcasm. Sarcasm often conveys harsh or derisive irony; the irony of Marianne’s sarcasm, however, is that it connotes a sincerity of sentiment that her words do not live up to. In a scene early in the novel, Elinor chides her sister for speaking openly and exhaustively with Willoughby; she predicts that the couple’s acquaintance will be ephemeral due to their “extraordinary despatch of every subject for discourse” (40). Marianne’s response exemplifies sarcasm in its most sincerely caustic use:

‘Elinor,’ cried Marianne, ‘is this fair? is this just? are my ideas so scanty? But I see what you mean. I have been too much at my ease, too happy, too frank. I have erred against every common-place

notion of decorum; I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been reserved, spiritless, dull, and deceitful:— had I talked only of the weather and the roads, and had I spoken only once in ten minutes, this reproach would have been spared.’ (40)

Instead of simply acquiescing to Elinor’s point of view or submitting to her reprimand, Marianne employs a sarcastic tone that makes her frustration evident; this sarcasm is announced by her statement, “but I see what you mean.” Though she claims to know what Elinor means, Marianne does not actually believe that she was too much at ease, happy, or frank. Marianne’s sarcasm indicates the sincerity of her expression; she is not afraid of offending Elinor, so long as she is honest. Marianne’s intentional commitment to sincerity here exemplifies her natural capacity for reason, or sense, in simultaneity with her sensibility.

Another externalization of Marianne's sensibility comes through her demonstrations of direct, intentional silence. Later in the novel, Marianne finds herself again at Barton Park, this time in the company of Elinor, Lady Middleton and her children, and the Miss Steeles. While observing the devoted attention Lady Middleton pays to her children, Lucy Steele proclaims, "What a sweet woman Lady Middleton is!" (101). Instead of responding with the statement of approbation Miss Steele was likely expecting, Marianne withholds any comment at all. The narrator explains that "it was impossible for her to say what she did not feel, no matter how trivial the occasion was" (101). By withholding language, Marianne is not suppressing her judgment, but rather making it known through her silence, which equally shows her disapproval as it does her capacity for restraint; the careful consideration and control that is required by Marianne's linguistic restraint further demonstrates her natural proclivity

for sense. Though silence implies a void of language, it is nonetheless a category of expression because it is intentionally inspired. Ultimately, employing deceptive language is *never* an option for Marianne; henceforth, when she *does* express herself verbally, there can be no doubt that her words are a mirror of her thoughts. At the heart of Marianne's language, or lack thereof, is *always* the presence of sincerity.

Yet, Marianne's tendency to use the conditional tense to create hypothetical realities that provide her with premises to justify her actions makes clear that her sensibility is potentially inhibiting. For example, after Marianne returns from a solitary excursion with Willoughby to Allenham, Elinor informs her of the impropriety of traveling in an open carriage with an unmarried gentleman as one's only companion. In response, Marianne contends, "if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I *should have been* sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we

are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I *could have had* no pleasure” (57, italics mine). Marianne uses the conditional here to prove that the loveliness of her experiences equate to the decency of her actions. Adam Smith believes that judgment of one’s actions ought to come through a conditional idealization of the situation—that people might judge their actions by imagining themselves fair and impartial spectators (128-129). Marianne, however, fails to position herself as this “fair and impartial spectator.” Instead, her judgments are based on the pleasantness of her emotions. Accordingly, her language here is imaginative and contrary to what is reasonable and factual, elucidating her sensibility.

However, Marianne’s irrational language marked with sensibility reveals an important idiosyncratic facet of her character: that she is a verbal processor. Especially in conversation, Marianne immediately translates her thoughts into words rather than taking

time for reflection. Thus, her language does not immediately feature consideration of others. Marianne's inclination to determine a situation's impact on herself first, before considering others, is not unforgivable, or even extraordinary. Characters whose language is more exemplary of the principle of sense might conduct this process of reflection internally so that by the time they verbalize their thoughts, others are included. Marianne's language, however, is dense with use of the first person; this tendency is exemplified in the monologue she gives in response to Willoughby's heartless letter:

'No, no' cried Marianne, 'misery such as mine has no pride. I care not who knows that I am wretched. The triumph of seeing me so may be open to all the world . . . But to appear happy when I am miserable—oh, who can require it? . . . Whom did I ever hear him talk

of as young and attractive among his female acquaintance?—oh, no one, no one:—he talked to me only of myself . . . Elinor, I must go home . . . Why should I stay here? I came only for Willoughby's sake—and now who cares for me? Who regards me? (154-155)

Presumably our first response to this passage is to fault Marianne for her selfishness; Marianne's excessive use of the first person certainly inspires such a perception, and she *is* being selfish here. Because of the rawness of this unprocessed language, however, her first-person usage is not sufficient evidence for selfishness as one of Marianne's *dominant* characteristics. Instead, we might consider that Marianne's use of the first person only indicates a nuance in her personality that requires the verbal processing of new information.

Accordingly, as evidenced by this particular monologue, the language that follows Marianne's initial

verbal processing will be a more accurate indication of her mature motivations. Although Marianne mistakenly forgets to consider other people in her hasty language, she is not selfish in her intentions. While in the passage quoted above she fails to consider the wishes of others, the following passage indicates that she does indeed have the capability to be selfless:

Marianne had promised to be guided by her mother's opinion, and she submitted to it, therefore, without opposition, though it proved perfectly different from what she wished and expected, though she felt it to be entirely wrong, formed on mistaken grounds; and that, by requiring her longer continuance in London, it deprived her of the only possible alleviation of her wretchedness, the personal sympathy of her mother, and doomed her to such society and such

scenes as must prevent her ever knowing
a moment's rest.

But it was a matter of great
consolation to her, that what brought evil
to herself would bring good to her sister.

(175)

The difference between this passage and the former is not that Marianne no longer considers her situation to be wretched or pitiable; in fact, her desire to leave London immediately and return home is still as strong as ever. Her selflessness is evident, however, in her *reasons* for staying; Marianne remains in London because she knows it will promote her mother's wishes and Elinor's well being. Marianne does not have a selfish heart. Her use of first person language, then, portrays a self-centeredness that does not actually exist.

We realize through this analysis that the analytical problem of Marianne's character is her sensibility causes her language and intentions to not

always align. While her language is often perceived as offensive, selfish, and imaginative, her expressions are undoubtedly sincere and her intentions are altruistic. Considering that sense and sensibility exist on a continuum of positive and negative qualities, we must establish where along that spectrum Marianne exists according to the moral standards intrinsic to the novel. Conveniently, Austen's protagonists in *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor and Marianne, establish their opinions of others primarily through language, as they recognize that it is a means through which to understand people more deeply. By analyzing these secondary characters whose languages exhibit the same qualities as Marianne's (offensiveness, imaginativeness, selfishness, sincerity, and selfless intentions), and by using the novel's judgments of them to determine whether those qualities are positive or negative, we will be able to determine Marianne's position with reference to sense and sensibility.

Perhaps the character in *Sense and Sensibility* whom the novel judges most harshly is Fanny Dashwood, whose imaginative language exemplifies sensibility. The most striking quality of Fanny's language is her use of the future tense, through which she imagines speculative circumstances, but asserts them as true in a way that necessitates the plausibility of her reasoning. Fanny expertly achieves her ends because she knows how to manipulate the people around her through her language. She uses her language skillfully, creating a framework of theoretical reasons and circumstances that encourage her husband John to enter into her point of view; she makes unrealistic consequences sound equitable and pressing, which allows her to slowly, slyly sway her husband to execute her biddings. Her case to John concerning his father's dying wish to provide for his sisters is saturated with future verbs: "Altogether, they *will have* five hundred a year amongst them, and what

on earth can four women want for more than that? They *will live* so cheap! Their housekeeping *will be* nothing at all. They *will have* no carriage, no horses, and hardly any servants; they *will keep* no company, and can have no expenses of any kind! Only conceive how comfortable they *will be*” (10, italics mine). Of course, Fanny Dashwood cannot actually know the accuracy of any of these assurances; they are all speculation. Fanny’s constant use of the future tense makes her blind to the present reality. She does not understand (or care to understand) the financial support that John’s sisters *need* because she is always thinking about the future and how to secure the best situation for herself; Fanny’s idealistic mindset makes it impossible for her to have sincere intentions toward others in the present. While Fanny rarely speaks directly to Elinor and Marianne, the narrator implies that her treatment of them parallels the cunning language she uses with her husband: “Mrs. John Dashwood [Fanny] now installed herself mistress

of Norland; and her mother and sisters-in-law were degraded to the condition of visitors. As such, however, they were treated by her with quiet civility” (7).

Marianne and Elinor dislike Fanny because of the “quiet civility”—the false sincerity—with which she regards them. Their pejorative opinion of Fanny tells us that imaginative language (whether it be Fanny’s futurism or Marianne’s conditionalization) is problematic because it breeds an unawareness of reality, which cultivates insincerity.

Sir John Middleton also exemplifies such imaginative language of sensibility, yet the novel judges him less harshly. His greatest weakness is that he sometimes becomes so fixated on certain ends that he disregards the feelings or wishes of others in his attempt to achieve them. The most striking occasion of this language occurs when Colonel Brandon is required to leave abruptly for town, and thus to cancel the excursion to Whitwell. Observing the disappointment of the rest

of the party, Sir John Middleton proclaims, “We *must* go; it *shall not* be put off when we are so near it. You *cannot* go to town till to-morrow, Brandon, that is all” (54, italics mine). Where Fanny uses the future tense, Sir John uses imperatives. Furthermore, Sir John was often blind to Marianne’s and Elinor’s polite rejections of his invitations to Barton Park: “Sir John had been very urgent with them all to spend the next day at the Park. Mrs. Dashwood . . . absolutely refused on her own account; her daughters might do as they pleased . . . They attempted, therefore, likewise to excuse themselves . . . But Sir John would not be satisfied,—the carriage should be sent for them, and they must come” (90). In contrast to Fanny, Sir John’s persistence and intransigence seems, at least in part, intended to ensure the happiness of others. Still, Sir John’s language often lacks elegance and restraint. On first meeting the Dashwoods, the narrator describes Sir John’s entreaties as being “carried to a point of civility” (26). Ultimately,

there seems to be incongruence between the enthusiasm and brashness of Sir John's language, and the sentiment behind it; there is clear evidence of this in his response to Marianne's performance on the piano-forte: "Sir John was loud in his admiration at the end of every song, and as loud in his conversation with the others while every song lasted" (30). Sir John's zealous language connotes, rather than denotes, his sincerity. Thus, despite the apparent self-centeredness and disregard that marks his language, Elinor and Marianne find him redeemed by his kindness. Even in his forcefulness, his unarguably good intentions justify clemency.

Willoughby also demonstrates sensibility, but not in the same way that Fanny and Sir John Middleton do; where their languages are imaginative, Willoughby's is ebullient. Where Fanny and Sir John use the language of sensibility to escape the unfavorable consequences of reality, Willoughby's language is problematic in its haste. He is so driven by his own thoughts that he lacks

consideration or compassion for others. Still, Marianne likes him. They read, talk, and sing together, and, like Marianne, “his musical talents were considerable” (41). Willoughby and Marianne express themselves similarly, and this seems to be what forms an instant camaraderie between them. Willoughby’s language is almost the exact opposite of Edward’s in its fluency; considering how frustrated Marianne initially is about Edward’s “reserved conversation,” it is not surprising that she finds great value in Willoughby’s easy company in comparison.

Elinor, however, finds Willoughby’s often and candid verbalization of his thoughts disagreeable; he is too hasty, and thus unfair, in forming his opinions of other people. In fact, during a conversation about Brandon, Willoughby proves the correctness of Elinor’s observations; he asserts, “[he] is just the kind of man whom every body speaks well of, and nobody cares about; whom all are delighted to see, and nobody remembers to talk to” (42). Later in the

same conversation, when Elinor asks Willoughby why he should dislike Brandon, he clarifies, “I do not dislike him. I consider him, on the contrary, as a very respectable man, who has every body’s good word, and nobody’s notice; who has more money than he can spend, more time than he knows how to employ, and two new coats every year” (43). Through this rebuttal, we must recognize certain qualities of Willoughby’s language: that his judgments are quick, but insightful and reasonable; he is harsh in pointing out the negative, but nondiscriminatory in his concessions to the positive; he might be offensive, but he is sincere. Willoughby’s language is grounded in cognition as much as it is charged with pathos. The fact that Marianne is so drawn to Willoughby is representative of the value she places in one’s ability to be unreservedly forthright; conversely, Elinor’s mistrust of Willoughby’s language is indicative of her preference for contrived compassion to offensive honesty. This distinction between Elinor and Marianne is one we might consider,

as does critic Sarah Emsley, to be a reflection of Austen's Aristotelian tendency to value truthfulness, not modesty, as the virtuous mean. Indeed, Austen uses her characterizations of the Dashwood sisters to illuminate the mean—what we might call the middle ground—that always exists between two extremes; in this case, the extremes relate to her characters' perceptions and judgments. Together, Marianne and Elinor's judgments of Willoughby promote the idea that it is possible to be both reasonable *and* emotional, and it is certainly possible to use both of those qualities as channels for positive perceptions and expressions.

Sharply contrasting with Willoughby's language of sensibility, Lady Middleton's rational and premeditated language exemplifies sense. Interestingly, Lady Middleton possesses all the graces and manners that one might consider advantageous; her language, however, conflicts with these promising characteristics. The narrator states, "Her visit [to Elinor and Marianne] was long enough to detract something from their first

admiration, by showing that, though perfectly well bred, she was reserved, cold, and had nothing to say for herself beyond the most commonplace enquiry or remark” (26). Lady Middleton proves that silence is often the most potent language a person can employ; her silence, however, is almost always an indication of polite but forceful indifference. Rather than expressing sincere concern for Marianne after Willoughby’s pusillanimous rejection, Lady Middleton repeatedly proclaims whenever appropriate, “It is very shocking, indeed!” which she feels is just enough to “support the dignity of her sex” (177). Then, as soon as a day passed without reference to Marianne’s situation, the narrator informs us that she “thought herself at liberty to attend to the interest of her own assemblies, and therefore determined that as Mrs. Willoughby would at once be a woman of elegance and fortune, to leave her card with her as soon as she married” (177). Though Lady Middleton speaks when it is socially expected or

considered proper for her to do so, Marianne and Elinor still dislike her self-centeredness that manifests through a disinterested tone and lack of emotional investment.

The last secondary character we must look at is Colonel Brandon, who voices the language of sense with the same restraint that Lady Middleton exhibits; unlike her, however, he is compassionate, considerate, and more selfless than most people. These traits are especially evident in his reception of Marianne's piano performance at Barton Park. Austen writes, "Colonel Brandon alone, of all the party, heard her without being in raptures" (30). Juxtaposed to the garrulous responses of Sir John and Lady Middleton, the greatest advantage of Colonel Brandon's language in this scene is that it is withheld. He exercises commitment to meditative and intentional silence with success that no other secondary character achieves. Marianne recognizes this, and accordingly respects him for it: "He paid her only the compliment of attention; and she felt a respect for

him on the occasion, which the others had reasonably forfeited by their shameless want of taste” (30).

Marianne seems to have no objections to Brandon’s language; in fact, she values the principles of sense that he embodies. Instead, she objects to the aesthetical qualities of his character: “Colonel Brandon is certainly younger than Mrs. Jennings, but he is old enough to be *my* father; and if he were ever animated enough to be in love, must have long outlived every sensation of the kind. It is too ridiculous! When is a man to be safe from such wit, if age and infirmity will not protect him?”

(31). Marianne’s harsh judgment of Colonel Brandon throughout the novel is not due to her dislike of the virtues he possesses, but dislike of his age and lack of physical attractiveness. Thus, her changed opinion of him at the end of the novel has nothing to do with a renewed perception of his character and everything to do with a reevaluation of her aesthetic priorities.

Akin to Brandon’s opportune silence, his

language is often pragmatic, carefully contemplated, and thus almost always deliberate and purposeful. He begins a conversation with Elinor, for example, with a statement that implies a question he has already spent time considering on his own: “Your sister, I understand, does not approve of second attachments” (47).

Representative of the majority of Brandon’s language, this statement is unhindered by an interference of capricious emotions. Most of all, Elinor appreciates this intentionality of his language, as evident in her explanation to Willoughby: “I can only pronounce him to be a sensible man, well-bred, well-informed, of gentle address, and, I believe, possessing an amiable heart” (44). Elinor’s favorable opinion of Brandon aligns with the novel’s positive judgment of him, as she appreciates the intentionality of his concise language.

Ultimately, we can use the novel’s judgments of each of these secondary characters to place the qualities of sense and sensibility Marianne possesses onto a

moral continuum. First, her imaginative language is driven by qualities that resonate with *both* Sir John Middleton and Fanny Dashwood's; while her use of the conditional is accompanied by selfless, sincere intentions—a positive characteristic of the language of sensibility—she uses theoretical premises to escape the consequences of reality. Furthermore, her use of the first person exemplifies a selfishness paralleled by Willoughby's hasty language. These two latter tendencies are both negative characteristics of the language of sensibility. On the other hand, Marianne's intentionally offensive declarations, sarcasm, and silence resonate with the control and sincerity that marks Brandon's language, which are positive characteristics of sensible language. Accordingly, then, to say Marianne possesses an *excess* of sensibility is to simplify her character unfairly, considering that for the majority of the novel, Marianne possesses felicitous qualities of both sense and sensibility.

Willoughby's avarice and insincerity cause Marianne deep heartbreak and lassitude that lead to self-negligence and a subsequent illness, throughout which she finds herself seriously reflecting on the faults of her past behavior. With specific application to Austen's novels, C.S. Lewis coins this process of reflection and insight "undeception," in which Austen's heroines become aware of mistakes they have been making about themselves and about the world in which they live (27). Lewis maintains that undeception is significant for Austen's characters specifically because it creates a distinct turning point in their stories (28). Marianne's discovery of Willoughby's deeply flawed character inspires a painful reevaluation of her own. That Marianne's undeception is inspired by her grief over Willoughby is ironically felicitous; just as he played a part in cultivating negative qualities in her, so too does he, though unknowingly, enable her transformation.

Initially, Marianne becomes aware that her

priority of aesthetic qualities as a basis for her judgment and treatment of other characters is misplaced. The first part of her undeception is realizing how problematic Willoughby's influence was on her. Marianne admits, "I saw in my own behavior, since the beginning of our acquaintance with him last autumn, nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself, and want of kindness to others" (284). Rather than focusing on deeply rooted qualities of sense and sensibility in other people, Marianne judged according to shallow aesthetic principles. In consequence of this propensity, Marianne realizes that she had been injudicious, rash, and careless in her perceptions of others, which ultimately caused her to regard those she disliked with a lack of empathy and mercy. Marianne's aesthetic priorities directly relate to her hasty, selfish language. Because aesthetic judgments are pathos-driven, Marianne's language also became emotionally charged, dense with the first person. As Marianne becomes more contemplative and unbiased in her judgments of others, perceiving

qualities deeper than mere aesthetics, she no longer needs to process her thoughts verbally. Her hasty, selfish language, then, transforms into language that is considerate and reserved.

Secondly, Marianne recognizes the indecorum of justifying her decisions through conditional ideation that uses her personal sensibilities as its premises. This process of justification dictates nearly all of her language, and is the basis for several of the principles she lives by from the beginning of the novel through the time of her undeception—that silence is more commendable than dishonesty, that insincerity should be a more debilitating fear than offensiveness, and that one's conscience is an infallibly trustworthy guide through society. Through reflection, however, Marianne realizes that these maxims have misled her, and in a fit of regret and self-loathing, she reveals all of her insights to Elinor:

I cannot express my own abhorrence

of myself. Whenever I looked towards the past, I saw some duty neglected, or some failing indulged. Every body seemed injured by me. The kindness, the unceasing kindness, of Mrs. Jennings, I had repaid with ungrateful contempt. To the Middletons, the Palmers, the Steeles, to every common acquaintance even, I had been insolent and unjust; with a heart hardened against their merits, and a temper irritated by their very attention.

(284)

Marianne finally realizes that when she often consulted her imagination and feelings, she should have recognized the prescriptions of social propriety; not until her undeception does she understand that duty does not require conformity. In her disregard for socially correct language, she has often expressed herself with contempt, bias, and petulance that did not actually

match her sincere and selfless intentions.

Marianne's undeception is followed by a declaration of reconsidered beliefs and reformed priorities that theoretically transform her negative qualities of verbal haste and conditional ideation into positive qualities of introspection and recognition of social propriety. With resolve and determination, Marianne declares to Elinor,

The future must be my proof. I have laid down my plan, and if I am capable of adhering to it, my feelings shall be governed and my temper altered. They shall no longer worry others, nor torture myself. I shall now live solely for my family. You, my mother, and Margaret, must henceforth be all the world to me; you will share my affections entirely between you. From you, from my home, I shall never again have the smallest

incitement to move; and if I do mix in other society, it will be only to show that my spirit is humbled, my heart amended, and that I can practice the civilities, the lesser duties of life, with gentleness and forbearance. (285)

With this proclamation, Marianne's undeception is complete. Where she neglected civilities, duty will now inform her behavior; where the sincerity of her language often caused offense, it will now be directed with greater gentleness; where her judgments were impetuous, they will now be patient.

Several critics view Marianne's marriage to Brandon as problematic; Folsom, for example, finds the happiness of the ending diminished by the possibility that "since Brandon loves Marianne almost as a reincarnation of his first love, perhaps in essence he remains true to his first attachment" (38). On the contrary, I argue that the love between Marianne and

Brandon is ultimately what proves the longevity and sincerity of Marianne's transformation; as Austen proclaims, "Her regard and her society restored his mind to animation, and his spirits to cheerfulness; and that Marianne found her own happiness in forming his, was equally the persuasion and delight of each observing friend. Marianne could never love by halves; and her whole heart became, in time, as much devoted to her husband as it had once been to Willoughby" (312). That Marianne marries Brandon is evidence that she recognizes the necessity of seeing past aesthetic qualities, as well as the duty to treat others with conscientiousness and equitability; that Marianne *loves* Brandon, however, is evidence that her mind and heart have truly been altered.

By the end of the novel, Marianne Dashwood admirably exemplifies *exclusively* positive qualities of sense and sensibility. Perhaps through her, Austen is redefining the way her society viewed the ideas of

sense and sensibility as absolutely positive or negative based on the proportions in which they exist. As illuminated through Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals*, Austen's society was inundated with Enlightenment notions that it was *always* good to base one's decisions on reason (sense), and *sometimes* good to base them on one's emotions (sensibility), depending on its proportion to reason. Considering this, we realize that the apparent dichotomy established in Austen's title represents her society's view of sense and sensibility as overarching ideas that inform one's decisions. Instead, however, Austen presents her society with a new perspective on sense and sensibility—one that diverges from the way Enlightenment thinkers present the relationship between reason and sentiment, that declares sense and sensibility to be channels through which deeper qualities or virtues are expressed, and that rejects the tendency to view sense and sensibility quantitatively and competitively. Through Marianne,

Austen shows us that possessing an ideal character is not about having a certain amount of sense, or a certain amount of sensibility because ultimately, neither sense nor sensibility are innately “good.” Ideally, then, Austen might be saying that the essential goal of one’s character should be to cultivate simply positive aesthetic qualities that exemplify the moral attributes of each “sense” and “sensibility.”

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The Woman Warrior:
The Silent Creation of a Third Space

Hayley Struzik
Christopher Newport University

Introduction

Dr. Rana Gautam, professor of Christopher Newport University's social work class, begins the session by raising this question: "If African Americans are stereotyped as being violent, and Hispanic Americans are stereotyped as being lazy and hyper-sexual, then what is the stereotype attached to Asian Americans?" (Gautam 2014) Even though each student

wrote his or her individual answer down, this answer was unanimous: they are viewed as smart – perhaps they can be viewed as *too* smart? This perspective forms the basis of the idea that Asian Americans are the “model minority,” a group that is neither seen nor heard, a people who are praised for remaining silent, for their intelligence and meekness, and for hiding away in their Chinatowns and enclave neighborhoods.

Maxine Hong Kingston is faced with this invisibility as a second generation Chinese immigrant attempting to understand the world of her parents, and how to incorporate this ancient culture into contemporary American society. This leads her towards “a sense of split-personality and juxtaposed identity,” which emphasizes the lack of her belonging in either space (Aoki 13). This cultural dichotomy as seen in *The Woman Warrior* forces opposing expectations onto Maxine, turning her into an “other” that must float along the boundaries of either culture. Cultural

stereotypes and her mother's talk-stories impose silence upon Maxine, making it difficult for her to create her own balanced Asian-American identity.

By examining the story of her No Name aunt and observing the interaction between her aunt Moon Orchid and Moon Orchid's husband, Maxine learns how others can force her to be silent, threatening to turn her into a ghost of which her mother warns her. Furthermore, by listening to the legend of Fa Mu Lan and closely watching the girl at her school who refuses to speak, Maxine finds that silence can be a tool of protection and a means of power. Maxine must battle with these two types of silence and the Chinese idea of subordinate femininity in order to create a "third space" so she can move beyond the binary of China versus America, and embody both her heritage and the influences of her current culture.

Through providing background on the history of the Chinese immigration into the U.S. and the reactions

of the white majority (including this model minority stigma), these stereotypes, in addition to the Chinese idea of how a woman should ideally behave, can be fully examined. Additionally, Homi Bhabha's theory of a "third space," along with its relevance to minorities and the process of self-identification, illuminates Maxine's own creation of location. The various modes of silence Maxine experiences through her mother's stories, and her time at school, comprise the steps and transformative moments that allowed her to achieve this identity. When Maxine finally decides to use writing as her device for communication and representation, resulting in her "third" or hybrid space, she must leave "room for paradoxes" (Kingston 29) and understand how this space acts as a "variable reality" that does not compel her to interpret the world in dichotomous terms (57).

The Asian "Other"

The story of Chinese immigration to the U.S. has been one of confusion and paradox, including both intense prejudice and also acceptance based on perceived similar values between the white majority and this Asian minority. Chinese immigrants made up the “first large-scale Asian immigration” when they settled in California during the Gold Rush in 1848 (Rangaswamy & Shah 5). Though initially welcomed as a source of cheap labor, especially as they worked on the Transcontinental Railroad, these immigrants were quickly accused of “lowering wages and increased unemployment,” a yellow peril threatening native U.S. citizens searching for jobs (5). As a result of this prejudice, these Chinese laborers were placed in horrendous conditions often without pay; the prevailing perception that the Chinese were seen as an inferior race reinforced this discrimination, leading to the restriction of their immigration (Wei). The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 sought to prevent the entrance

of Chinese into the U.S. (Rangaswamy & Shah 5). This was not the last act passed that created obstacles for these people; the Immigration Act of 1924 banned the Chinese from being eligible for U.S. citizenship, and the Magnuson Act of 1943, passed within an environment of heightened racial tension between the U.S. and Asia due to World War II, established a quota of only 105 Chinese immigrants a year, creating a society of mostly Chinese bachelors separated from their wives and children (Wei). Eventually in the period after this war, the U.S. changed its international policy and expanded its global interests, passing the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act that eliminated all quotas and allowed for increased immigration, bringing in a new class of Chinese professionals and entrepreneurs (Rangaswamy & Shah 6).

However, because of past discrimination, many Chinese immigrants had escaped into their own enclaves or Chinatowns (Wei), isolating themselves

and surviving on small businesses, such as the laundry Maxine's father operates in the novel (Healey 369). These communities were often based around clan groups, or "huiguan," that placed those from the same Chinese region together (368). Though mostly successful, prejudice and their separation from mainstream society made it virtually impossible for these immigrants to assimilate, and they were also expected to remain invisible (Wei). The second generation of Chinese immigrants, which includes Maxine, decided to make contact with the larger society by pursuing education and diverse job opportunities outside of these enclaves (Healey 369).

Viewed by the dominant majority as valuing education and able to gain a substantial income (Rangaswamy & Shah 24), the second generation was given a new stereotype termed the "model minority" (Wei). This led to the expectation that Chinese Americans like Maxine should be quiet, polite, and

high-achieving, a type of pressure she must contend with while attempting to form her own identity (Healey 380). This stereotype has been perceived as a way for the U.S. to “reaffirm the validity of the American democratic promise that other minorities of color have collectively failed to take advantage of” (Li 9). However, despite Maxine’s “good values” such as respect for authority, a strong work ethic, a willingness to conform, and maintaining a polite silence, her voice is still imprisoned, and boundaries are placed around her ability to find a way to make sense of the two cultures competing for her loyalty (Healey 393).

Chinese versus American Femininity

Being a member of the ‘model minority’ is not all Maxine struggles with; Chinese culture, along with her family and community’s constant reminders, tell her that her gender is of little value. Despite being born and raised in the U.S., China proves to have a

culture “whose layers of tradition govern the lives of the Chinese, even when they are far away in America” (Huntley 90). The traditional Chinese society is a “male-dominated . . . kinship system,” and the men are the basis of community networks” (Simmons 50). Since women were raised to be eventually given away to their husband’s family, where they remained subordinate, they never truly belonged to their immediate family or to their in-laws. Asian women were supposed to be “hyperfeminine,” with “passive, weak, quiet, and excessively submissive” traits (Pyke & Johnson 36). They were not granted an “individual identity apart from their family role” (38), which aligns with the Confucian moral code, and there was a lack of “control over outcomes in their lives” (Ngan-Ling Chow 294). Because of this, these women become an “internal colonized group” within the Asian-American minority that is discriminated against in the U.S. (293).

Growing up, Maxine is continually faced with

disdain when told “there is no profit in raising girls” (Kingston 45). She often “denies her gender,” which is exemplified in the scene of the novel where she tells her mother that she is not a “bad girl” (Huntley 110). Through her mother’s talk-stories, Maxine feels that she must either “grow up a warrior woman” or become an enslaved wife (Kingston 20). These stories “epitomize the contradictions in the cultural messages with which a young Chinese American woman must grapple” (Huntley 77); Maxine notices that China is full of paradoxes, as she learns about a forgotten aunt who is compared to a celebrated girl warrior, as well as the worthlessness of girls in China compared to her mother becoming a respected doctor (69). Furthermore, she observes that even though she has been told Chinese women should be seen and not heard, her mother and her friends are loud and distracting in public (83). According to Pyke and Johnson, since Maxine is a member of a community that is “racially and

ethnically subordinated” within the U.S., she is faced with “conflicting gender expectations” that confuse her by requiring “different gender performances depending on the . . . context,” which can include her family in the Chinese community, or her American school and peers (34). Living in a predominantly white world, Maxine must submit to the “controlling images” that “reaffirm whiteness as normal” (Pyke & Johnson 36) and the perspective that femininity should be “authentic” rather than the “coerced” femininity she experiences from Chinese culture (43). As a subordinate to these “elite definitions” and to what is imposed upon her by her mother and the community, Maxine is denied the “power of self-identification” (36).

Maxine recalls that “we American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American feminine,” oftentimes leading to their silence, unsure what voice would be acceptable to use (Kingston 172). In the classroom she especially faces the conflict between

feeling the urge to “confirm the stereotypes” caused by the “racialized gender expectations” of silence and submissiveness in order to fit in, while her teachers and mother simultaneously encourage her to strengthen her weak voice (Pyke & Johnson 46). With all of this being said, this silence that Maxine and her Chinese peers must overcome is not completely a factor of Asian or American femininity, but a “function of identity confusion” as well (Simmons 95). Maxine has to find a way out of this contradiction that is pulling her between being the quiet and respectful Chinese girl who is able to heroically represent her family and village, without even knowing what this village is, and assimilating into the American girl who feels she must be even more quiet, all the while trying to create an individual and unique voice valued by the larger society.

Third Space Theory

So what does it mean for a person to exist and

survive within a society that neither recognizes or appreciates one's ethnicity or gender, and thus does not leave one room for any potential contributions? Furthermore, what do the binding cultural ties signify when a person attempts to carve out a niche for himself or herself in a new, dominant, and oppressive culture? Homi Bhabha defines this as "deeply negating experience, oppressive and exclusionary," which encourages one to move beyond the "polarities of power and prejudice" into a formative space (xi). Though Maxine may feel invisible as she moves along the boundary between Chinese and American cultures, Bhabha states that this boundary is where "something begins its presencing" (1) a unique place that is on the "borderline of history and language, on the limits of race and gender" where one is able to "translate the differences" between these cultures and form a solid identity (244).

This type of hybridity allows this person to

have an active presence by throwing off the chains of “discrimination and domination” (Bhabha 159). It is “antagonistic” (225), a site where the otherized individual can exert influence with an identity which, “eluding resemblance,” conveys an authority through the power this person has found in “unpicking” and dissociating from various aspects of the cultures, and then “relinking” other aspects in a specific, individual way (265). This space allows not only for the “creator of the third space to detach temporarily from already-existing parameters and examine them with newer eyes,” but it also establishes an authority that demands to be noticed apart from the categories of culture (Benson 556).

So how does one create this third space? This will depend upon the individual; for example, the various forms of silence Maxine experiences affect the construction of her third space. However, in a more general sense, Bhabha explains that this “articulation

of difference” that “seeks to authorize cultural hybridities” is a “complex, on-going negotiation” (3). This negotiation is mostly one that takes place not only between the person and his or her role in opposing cultures, but also within the person alone. This person, like Maxine, has to be able to articulate these often “contradictory elements” to make the hybrid space meaningful (37). This is why it is especially important that Maxine works through the multiple forms of silence existing in her life in order to discover her own method of articulation.

According to Bhabha, the process of identification would not involve Maxine affirming that she is fully American or fully Chinese (which would be assuming a “pre-given identity”), but instead would mean she would produce her own new “image of identity,” and that creating this space would signify her “transformation . . . in assuming that image” (64). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon states that

“As soon as I desire I ask to be considered”; once a person desires to have this identity and voice, then he or she is also asking for the hybrid space to be noticed and accepted (73). Similarly, as the creator of a third space, Maxine must realize that her new identity is ever changing, fluid, and transforming.

Through having this written voice, Maxine can never draw a solid line between the “private and the public, the civil and the familial” (Bhabha 330); there will always be an ambivalence within her voice and a “tension between the influence of traditional ‘ethnicist’ identifications that coexist with contemporary, secular, modernizing aspirations” (359). Though she has been “shaped by the dominant culture,” she still feels “strongly drawn to the traditions and values” of her “parents’ ancestral culture” (Huntley 73). This should not be viewed as negative, but rather a fact to be acknowledged so she can best utilize her voice to encompass both cultures and influences. This third space Bhabha

describes is not solely ruled by the dominant culture, or by the “other” culture, but “something else besides” that is up to the person/creator to define (41). Maxine specifically faces the dichotomy between the Western culture seeking to “forget time and . . . accumulate contents” and the Chinese culture seeking to maintain “popular traditions” (81). With her written voice, she must find a way to share how these “narratives must be repeated” and how they have been relayed originally by her mother in the context of a predominantly white Americanized society (81). This “in-between space” gives Maxine the location for “elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity” (2). In this hybrid place, she can move past the binary of cultures and formulate her unique expression of both without any suppression, using a voice long kept silent.

Forced Silence: No Name Aunt

“You must not tell anyone . . . what I am about to tell you”—this is how Maxine’s story begins, a poignant statement revealing how silence is imposed upon her not only by being a minority in society, but also by her mother, Brave Orchid (Kingston 3). Brave Orchid often uses talk-stories to educate her children, specifically ghost stories, such as the first talk-story in the book about Maxine’s No Name aunt (Aoki 20). Because No Name wronged her family, stained her own honor, and disobeyed the traditions of her village by getting pregnant with a man who was not her husband, she was turned into a ghost as if she had never existed. Maxine’s mother commands her: “Don’t humiliate us. You wouldn’t like to be forgotten as if you had never been born” (Kingston 5). This warning tells Maxine that silence can be the “result of moral judgment inflicted by society” (Aoki 36), and specifically Chinese society that “requires respectful submission” at all times (Simmons 57). If she fails to behave acceptably, or commits any

sort of betrayal or dishonor similar to her aunt, she will subsequently face the same ghostliness and the ultimate “state of disgrace and weakness” (Aoki 33).

No Name was punished with forced silence by the villagers for “acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them” (Kingston 13). No Name’s experiences haunt Maxine as she attempts to make sense of why her aunt’s life was obliterated from history. Being an Asian-American, Maxine is already treated like a ghost by her Chinese family because of her “foreign American behavior and attitudes,” which is perhaps why she decides to offer a different story about her forgotten aunt (30). From what Maxine has been taught about women’s submissiveness being integral to traditional Chinese values, she decides that “women in the old China did not choose. Some man had commanded her [No Name] to lie with him and be his secret evil” (Kingston 6). This “other man” who impregnated No Name, according to Maxine’s version of the story,

was probably “not, after all, much different from her husband. They both gave orders: she followed” (7).

According to Maxine, maybe her aunt could not help having these dreams about the “forbidden” (Kingston 8), feeling drawn toward a man against her family’s wishes and with fear about the consequences of an attraction that “eludes control” (12). Maxine imagines No Name’s desire for individuality as perhaps not solely a fault of her own, but also a fault of the “frightened villagers, who depend on one another to maintain the real” and who are preoccupied with a “roundness” and the “circling of events” until they can no longer accept “fatalism” and “deny accidents” (13). Maxine feels that because these villagers and her mother have wiped out her aunt’s existence, and because she strives to grasp at the strings of her heritage, she must make No Name’s life into something she can understand; she claims that “unless I see her life branching into mine, she gives me no ancestral help”

(8).

Though Maxine is told about the villagers' silencing of her aunt, she also notices No Name's "secret voice": a silence she kept about the man "throughout her labor and dying; she did not accuse him that he be punished with her (Kingston 11). This could be seen as a form of "self-punishment" resulting from the punishment society has already inflicted upon her; she took on the weight of having never been born alone, and then lovingly grants her baby an escape from this pain (Aoki 36). Though giving birth to a child destined to be forgotten, she fought to stand to her feet in a pigsty so that her child would not be snatched up by the "jealous, pain-dealing gods" (Kingston 14). Carrying the baby to the well, No Name fulfills her promise to "protect this child as she had protected its father," forcing permanent silence on the child by killing it with her, knowing it would turn into a living ghost with "no descent line" just as she has experienced from others forcing her to be

silent (15). Because No Name had her voice and future viciously stripped away from her, she realizes that she must spare her child from a similar life of existing in a cage of silence.

Forced Silence: Moon Orchid

When Maxine's other aunt, Moon Orchid, arrives in the U.S. after many years of separation from her family, both her agenda and her voice are taken over by her sister Brave Orchid. Almost immediately upon Moon Orchid's arrival, Brave Orchid inserts herself into her sister's business by asking, "What are we going to do about your husband?" (Kingston 124). Though Brave Orchid may initially believe what she is doing for her sister is for her own good, it quickly transforms into Moon Orchid's insanity, and her "identity collapses" (Simmons 89); Moon Orchid's "abundance of silent obedience" in regard to her sister creates a "ghost-like existence" within her (Aoki 31). As soon as Brave

Orchid brings up the topic of her sister's estranged husband, Moon Orchid shows her fear, incited by the prospect of seeing him again and regret for coming to the U.S, by saying "I shouldn't be here" (Kingston 124) and "I want to go back to Hong Kong" (125). Brave Orchid refuses to give in to her sister, who believes she "mustn't bother him"; instead, Brave Orchid continually pushes Moon Orchid, expressing her own frustration and excitement about surprising the husband, and outrage over how he would marry a new wife (125).

Soon, however, Moon Orchid asks her sister what to say when she sees her husband and multiple questions about how to treat the other wife, revealing how an unfamiliar situation in an unfamiliar place has granted Brave Orchid the power to usurp the voice and actions of her sister. Brave Orchid even mentions that she could "think of hundreds of things" to say for her sister, and that she would love to be in this position that Moon Orchid is dreading because of her uncertainty

and anxiety (Kingston 126). Eventually Moon Orchid begins to play along, joking that the new wife can “comb my hair and keep house” (130), failing to comprehend that Brave Orchid is not simply “talking-story,” but is actually serious in her desire to act and speak for Moon Orchid (131). Even in Chinatown, the community women attempt to influence Moon Orchid’s actions; it seems that they are familiar with this reclaiming of a husband, while Moon Orchid only stands in the background as these women speak for her (138). Because of her fear, she succumbs to the idea of Brave Orchid speaking for her, saying “you can talk louder than I can,” thus accepting the silencing of her own voice (144).

When the two sisters finally come face to face with the husband, his accusatory and “rude American eyes” (Kingston 153) described as “looking for lies” (152) shock Moon Orchid’s voice out of use immediately; she can only “open and shut her mouth

without any words coming out” and “whimper,” while Brave Orchid can “not keep silent” (152). She attempts to justify why Moon Orchid is with her in the U.S., but the husband states that Moon Orchid “can’t belong” and would never be able to “fit into an American household” (153). “You can barely talk to me,” he says, and Moon Orchid can only hide her face with her hands in response, feeling that she is merely a ghost (153). He reinforces her ghostliness by stating how she has become a character in a book to him, and that he has even silenced her existence by never telling his new wife about her (155).

This encounter causes Moon Orchid’s sanity and sense of self to vanish; “even the image of herself as the banished wife, who could at least live in the reflected light of her husband, has been forfeited and order has been broken down completely” (Simmons 89). Not only is she a ghost because of the silence demanded by her husband and the foreignness of this new culture, but

also because she has a “lack of comprehensible speech” (Aoki 20), and is only able to “speak nonsensically and non-rationally” (32). According to Brave Orchid, her sister, who can only obsess over being watched and followed by Mexicans, is insane because she has “only one story” that she constantly repeats (Kingston 159). The only people Moon Orchid ends up being able to communicate with in a meaningful way are the other women in the asylum to which she has been admitted. She eventually fades “entirely away” one morning, having partially regained her voice, but ultimately living her final years trapped in an insanity caused by an overwhelming silence imposed by her husband (160).

So what significance does this story about her aunt have for Maxine? The book mentions that Brave Orchid’s daughters, after hearing about Moon Orchid’s husband, “decided fiercely that they would never let men be unfaithful to them,” and majored in “science or mathematics” so they could become strong

and independent without having to rely on a husband (Kingston 160). Maxine may view this story about this aunt as similar to the story about her other aunt, No Name, who both felt the burden of silence caused by family members and were left without the power of spoken thought and free action. Looking at the ghosts of her aunts, Maxine may be able to see how critical expressing herself is in preventing a life of floating along the boundaries of belonging and sanity, and how necessary the formation of her own voice is in carving out a solidified place on the boundaries of culture she faces. Rather than having society or her mother create her voice for her, which seems to lead to madness or complete obliteration, Maxine finds some strength in these talk-stories to begin seeking out a way to survive as both a female and second-generation immigrant living between two cultures that she does not fully understand.

Silence as Protection and Power: Fa Mu Lan

Maxine not only hears about these women who are either pushed to their deaths or to insanity because of their loss of voice; she also learns of a warrior woman who uses silence as a means of survival and power. Fa Mu Lan is the legendary female warrior who bravely avenges her village after years of training in the mountains. Maxine retells this story within the novel as if she was this famous Chinese heroine. “The first thing you have to learn,” according to the elderly couple training Fa Mu Lan, “is how to be quiet”; in this way, she heightens her awareness of her surroundings and each move that her body makes (Kingston 23). By exercising her focus, she is becoming level-headed and calm, while learning bravery and survival skills through solitude spent on a mountain top.

After passing her lessons learned from the ways of the tiger, such as carefully watching and stalking prey, the couple teaches her to how to see an entire dragon

by helping her to “make her mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes” (Kingston 29). With a few more years of training on the mountain, during which she “talked to no one except the two old people,” Fa Mu Lan is able to return to her village and take the place of her father to fight for her people (33). Using her body as a message, she agrees to kneel silently before her parents, who use a knife to “carve revenge” into her back; with these permanent scars, even her dead body can become a silent but powerful “weapon” for the people to observe and then carry out those oaths (34). As she begins to gather her army, however, a unique voice emerges from her that is influenced by her years of solitary training to connect with nature and the surrounding world: “I inspired my army . . . At night I sang to them glorious songs that came out of the sky and out of my head” (37). Once she has gained millions of followers from the entire nation, Fa Mu Lan faces the emperor and makes demands of him with this powerful

new voice, and delivers final justice with the strength built up in her body from the silence and awareness she found while on the mountain. Ultimately, Fa Mu Lan is not only remembered for her warrior success, but for her “perfect filiality” shown through her submissiveness and respect for her parents, and the fulfillment of the words on her back for the village (45).

In light of this story, Maxine struggles with the knowledge that she does not have a specific village to represent, and sees silence as a way to “survive in racist America” and not disappoint her family (Aoki 38). She recognizes the limitations regarding the idea of a woman warrior like Fa Mu Lan in the context of the U.S.: in this country, Maxine faces overwhelming challenges, knowing that even though Fa Mu Lan was able to return and live in peace with her village, Maxine’s “life will never really return to normal” (Simmons 92). By having a “lonely-quiet space,” Maxine is sheltered from the “harsh reality of clashing cultural practices,

sexist Chinese thought, and racist American attitudes” (Aoki 53).

However, as she transforms and seeks out her own form of expression, it is clear that Maxine views this talk-story in a different way with different lessons than before. The dragon, which for Fa Mu Lan symbolized the “vastness of the universe compared to the minute existence of humans,” becomes this “multi-cultural world” where Maxine exists, “replete with seeming contradictions” that she must come to terms with and use in order to create a third space that combines aspects of two cultures (Aoki 83). Maxine recognizes that “the swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar”; though both spend years in silence, hiding from the outside world, eventually this time becomes the root of their strength (Kingston 53). For Maxine, “the reporting is the vengeance – not the beheading, not the gutting, but the words” (53). Her written voice is what provides the vengeance for names the white

majority has called her, and for the many moments her mother belittled and doubted her.

Silence as Protection and Power: The Quiet Girl

Before finding her way with words, Maxine remembers that her “silence was thickest – total – during the three years that I covered my school paintings with black paint” (Kingston 165). She thought of the black paint as curtains, ready to move aside at any moment she chose to reveal what was underneath, believing that she was the “keeper of something precious and significant” (Huntley 7). She viewed this silence as “misery” when she began having to speak up in the classroom, not understanding why her voice and the voices of the other Chinese girls were barely audible (Kingston 166). Reading aloud, she identifies an “individuality and self-identity of which she is not yet confident” (Aoki 60), causing her voice to sound like “bones rubbing jagged against one another” (Kingston

169). “To speak up would be to claim an authority” Maxine does not feel she owns, especially as a minority young woman living in a white world (Huntley 101). She knows that as an Asian-American, she is different and set apart, and she is confused overall about which culture she should cling to; silence acts as a neutral area in which she does not have to choose between her Chinese heritage and an incomprehensible American society.

When Maxine notices the quiet girl in school, she also notices a reflection of herself, feeling her own “fragility” in this girl who also does not swing at the baseball and is the last one chosen when it is time to play (Kingston 176). Maxine quickly becomes fed up with this girl’s complete silence, which she views as a weakness she herself suffers from. When she corners the quiet girl in a bathroom, Maxine taunts and pleads with her to utter a single word, trying to “scare the words out of her” (178) and “undo her own silence

by forcing the girl to speak, by taking over her voice” (Simmons 97). Afraid of never discovering her own escape from silence, Maxine pulls on the girl’s hair and skin, begging her to “let people know you have a personality and a brain” (Kingston 180) and showing that she “wants to give the girl what she sees as power by forcing her to speak” (Parrott 383).

Yet perhaps Maxine does not realize that this girl’s silence is her actual *choice*; rather than the girl attempting to avoid finding her place within society and an identity, her lack of speech defines her sense of self. This silence becomes a “shelter of power” (Parrott 383), an internal world that the girl can maintain apart from the brutality of humanity, and a way she can keep her “gentleness and tenderness . . . intact” (Simmons 50). What Maxine does not know until she unearths her own voice is that she and the quiet girl both have an authority and power by being able to control how they express themselves. Maybe the quiet girl remains

steadfast in her silence so that only her actions can be seen, rather than words that others can construe and “capture . . . for their own use” (Kingston 169). Maxine, for her part, chooses to reveal her potent and weighty thoughts through writing, because she can no longer keep them simmering under the surface and has formed her own space in society in which she feels comfortable expressing her conflicted self.

Conclusion

Maxine truly begins to use her voice when she admits to having a “list of over two hundred things that I had to tell my mother so that she would know the true things about me and to stop the pain in my throat” (Kingston 197). By admitting these things, Maxine hopes that her mother and the world “would become more like me, and I would never be alone again” (198). However, Maxine realizes that her mother is annoyed with her whispering “madness” when she tries to go

through this list with her. This leaves Maxine with an even greater need to speak (200). The result is an emotional outburst directed toward her mother, when Maxine claims that she won't be a wife or a slave, that she is intelligent, that she wants to be a lumberjack and reporter to rid herself of feminine stereotypes, and that she does not "need anybody to pronounce English words for me" (202). Maxine also complains to her mother about her confusing talk-stories, upset that she is not able to know "what's real and what you make up" (202).

However, as is evident in this book Maxine later writes, she "reshapes and modifies the stories" as an "act of self-creation," joining what she knows about her Chinese heritage with her experience growing up in the U.S. (Huntley 94). Throughout the novel, Maxine is faced with having to "translate culture as well as words, and must do this despite the fact that she might not completely understand the Chinese

customs herself” (Aoki 43). Her own experiences and emotions transformed into words comprise her unique translation of both Asian and American cultures; she is able to “challenge the idea that the spoken . . . word . . . is the only or the best way to communicate” (Parrot 376). Despite the “profound insecurity” (Huntley 89) she felt as a child, which she describes as having “felt I had no place of my own and had to hide” (Simmons 7), *The Woman Warrior* is an example of Maxine using language that overcomes both “Chinese patriarchy and American racism” and allows her to express her true self within her own created space (101).

Though Maxine portrays courageous Chinese women in the novel, as well as the numerous obstacles and inner turmoil Asian Americans faced as they were given the choice to assimilate into a new culture, her purpose for this written voice is summed up in this quote: “Why must I ‘represent’ anyone besides myself?” (Li 53). With the final story at the conclusion of the book focusing on the brave poetess Ts’ai Yen, who

was kidnapped by a barbarian tribe in ancient China, Maxine reimagines a woman who, like herself, “faces, communicates, and even creates beauty out of the pain and loss that results from being of two opposing worlds” (Simmons 102). As Ts’ai Yen sings about her home in the wilderness, and then returns home with songs “from the savage lands,” she is able to communicate beyond language barriers and tie these two separate worlds together (Kingston 209). There is grief and sorrow in her music, yet she is still able to recognize the reality of “the world in which she finds herself and the humanity of those who inhabit it” (Simmons 106). Maxine’s hybrid location, her “third space,” encompasses aspects of both cultures and allows her to make meaning out of her experiences. This reality, as large as the dragon in Fa Mu Lan’s story, will always include paradoxes and contradictions that can be made beautiful and poignant with language.

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**Intergenerational Trauma: A Look at Sherman Alexie's
Child Characters**

*Kiersten Sargent
University of Dayton*

The cyclical nature of poverty is not questioned.
The cyclical nature of abuse is easy to spot.
What about the cyclical nature of pain and trauma?
Can suffering travel? Can an individual be born into
trauma like someone is born into poverty? Is it deeper
than that? This essay takes a look at the very real

cyclical nature of trauma within a few of Sherman Alexie's works. Alexie uses child-characters to expose intergenerational trauma and suffering through the intolerance they experience. The characters that will be examined are Jonah from "The Sin Eaters" (a short story within *The Toughest Indian in The World*, 2000), John Smith from *Indian Killer* (1996), and Zits/Michael from *Flight* (2007). All three of these Native American children are put through traumatic experiences that stem from their ancestry. Child characters experience great suffering to demonstrate the negative impact that intergenerational trauma has on the perpetuation of intolerance.

With hurt often comes confusion for children. They wonder why they are being hurt or if they deserved it. In "The Sin Eaters," however, we see an example of one who was hurt for the betterment of the world. In the short story a young Native American boy is sought out, along with hundreds of others, because his

skin, eyes, hair, and DNA are just right to save the world in some way unknown to the reader. Scared, empty, and constantly being stuck with needles, Jonah is given a message: “Dr. Clancy pushed another needle deep into my other hip. ‘You’re doing a brave thing. You’re saving the world’” (Alexie 115). “Dr. Clancy” is a white doctor who is inflicting pain upon Jonah’s body for some “greater good” of humanity. Unfortunately, being “brave” requires an element of choice that Jonah lacks as he is being held and restrained against his will and without knowledge of his choice. Jonah is excluded from the ‘greater’ purpose that the doctors and whites are privileged to experience. The idea of self-sacrifice for the betterment of humanity is a Christian ideology inspired by the self-sacrifice of Jesus. Because Jonah is not choosing to sacrifice himself, he is not self-sacrificing but rather being harvested for the salvation of others. Jonah, targeted because of his marginalized differences, illustrates how intolerance and trauma is inflicted under

the guise of sacrifice for the betterment of humanity. Since it is clear that one group is being harvested for the salvation of another group, inequality is present as well as intolerance. Intolerance is perpetuated when one group suffers at the hands of another and this suffering is carried on within individuals.

DNA is the genetic material that defines a life as far as what it looks like and how it functions. As the white doctors began pushing needles into him, Jonah thinks to himself, “the hypodermic syringe ... sucked out pieces of my body ... sucked out fluid ounces of my soul ... sucked out pieces of all of my stories ... sucked out pieces of my vocabulary” (Alexie 115). When the doctors were extracting what they believed to be nothing more than physical materials from Jonah they were actually taking his “body,” his “soul,” his “stories,” and his “vocabulary” which, for Jonah, was his true DNA. In other words, while the doctors were literally extracting materials from Jonah’s body, they

were crippling his spirit and identity. All of the things that Jonah saw the doctors taking from him were also the things the colonizers stole from and suppressed in Native American groups. This intentional mirroring represents the ongoing pain and loss of culture endured by Native Americans in the United States.

In “A World of Story-Smoke: A Conversation with Sherman Alexie,” Åse Nygren is interested in Alexie’s ideas on perpetuated suffering and how it is carried. Nygren claims that “The characters are muted by the traumas of hatred and chaos, loss and grief, danger and fear, and cannot—except in a few rare cases—articulate their suffering” (Nygren 151). This interview opens the door to taking a closer look at trauma within Alexie’s work. Nygren claims that characters are silenced, which leads to self-destructive behaviors. Alexie attempts to give language to suffering while also expressing that suffering cannot be shared; suffering is incomparable. Alexie’s responses in the

interview provide insight into why violence is so prevalent within his writing; Native Americans alive today are survivors of genocide. Trauma experienced by individual characters relates to the collective trauma of Native Americans. He once jokingly explained, “I think loss is in our DNA” (O’Connor). This is ironic considering that DNA seemed to be what was taken from Jonah. For Jonah, the DNA that doctors were extracting were his words and his history, and his history is pain. The doctors were not healing Jonah of the traumas carried deep within his bones, but rather using it for their gain. This exemplifies how privilege uses pain to perpetuate oppression.

For many, heritage is passed down and celebrated. Unfortunately for some it cannot be forgotten. Nancy Van Styvendale investigates the travel of trauma throughout Alexie’s *Indian Killer* and is intrigued by Alexie’s statement that “The United States is a colony and I’m always going to write like one who

is colonized, and that's with a lot of anger" (212). In the dynamic of the "colony" and the "colonized," the "colony" has a sense of righteousness and the "colonized" are robbed of space, resources, and freedom, and are often left with "anger." The "United States" is not typically thought of as a colony, and it is especially does not think of itself that way. Outwardly stating that the US is a colony is a reminder of a history or heritage that most Americans have forgotten. The Native Americans cannot forget their role in colonialism because it coincided with the genocide of an entire group of people. Whites get to live freely in a land they claimed hundreds of years ago, only thinking about the white lives lost for this great land. Seeing this, knowing this, and living this is the seed of anger for the abused and of those less privileged than white Americans. The trauma of genocide grows in each following generation and lives in the skin, and has the ability to torture those marginalized in the white world.

Trauma is visible in the lives of a variety of characters but it is also traveling through generations. John Smith, the main character in the novel *Indian Killer*, is experiencing trauma despite his limited ties to his culture; he is aware and has even created his own traumatic creation narrative to fill the gap. As John describes it, “The doctor cuts the umbilical cord quickly ... A nurse cleans John, washes away the blood, the remains of the placenta, the evidence. His mother is crying. ‘I want my baby. Give me my baby. I want to see my baby. Let me hold my baby’... The nurse swaddles John in blankets and takes him from the delivery room” (Alexie 5). John is then immediately transported to his adoptive white parents. This is the traumatic image that John created for himself that describes his birth. The cries from John’s mother demonstrate that she wanted to keep him, and never had the chance. This only adds to the pain in John’s life. He had no connections to his heritage and suffers for

it. The lack of connection to his real past, the forced generic connections, and his parents' neglect of his mental problems resulted in a traumatic life for John. Despite being separated from a Native American heritage and delivered to a white family, John never assimilates into white culture, demonstrating that trauma experienced by Native Americans comes from white culture and perpetuates intolerance.

Before the novel begins, Alexie presents an epigraph from Alex Kuo: "We are what we have lost." Through Kuo, Alexie implies that groups of people are literally defined by what they have lost along the way. John does not know what he has personally lost, but in his own mind, he feels as though he lost his mother, cousins and friends whom he never knew. He feels as though he has lost a tribe. The people that he imagines to have lost (because he was never connected to them) were people who were already carrying suffering from their heritage. John defines himself from what has

been taken away from him. What makes it worse is that John is not in a group of people that he can share this pain with; he is completely alone. The emptiness within John is a trauma that was given to him. He is a suffering Native American man in the white world and his suffering is perpetuated by the intolerance that he experiences through the neglect of his human needs.

Adoptions are often sensationalized; a person/couple gets a new baby, but what happens next? Margaret Homans, author of "Adoption Narratives, Trauma, and Origins," claims that John's lack of authenticity of origin, combined with marginalization in the white home and neighborhood where he was raised, resulted in a lack of a sense of belonging in any realm. This ultimately dehumanized John and led to the deterioration of his character. A lack of connection to his true origin prevented John from developing properly. Because John was only subject to generic stereotypes with no ties to any family, he

created his own history. Adoption without a history or familial/cultural connections demonstrates that cultural displacement is traumatic and has life-long consequences. Furthermore, John's internalized suffering and marginalization lead him into a life plagued by trauma perpetrated by the intolerance of his identity.

Christianity is a faith, but in the imperializing world it is also a tool for assimilation. Emily Metz-Cherné claims that "Alexie reveals the unchristian actions of the American nation" (178-179). Because the values of Christianity run so deeply in American culture, the idea that they could be accused of being unchristian would be a shock to early white culture in America. After all, these early settlers were 'saving' the savage Natives with the 'gift' of their faith. What seemed like good deeds and gifts were, in reality, incredibly destructive to Native Americans. John Smith's life exemplifies this idea of a good deed gone

wrong. His white parents adopted him and loved him but when there were major warning signs that John was mentally slipping they wrote it off to his heritage. Encouragement without any cultural connections confused and alienated John, leaving him neglected. Marginalization created by the neglect of white parents and society traumatized John, perpetuating his pain and inequalities.

In *Flight* the main character who calls himself Zits experiences a journey through time and space and into other people's perspectives. In his internal monologue Zits explains, "I'm fighting and kicking because that's what I do. It's how I'm wired. It's my programming. I read once that if a kid has enough bad things happen to him before he turns five, he's screwed for the rest of his life" (*Flight* 17). Just as a doorbell is wired to ring, Zits is wired for pain and violence; Zits explains that this has an impact on the rest of one's life. These predetermined reactions are the result of the

suffering of Zits' early youth and maybe even before he was born. This pain and rage from Zits is the result of the trauma that was passed to him through past generations and perpetuates suffering in his life.

Much of the trauma in Zits' life that he was born with comes from his father. Later in the novel Zits realizes that "I am my father." This is the realization for Zits that he is his father, physically at this stage in the book, but it also reveals something deeper. Zits sees that he and his father are the same. They have had similar youths and they were possibly headed on the same path. Zits' father, Robert, was an abused child who suffered at the hands of his father. Zits was abused by a large number of people but was also hurt by the abandonment by his own father. Robert is currently an alcoholic on the streets who carried so much pain in his heart that the most he will ask from another person is their respect. Zits sees that the path of an abused child does not lead to a promising place; instead it results in

a circle. This is one of the most eye-opening scenes for Zits. The pain experienced by Robert lead him to being homeless and dysfunctional. Robert is a person who could not break the cycle. The suffering experienced by Robert as a child lead to his unraveling, which ultimately reveals to Zits the cyclical nature of suffering.

Suffering and its motivation moves in a cycle through generations. In the midst of war Zits wonders, “Is revenge a circle inside of a circle inside of a circle?” (Flight 77). Here the “circles” that Zits considers are cycles of pain and suffering. One group attacks another; that group feels pain and loss and then retaliates. Upon retaliation, the first group feels pain and loss and retaliates. And so on. Pain begets more pain. Just as revenge is a driving force behind the cycle, intolerance also drives the same cycle of suffering. One group is marginalized and disrespected so that the majority group can grow in power. This allows the marginalized to develop more internalized pain and suffering while

the majority group develops a deeper internalized intolerance for other groups. Cycles of suffering allow cycles of intolerance to grow until the intolerance and the suffering deplete together.

Judith Shulevitz, author of “The Science of Suffering” explores the ways in which trauma travels through generations, ultimately claiming,

There is biological PTSD, and familial PTSD, and cultural PTSD. Each wreaks damage in its own way. There are medicines and psychotherapies and the consolations of religion and literature, but the traumatized will never stop bequeathing anguish until groups stop waging war on other groups and leaving members of their own to rot in the kind of poverty and absence of care that fosters savagery. (18)

By drawing connections between intergenerational

suffering and post-traumatic stress disorder Shulevitz highlights the severity of the struggle with trauma. A major catastrophic event like genocide cannot pass in a day, a decade, or several generations; instead it is carried and preserved in the lives of children who will pass it on to their children and so on. Pain will live and grow until resolution is met. As long as groups are growing in pain from intolerance, intolerance will grow in turn. For Zits, however, a growth in awareness and a giving person can be a step in breaking the cycle of suffering.

Flight comes to an end with a message of hope.

Zits, who feels as though he has been given a new home, thinks

I haven't been hugged like that since my mother died.

I'm happy.

I'm scared, too. I mean, I know the world is still a cold and cruel place.

I know that people will always go to war

against each other.

I know that people will always be targets.

I know people will always betray each other.

I know that I am a betrayer.

But I'm beginning to think I've been given a chance. (180)

This end-thought from Zits is a message of hope. He can see that the world is not a perfect place. Suffering and trauma still exist and have power. The remarkable and touching fact is that Zits has the sight and opportunity to change. This change occurs through the acknowledgement of his faults. After the first-hand experience of the faults of others, others who were in different positions than him, Zits can understand that everyone has faults and pain but it does not have to be the defining characteristic of an individual. Pain is this deep and strong cycle, but it is not so predetermined

that it cannot be changed, and Zits experiences this opportunity and creates the message that suffering is deep in the bones and skin of certain groups of people, but with hope and persistence, greater outcomes beyond the transferring of trauma can be achieved.

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Feminism and the Force of Institutions in Twenty-First Century Dystopian Novels

Stephanie Roman
University of Pittsburgh

Twentieth century dystopian novels are categorized by the prevalence of Orwellian, or totalitarian, language. Their institutions and governments are synonymous, usually ruled by a despotic dictator or autocratic party, such as George Orwell's *Big Brother* in *1984* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Mustapha Mond* in *Brave New World* (1932), and David Lloyd and Alan

Moore's Adam Susan in *V for Vendetta* (1982-89). These novels feature the paradigm of a male protagonist and a prominent female companion who attempt to overthrow the dystopic, dictatorial political regime.

If I read the twentieth century as one of male domination—i.e. the Bolshevik Revolution, WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam War were conflicts fought largely by men and dominated by men—then it's not very surprising to annotate the mass of dystopian literature in this period as overwhelmingly male. Hierarchical power structures can only be so, and even in collectivist, socialist-inspired dystopias, internal hierarchies still persist. Contrast this history to several twenty-first century dystopias, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and Dave Eggers' *The Circle* (2013). These versions of dystopian nightmares lack centralized, bureaucratized authority, because they are emblematic of the present much like Huxley, Orwell, and Thomas More wrote of

their presents. *Oryx and Crake* depicts an ecologically destroyed world whose best and brightest scientists live in scattered and disparate Compounds, owned by various capitalistic corporations. In Eggers' novel, the Circle is a largely distributed and monopolistic technology corporation that has roots in everything from drone strikes to counting the grains of sand in the Sahara.

The biggest difference is that the twentieth century concerned itself with government ruining the lives of its people while the writers of twenty-first century dystopias fear corporate greed and capitalism. I propose that this shift allows previously marginalized groups—women and people of color—into the active, political spheres of twenty-first century dystopias because the enemy is no longer an oppressive political state, but instead technological corporations. This method of capitalistic organization pays no mind to race or sex, so long as someone makes money.

The corporations themselves are paradoxically both exploited and exploitative, much like women, so in this sense, megacorporations like the Compounds from *Oryx and Crake* and the Circle are the functional equivalent of women in the twenty-first century, due to technology and technological protocols. These societies also provoke the creation of “post-human” characters, beings that have transcended normal human existence through scientifically altered biology or technology implants. Both of these societies feature a fundamentally oppressive corporation(s) that inspires differentiating degrees of resistance to authority; the relation between the consumed, the resisters, and the post-human forms a separate triangle of power with unabashedly sinister consequences.

First, the structures of the institutions need to be examined in order to distinguish them from preceding power structures. French philosopher and critic Michel Foucault aptly summarizes how power

and control worked in classical and modern times in his chapter “Panopticism” from *Discipline and Punish*: in the classical era, discipline was centralized under a despotic sovereign, while in the modern age power is decentralized, placed in the hands of several separate but hierarchical systems. He theorizes a structure called the Panopticon, which was first laid out by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. The Panopticon is the epitome of surveillance, power, and the effect of control over a population. Foucault describes it as:

At the periphery, an annular building; at the center, a tower; this tower is pierced with

wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell

from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. (Foucault 201)

Though Foucault describes the Panopticon mainly as a tool to control inmates, whose every move would be observed from the central tower, he suggests that this mode of power is endemic to all institutions, including hospitals and schools. Evidence of it is still seen daily as it forms a basic hierarchy like the kind seen in corporate America. Each cell in the Panopticon can flare out to have more underneath it, with each tier reporting only to the one preceding it, until finally it reaches the head (the sovereign or CEO). Particularly in twenty-first century America, both government and private parties constantly impose surveillance over cellphones and computers, demonstrating one of the most visceral and frightening realities of the Panopticon. Life in this

endlessly surveilled Panoptic state is largely what forms the remainder of this argument.

French philosopher Gilles Deleuze adds a third network that applies to the present: societies of control, which are run by computers and information network technologies rather than pulleys, clocks, and thermodynamic machines. These control societies are characterized by what media theorist Alexander R. Galloway calls “distributed” or rhizomatic organizations in his book *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization*. As Galloway writes, “In a distributed network there are no central hubs and no satellite nodes, no trunks and no leaves. Like the rhizome, each node in a distributed network may establish direct communication with another node, without having to appeal to a hierarchical intermediary” (14). It resembles an utterly anarchic mode of control, because every node can directly access any other node; there is no sorting, hierarchy, or established source of power. This isn’t the

case, however, thanks to protocological ordinances that govern this type of communication. Protocols function in vastly different ways, but most of them entail an orderly flow of goods, information, and so on. Understanding the distributed network is vital to my understanding of both the Compounds and the Circle: in both Atwood's and Eggers' novels, both institutions *are*, in various degrees, control societies arranged like distributed networks.

At the onset of *The Circle*, a young woman named Mae Holland arrives at the company for her first day of a new job. Eggers describes it as a campus, but “a workplace too, four hundred acres of brushed steel and glass on the headquarters of the most influential company of the world” (1). It's located somewhere in California (though never stated, it's presumably Silicon Valley). It employs 10,000 at that campus alone, but it has divisions around the entire globe. Visually, it's an immense and striking place: “The front hall was as long

as a parade, as tall as a cathedral. There were offices everywhere above, four floors high on either side, every wall made of glass” (Eggers 3). It structurally relies on an abundance of glass, a physicality that extends to a major theme, transparency—there are moments when Mae and her friend Annie are separated by several floors but can spot each other through the distance as if they were looking through unobstructed windows. As the novel proceeds, this transparency becomes one of the Circle’s most polemical developments, as it essentially forces politicians and Circle employees to wear cameras and microphones at all times in order to eradicate gerrymandering, extortion, and general corruption. Based on the Circle’s description, it nicely fits the mold of a control society: not only is the California office one of many divisions spread out globally (one node out of many), but the individuals who work at the Circle are the equivalent of nodes as well, as the employees are expected to engage in mass communication,

sending zings, comments, photos, messages, and likes to numerous feeds in order to satisfy a “Participation Rank,” a company-wide mode of monitoring (Eggers 101).

Meanwhile, in *Oryx and Crake*, society resembles something more familiar. Its pre-apocalyptic world is divided in two: the suburbs, coined Compounds and run by various scientific communities, and the cities, designated “pleeblands.” There’s a strict “us” and “them” systematization between members of the Compound and the pleeblands from the city. The protagonist, Snowman, reflects on his younger life when he was known as Jimmy, and he recalls the things his parents and TV tell him about life in the Compounds versus life in the pleeblands:

Long ago, in the days of knights and dragons, the kings and dukes had lived in castles, with high walls and drawbridges and slots on the ramparts so you could pour hotpitch on your enemies ...

and the Compounds were the same idea. Castles were for keeping you and your buddies nice and safe inside, and for keeping everybody else outside. (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 28)

Jimmy asks his father if they are the kings and dukes, and Jimmy's father answers affirmatively. Another conversation with his father reveals that members of the Compound encompass everyone of value to the company, including middle-range executives and junior scientists, not just its top people. The Compounds intend for everyone to stay inside their protective walls in order to prevent infection from the Modules and pleeblands, and these walls are carefully supervised by the CorpSeCorps, a military police force.

The Compounds are described as nearly resort-like in their isolation. After moving to HelthWyzer, one of the larger and better funded Compounds, its superiority abounds: "It had two shopping malls instead of one, a better hospital, three dance clubs, even its own

golf course,” and best yet, it was protected by a large wall and tight security at the gates (Atwood, *O&C* 53).

However, because the Compounds are based in scientific research and discovery, they inevitably lead to the creation of hierarchies. There’s a distinction between top-level scientists and junior ones, the CorpSeCorps guards, and the elusive executives funding the research. The Compounds—contrary to Jimmy’s belief in kings and dukes—lack a sovereign’s command as in the classical era, and instead adopt a modern, decentralized form of government. This system is the Compounds’ major failing, because Crake’s—the “antagonist,” though I might say “visionary”—philosophy detests such hierarchies and seeks to exterminate them in his Paradise project. It’s the failure of the capitalistic, decentralized network that prompts such disagreeableness in Crake. According to Jimmy, the Compounds are miniature utopias, but Crake envisions the problems with institutions

based on the systematic divides between us and them, rich and poor, and intelligent and unintelligent. Crake sees the Compounds' rigid security measures, pleebland decontamination, microbial warfare, pigeons (artificially raised livestock), and secrecy as processes only a diseased society needs. Art, history, religion, violence, sex, and the awful videogames and Internet programs the boys view (e.g. HottTotts, BrainFrizz, and Blood and Roses), all fuel Crake's image of a broken, unfixable dystopic capitalist society. Jimmy elaborates on one example, the videogame Barbarian Stomp (See If You Can Change History!):

One side had the cities and the riches and the other side had the hordes, and—usually but not always—the most viciousness. Either the barbarians stomped the cities or else they got stomped, but you had to start out with the historical disposition of energies and go on from there. Rome versus the Visigoths,

Ancient Egypt versus the Hyksos, Aztecs
versus the Spaniards. (Atwood, *O&C* 77)

Crake takes these youthful misadventures and fascinations and aims in his adult life to create a utopia lacking the things he considers undesirable, namely God and art. The pre-apocalyptic world of the Compounds is an undeniably screwed up and masculine one regimented by hierarchy. So then Crake, Jimmy's brilliant scientist-philosopher best friend, uses his abilities and resources to found the Paradise Project, which ultimately leads to the eradication of the human population via an internationally distributed miracle sex pill loaded with the fatal JUVE virus. Crake revises the world by creating a new species removed of all God, art, and history, leaving behind no leaders or patriarchies. Thus the Crakers, the world's new inhabitants, form an ideal distributed form of organization.

The story of *Oryx and Crake's* pre- and post-apocalypse continues in Atwood's second MaddAddam

book, *The Year of the Flood*, where she covers the stories of two women, Toby and Ren, who are members of the God's Gardeners religion and socio-political activist group. The God's Gardeners are an eclectic branch of vegetarian eco-terrorists. They grow vegetables on the roof of their base and are led by Adam One, a distinguished orator who preaches the tenets and virtues of preserving animal life. The God's Gardeners enforce a strange dress code that leads to much belligerence and harassment from regular pleeblanders, and consequently function as an enclosed society that relies on no outside help. Its members create, grow, and mend anything they need, and when they do need money the Gardeners sell soap and vegetables at an outdoor market.

Despite their peaceful-sounding hippie lifestyle, numerous legitimate reasons exist as to why the God's Gardeners get labeled as "cultists" and "terrorists." In their William Blake-inspired rhyming poetry that serves

as a bible, one theme prevails: the waterless flood, a simulacrum of the flood Noah and his family endured on the ark, which would exterminate most life. The Gardeners believe it their mission to stand on street corners and preach warnings of the coming apocalypse, but understandably this invites only scorn to their ranks. Yet because the Gardeners are God's chosen children, they prepared for this eventuality and knew they would survive the waterless flood. Evidently, even when Crake unleashes the JUVE pandemic throughout the world (the waterless flood), some of them do survive.

One of the Gardeners is Toby, a young woman rescued by Adam One from a dangerous and vindictive burger shop owner. As repayment she joins the God's Gardeners, eventually (though unwillingly) working her way up the ranks to become Eve 6, a position akin to a medicine man or potion master. Although an admitted non-believer, Toby embeds herself in the God's

Gardeners for protection from this violent man. Toby acknowledges some initial difficulty figuring out their society, and as she later explains,

Adam One insisted that all Gardeners were equal on the spiritual level, but the same did not hold true for the material one: the Adams and the Eves ranked higher, though their numbers indicated their areas of expertise rather than their order of importance. In many ways it was like a monastery, she thought. The inner chapter, then the lay brothers. And the lay sisters, of course.

(Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* Chapter 10)

Perhaps on a spiritual level the Gardeners are truly egalitarian, but Toby quickly notes after her promotion to Eve 6 the discord between what Adam One preaches and what the elevated Adams and Eves actually practice. In the Edencliff Rooftop Garden, there is a secret room attached to the supply room, where the Adams and Eves

meet to discuss matters privately, a place where they ultimately survey and evaluate their followers. At first, the God's Gardeners' distributed structure seems to lend itself to a tightly-knit, effective cell, where no individual holds power over another, but Toby soon realizes this is the farthest thing from the case, as the Gardeners are bogged down by the same hierarchical power structures as the rest of MaddAddam's pre-apocalyptic world.

Now that I have described the institutions, I will examine how their horizontal or hierarchical structures affect the way women are represented in current dystopian fiction. The second proposal of my thesis relies on a female or feminine presence to ensure the continued, propagated functioning of the control societies. In Alexander Galloway's *Protocol*, he makes this point abundantly clear when he draws on the works of cyberfeminist Sadie Plant. Plant argues that technology is inherently feminine, despite the common

belief that technology is ruled and dominated by male geeks, computer scientists, and writers, because it actually has origins in the female. Plant cites telephone operators (mostly or all female), notable computer scientists Ada Lovelace and Grace Hopper (who coined the term computer “bug”), and the weblike structure of cyberspace as examples of technology’s femininity (Galloway 189). Galloway, summarizing Plant’s ideas, writes that “Patriarchal power structures, which have unequally favored men and male forms in society, should be made more equal through a process of revealing and valorizing overlooked female elements,” and also that “technology threatens phallic control and is fundamentally a process of emasculation” (Galloway 188-89).

Similarly to Plant’s and Galloway’s writings, literary critic Chris Ferns draws attention to the Renaissance’s reliance on utopian patriarchal power and criticizes twentieth century writers like Huxley, Orwell,

and H.G. Wells because their fictional societies embody a “specifically male fantasy of establishing a familiar security” (174). This “familiar security” Ferns refers to literally correlates to the walls of the Compounds—in one dialogue, Jimmy’s father asks of his wife, “Didn’t she want to be safe, didn’t she want her son to be safe?”—but, regardless, the guards’ protocols, including phone-tapping, brutalization, and spying, make her feel like a prisoner there (Atwood, *O&C* 53). Her resistance to such policies is characteristic of the feminine’s need to break down the “male fantasy” and subscribe to a new societal organization.

Machinations like these are at work at the Circle as well. It originates from the same patriarchal attitudes, a product of its three “Wise Men” founders: Tyler Alexander Gospodinov (Ty), the genius programmer and boy-wonder who created the Unified Operating System the Circle runs on; Tom Stenton, the CEO and “Capitalist Prime”; and Eamon Bailey, the everyman,

spokesman, and salesman, the one who puts a human face to all of the Circle's products. Until Mae arrives at the company, the three are hardly known to intervene much in its affairs. Stenton and Bailey act as Circle endorsers rather than enforcers. Once the Wise Men establish the Circle, its progress and development are placed in the hands of its highly competent employees, chief among these Mae's college roommate and friend, Annie.

While Mae struggles with averageness, Annie is her beautiful, rich, blond, athletic, *wunderkind* companion. Before Mae graduated with even one degree, Annie had an MBA from Stanford and was a highly sought prospect. Annie quickly climbed the Circle's ladder, becoming one of its most important nodes of communication. She frequently takes foreign business trips, pitching ideas to various and varied consumers. She's a highly visible, highly respected, and even tentatively feared presence, almost single-handedly

responsible for the Circle's upkeep—Annie jokes that her lofty title is “Director of Ensuring the Future” (Eggers 3). She has a hand in nearly all of its projects and models the Circle's idea of a perfect citizen. She's a member of its “Gang of 40,” its forty most influential and imaginative minds involved in planning all its secrets. She's a blueblood who traces her roots back to the *Mayflower*.

Contrast Annie to Mae, and the power dynamic between them explains much of Mae's reverence towards her. Mae embodies the overwhelming averageness of the bourgeoisie. She befriends Annie on the college track team because her scholarship depends on it, suffers massive amounts of student debt because she changed her major several times, and works at a dead-end utility company job for several years before applying to the Circle. Annie encouraged her to apply, and though Mae doubted her eligibility, she suspects Annie pulled a few strings in order to get her the position: “a million people

wanted to be where Mae was at this moment, entering this atrium ... on her first day working for the only company that really mattered at all” (Eggers 3). When hired, she’s placed in Customer Experience, which entails answering hundreds of customer queries with one generic response after another. As Eggers writes it, it’s one of the dulllest jobs imaginable, but Mae relishes the opportunity. She emblemizes graduating college students today, as the economic crisis leaves many jobless or working in positions in which a degree isn’t necessary.

However, as *The Circle*’s narrative develops, Mae dissolves into merely a vehicle for the reader’s point-of-view. She loses all agency as a character. Mae gradually turns into a machine and is continually dehumanized by the layers of technology heaped on her. By the novel’s conclusion she carries about nine different monitors, phones, quizzing headgears, and cameras on her person at all times. She unquestioningly loses all

semblance of humanity and thus becomes technology itself, a mindless, unthinking drone, and the definitive post-human. But in doing so, she elevates herself to the very top of the Circle—she is, in fact, the one who “completes” it, who voices the opinion that Circle membership should be mandatory, and that democratic voting should be governed through its systems. This entails implementing a program called “Demoxie,” which repeatedly nudges its users to vote via annoying and ceaseless sound effects. Ty, under the pseudonym “Kalden,” and a few people from Mae’s former life like her parents and ex-boyfriend Mercer, appear as the diminutive dissenting force. Ty weakly and ineffectually attempts to persuade Mae to stop the Circle’s completion. As he rationalizes his actions, “I was trying to make the web more civil. I was trying to make it more elegant. I got rid of anonymity ... But I didn’t picture a world where Circle membership was mandatory, where all government and all life was channeled through one

network” (Eggers 485). Eggers’ vision of the Unified Operating System that blocks anonymity on the Internet is a tantalizing prospect. In the world of *The Circle*, and by extrapolation the real, twenty-first century we live in, being forced to take responsibility for all your actions and words online would inevitably lead to a cleaner, more charitable environment.

Despite Ty’s efforts, if not Mae’s, Stenton and Bailey would have found another naive body to control. Mae experiences the rush of power, the ability to observe everything and everyone from a distribution model, thanks to zings (a program like Twitter), TruYou (Facebook), and SeeChange (hidden cameras). In this elevation, Mae seizes the powers Annie previously held. They form an essentially tethered relationship, a hierarchy where one holds all the influence and the other holds nothing. Mae’s rising status in the Circle forces Annie to be the test subject of a project called PastPerfect, a flawless program for tracing one’s

ancestry. Upon discovering that her ancestors owned slaves and that her parents engaged in swinging, PastPerfect causes Annie to collapse into a catatonic state. In *The Circle's* conclusion, Annie is a nonentity and Mae becomes the control society, or protocol itself. They have both lost their sex and their humanity, inhabiting the new technological spaces as post-humans and pieces of genderless protocol.

Regardless of *The Circle's* alluring elements, its multitude of projects—including TruYouth, a program that implants a chip in all infants to prevent kidnappings and brutalization by recording, tracking, logging, and analyzing everything the subject does—represent the most horrific nightmare of Panoptic surveillance, where one private corporation holds all the power in the world. “Everyone will be tracked, cradle to grave, with no possibility of escape,” says Ty, characterizing the drastic and debilitating surveillance control already imposed on people by companies like Facebook and

Google (Eggers 486).

While the women in *The Circle* become mechanical post-humans entrapped by technology, the female characters in *Oryx and Crake* tackle post-humanism in another way, by complementing the liberation of post-feminism. Atwood, a well-known feminist writer, introduces Oryx as a child sex slave, a victim of trafficking. She originates from somewhere in Asia, but Oryx refuses to clarify where, and again refuses to reply to Jimmy when he insists he saw her on HottTotts, a child pornography website. Oryx, who's spent so much of her life as a purely exploited object, refuses to be the victim, which is what makes her so morally frustrating and difficult to understand. She does not let her horrific past haunt her—she shrugs it off while Jimmy pines over it, expressing guilt for the despicably patriarchal and passively consumerist society he lives in and which preys on her. Before Oryx, both Jimmy and Crake appeared entirely at ease and

complicit with the violence and pornography they viewed. Later, it becomes apparent Crake had long intended to eradicate those sorts of things with his new branch of genetically modified humans, but Jimmy never acknowledges the diseased state of the world until after its civilization is gone.

Inherently, *Oryx* is the product of capitalism's grip in highly industrialized nations. Fiona Tolan writes that *Oryx* encapsulates the "frequently contradictory problems" of the pornography debate—chiefly, that she's "at once liberal and conservative" and that *Oryx* "articulates significant tensions surrounding the notions of sexual liberation, free will, exploitation, commercialism, race, exoticism and ethnicity that congregate around the theme of pornography" (286). Though scrutinized for being a largely anti-feminist figure, *Oryx* manages to embody the "contradictions" of pornography by being all of these things while also resisting them. In order to reconcile *Oryx's* dubious

nature, doubtful origins, and apathetic lifestyle, we need to stop observing Oryx as merely the dispassionate sex worker or successful businesswoman, and in order to navigate this, Tolan applies the term post-human to Oryx as well as the Crakers. Additionally, Tolan refers to Oryx as “post-feminist,” meaning that “women are no longer victims, but are now free to construct and explore the lineaments of their own sexual gratification” (285). The post-human and post-feminist views of Oryx appear to be the only combination that can balance her contradictions. I have, for some time, concerned myself with how to read Oryx’s mystification, sexuality, and deification with regard to Atwood’s feminism. With a little bit of Orwellian irony, I suggest Oryx to be understood via “doublethink:” she’s pacifist, ignorant, sexist, sexy, academic, uneducated, whore, Madonna, nobody, everyone, product, producer, and so on. She is capable of inhabiting all of these roles, and because she does, she is the perfect candidate to be the Crakers’

instructor.

In *The Circle*, Annie and Mae pair together because of their friendship and the company they work for, but *Oryx and Crake* is relatively devoid of female characters—even the titular Oryx is physically absent until late in the novel. This seems partly to characterize Jimmy/Snowman's issues with women and his preoccupation with sex. Undoubtedly, the root of these problems comes from his mother's abandonment in his preteen years.

Jimmy's mother, Sharon, is presented tangentially in the text through the dialogue of other characters, like Jimmy's dad and Ramona, his lab assistant. Sharon was one of the scientists on her husband's team, and according to Ramona, she used to be brilliant until she quit due to depression. She smokes heavily and dons a bathrobe most of the time. Jimmy dedicates his childhood to provoking reactions out of her, like making her cry or laugh. She attempts

to explain the Compound's science to Jimmy, but he refuses to listen. She sees through the Compound's veils, so rather than participate in them, she disengages from the Compound, her husband, and Jimmy completely. As Tolan writes, "Sharon maintains her sense of the real, of immutable right and wrong, and refuses to be seduced by economic comforts and a ruthlessly maintained social stability for a privileged few" (279). Rather than comply with the institutionalized safety and comfort of the Compound, Sharon hangs on to her convictions as she witnesses the faults and failures of the Compounds. In Galloway's distributed network system, he writes that, "Opposing protocol is like opposing gravity" (147). Using protocols (living in the security of the Compound, in Sharon's case) automatically entails complicity. She resists by quitting her job and failing to be a mother, yet still partakes merely by living there. As Galloway writes, "The nature of resistance itself has changed within the protocological age ... There is a new

category of enemy. And this new category of enemy is not at all similar to the bosses, barons, or bullies of yore” (150). Therefore, the only way for Sharon to truly oppose protocol is to remove herself entirely from it, in the vein of Ty’s attempts to resist democratization in *The Circle*. Sharon exits the Compound society to join the God’s Gardeners, a group that deliberately undermines the Compounds by inciting terroristic attacks like burning fields of monopoly-owned Happicuppa coffee beans.

Finally, Tolan very aptly diagnoses the motivation behind Sharon’s actions when she writes, “Sharon’s political convictions push her to the margins of her society, until she becomes a terrorist. Involved in the anti-globalisation movement ... Sharon turns to violent resistance in the face of overwhelming governmental and commercial power structures” (280). Again, the issue of “resistance” arises. Sharon has no alternative but to do so, or else she aids and abets a

morally corrupt system of corporate capitalism, a world governed by Compounds like HealthWyzer, AnooYou, and RejoovenEsense. While under the protection of the God's Gardeners, Sharon is temporarily safe from her former life and the militarized CorpSeCorps. As a result, Jimmy must submit to annual interviews with the CorpSeCorps regarding his mother's émigré status. Adam One clarifies this precarious security in a conversation with Toby:

It would be bad for [the CorpSeCorp's] image to eviscerate anything with God in its name. The Corporations wouldn't approve of it, considering the influence of the Petrobaptists and the Known Fruits among them. They claim to respect the Spirit and to favour religious toleration, as long as the religions don't take to blowing things up: they have an aversion to the destruction of private property. (Atwood, *TYOTF* Chapter 10)

Of course, as the narrative goes, “blowing things up” is exactly what the Gardeners propose to do, thereby provoking the CorpSeCorps to raid their Edencliff Rooftop Garden and eradicate them. Sharon ultimately dies in the name of resistance—she honors something like “la liberté ou la mort,” and takes the morally “noble” path rather than acquiesce to the “evidently corrupt and dangerous” prevailing hegemony (Tolan 280).

With these case studies, I’ve referenced a couple of trends. We have corporations holding all the cards at the top (Compounds and the Circle) with a branch of post-human slaves and/or drones who buy into that institution fully (Mae and Oryx) and a second wing of resisters marginalized by the society (Annie, Kalden/Ty, and Sharon). What’s interesting about this? First, things often end badly for the resisters. Annie is in an indefinite coma, Ty is kept virtually imprisoned on the Circle campus, unable to leave, and Sharon is executed—clearly the path of resistance is not the ideal

one. Conversely, does life end satisfactorily for the post-humans? Does being post-human allow them to experience life and happiness anyway? Consider Mae, who's now one of the Circle's top employees and its public face, who wholeheartedly believes what she's done is right: "Completion was imminent, and it would bring peace, and it would bring unity, and all that messiness of humanity until now, all those uncertainties that accompanied the world before the Circle, would be only a memory" (Eggers 497). But she fails to recognize that she's surrendered everything humans desire: love, family, friends, and privacy, in the name of openness, democracy, peace, and transparency. Compare Mae to Oryx, who unquestioningly helps precipitate a worldwide pandemic that leads to apocalypse, an outcome she may not have fully understood but at least suspected: "If Crake isn't here, if he goes away somewhere, and if I'm not here either, I want you to take care of the Crakers" (Atwood, *O&C* 372). Unfortunately

for her, she ends up a martyr to Crake's cause.

In the usual understanding of feminism, the questions of a woman's place in the workforce, in society, as mother/caretaker, as connected to the earth and nature, and as dissatisfied with the status quo, are mostly addressed in both the figures of Sharon and Annie, who show many of these qualities. In contrast, Oryx and Mae embody post-feminist models of interpretation by refusing to be victims of their circumstances and by inhabiting societies that prohibit sexism by eliminating it entirely. The Circle is well established as being multicultural and equal-opportunity in its hirings, and the Crakers lack the capacity to distinguish race or sex. There appears to be a correlation from these examples: post-human, post-feminist characters propagate global demise, while traditionally feminist archetypes experience critical failure. Neither option sounds promising; curiously, while Atwood offers the Crakers as an

alternative to state control, they still systematically function by surveilling each other in an evolved form of panopticism. Similarly, Eggers offers no solution but to accept a ruthless, constant state of transparency, an ending that harkens back to *The Circle's* preceding dystopian tradition. This perpetuated silencing of the heroes or resisters at each of these novels' conclusions suggests that critique is necessary to society's continued functioning, in a way symptomatically related to Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. Regardless, state power in twenty-first century dystopias has instead been shifted to private institutions. Power within those institutions is now more freely distributed among its members, which importantly now include minorities. By exploring the relationship of power, women, and institutions in *The Circle*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *The Year of the Flood*, I've argued that these new protocological spaces allow women to participate in ways never demonstrated in prior dystopias. The advent

of the Internet, the cellphone revolution, Google, and the overwhelming abundance of information now at our fingertips has shifted society in very real, very dramatic ways, so these issues unavoidably arise in concurrent dystopian fiction, particularly where technology is concerned.

This doesn't necessarily bode well for feminism in dystopic fiction, because there does seem to be a newfound insistence on "Big Sister"-like characters. Primarily, Oryx's position is founded in "correcting" the dystopian, masculine, deadened, uncontrollable, pre-apocalyptic world by implanting new, superior post-human life into it. Meanwhile, Mae's ambition to complete the Circle advocates total democracy—and who in the United States would argue against *that*? She exposes corrupt politicians and eliminates child kidnappings and molestations. In these scenarios, there is a very fragile, unseen line between doing what is morally "right" or politically "just" and utter

annihilation.

In conclusion, I once again return to the arguments posed by Galloway, in the guise of Foucault. Galloway fervently insists that “networks are not metaphors,” meaning that libertarian and bureaucratic views of control in the information society are too limiting in scope (Galloway *xiv*). The networks are not metaphors; they are actual, tangible, and material, like the Compounds, the God’s Gardeners, and the Circle, which are real manifestations of Foucault’s and Galloway’s perceptions of power. As Foucault writes,

The panoptic schema, without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was destined to spread throughout the social body; its vocation was to become a generalized function ... The Panopticon ... has a role of amplification; although it arranges power, although it is intended to make it more economic and more effective,

it does so not for power itself, not for the immediate salvation of a threatened society: its aim is to strengthen the social forces—to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply. (209)

Several of his tenets speak directly to the flow of power seen in the Compounds, the Crakers, and the Circle. Panopticism clearly spread through the “social body” in *The Circle*; in fact it “strengthened the social forces” so greatly that Mae willingly morphed into a piece of the panoptic machine. Relatedly, the sort of selflessness of the Panopticon (“although it arranges power, although it is intended to make it more economic and more effective, it does so not for power itself”) is evidenced in the Crakers’ society, whose ignorance supposedly prevents bureaucratic or hierarchic power structures from forming (Foucault 209). Finally, in a backwards way, the “increase of production” and “developed

economy” apply most to the morally degraded
Compounds that function exclusively on consumerism.

Ideally, utilizing feminism, cyberfeminism, post-feminism, and post-humanism, twenty-first century dystopias create spaces where women embody not only massively exploited and exploitative people and institutions, but create spaces effectively managed by women. The utopian Crakers would not exist without Oryx’s practical life teachings, yet she also bears responsibility for ending the world; and Mae, in her drive to become an asset to the Circle, sacrifices all aspects of humanity to establish worldwide democracy. Then, agitators like Sharon and Annie face the consequences of resistance, become stripped of their power, and fail to produce change in their institutions. Thus, a trend seems to have emerged in twenty-first century dystopian novels that emphasizes the woman’s power to rebel and lead, but—because they are dystopian—the worlds invariably still go to hell anyway.

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Douglas Higbee
Department of English
University of South Carolina Aiken
471 University Parkway
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