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The Ashen Egg

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Submission guidelines: *The Ashen Egg* is an annual journal publishing critical essays on literature, rhetoric, linguistics, film, and popular culture. Any current Western Kentucky University undergraduate student may submit scholarly work for consideration. Submissions must be endorsed by an English Department faculty member who confirms the submission as a piece produced for one of the faculty member's courses and approves it as worthy for publication. Manuscripts may range from 750 to 3000 words, though exceptions may be made for submissions of stellar quality. Literature, film, and pop culture essays must follow the Modern Language Association style guidelines as defined in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (latest edition); essays on linguistics or professional writing topics may use APA (latest edition).

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Contents Vol. 5 (2017)

Note on Contributors

- | | |
|--|----|
| Loyalty, Intersectionality, and <i>The Wire</i> : The Need for Radical Queer Politics <i>Hatim Alamri</i> | 1 |
| Hope for Virgil's Salvation: It's Not Over Until Dante Says It's Over <i>Logan Anderson</i> | 7 |
| Schooled: The Conflict of Education and Religion in Appalachian Literature <i>Jessica Barksdale</i> | 21 |
| Torch of Love, Fountain of Hope: Dante's Views on the Power of Literature <i>Joshua Daniel</i> | 31 |
| An Insider's Perspective: Jim Wayne Miller and the Representation of the Mountain Man <i>Elon Justice</i> | 40 |
| Young Adult Literature in the Secondary English Classroom <i>Allison Millay</i> | 52 |
| Finding Roots: The Legacy of African Americans in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and "Fifty Years" <i>Megan Skaggs</i> | 64 |
| And Now For Something Completely Different: Noir Homage in Serial Television <i>Phoebe Zimmerer</i> | 72 |

Note on Contributors

Hatim Alamri recently graduated from Western Kentucky University, where he majored in political science and minored in creative writing. Born and raised in the Middle East, he navigated through an American education that positively challenged many of his preconceived notions and ideas, all while he simultaneously and consistently tried to not gain extra weight from ridiculously cheap and heavily processed food. During his time at Western, Hatim was a member of many clubs, including the film and international club—an experience that taught him the value of representative communities and free pizza.

Logan Anderson comes from Monticello, Kentucky and graduated from Western Kentucky University in May of 2016. While at WKU, she majored in English Literature and minored in Anthropology. She currently lives in her hometown, Monticello, and works for the Kentucky Career Center. Logan aspires to pursue a career in trade publishing.

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Josh Daniel graduated from Western Kentucky University in December 2016, where he majored in English Literature and minored in Creative Writing. He has previously been published in *Zephyrus* literary magazine and was awarded the Browning Literary Club Poetry Award in the spring of 2016. Currently Josh is enrolled in WKU's graduate program with a focus on English Literature. He wishes to thank WKU's English Department for the welcoming and enriching learning environment, and Dr. Langdon in particular for providing a stellar example of the kind of professor he aspires to be.

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Megan Skaggs is a recent WKU graduate with degrees in both English and International Affairs, with emphasis on Latin American Studies. While at WKU, she was involved in the Student Government Association and served as a Honors Topper. She was also able to travel to both Guatemala and Nicaragua to complete research for her undergraduate Honors thesis, "The Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Primary Education in Central America." In January

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Phoebe Zimmerer graduated from the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky in 2015 and is now enrolled in Western Kentucky University as a second-year film major. She is a strong believer in the power of fiction as well as pretty much anything Gloria Steinem or Leslie Knope ever said. In the future, she hopes to put her passions for writing, feminism, and television to good use by working with filmmakers to create culturally-significant media.

Loyalty, Intersectionality, and *The Wire*: The Need for Radical Queer Politics

Hatim Alamri

“It is not enough to tell us that one was a brilliant poet, scientist, educator, or Rebel. Whom did he love? *It makes a difference.*”

Those were the words with which writer Essex Hemphill concluded his essay “Loyalty.” The late African-American poet and social justice activist tackled in his enraged piece the subject of queer visibility within groups. Hemphill stressed the need for homosexual African-American to own up to their sexual orientation and denounce a love life lived in secrecy, away from their community’s eyes and consciousness. Hemphill published this piece along others in his 1992’s *Ceremonies: Prose and Poetry* collection, and the rebellious poet would later fight a new battle when he was left to deal with AIDS later in his life. Hemphill’s message urged a radicalization of queer politics and an increase in its visibility within minority communities.

Two key terms important to understand within the framework of this analysis are *intersectionality* and *heteronormativity*. American civil rights advocate and leading scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” to articulate how power structures interact in the lives of minorities (black women, specifically). Put simply, intersectionality acknowledges the interconnectivity of oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia,

transphobia, xenophobia, classism, etc.) and how they cannot be examined separately from one another. Crenshaw highlights the importance of acknowledging the connection between these discriminative entities and the different ways people experience life within society. She indicates, "Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics" (378). Crenshaw aimed for her term to draw attention to invisibilities within communities based on their interaction with power structures.

Similarly, the concept of heteronormativity questions the normative principles of social theories and institutions. Michael Warner uses the term to show the distinction between marginalized homosexual groups and their hetero counterparts. He also implies that whiteness in U.S. society is positioned as the country's racial norm against which other racial groups are often defined and stigmatized. Warner suggests that that gay and lesbian people of color have long contested the idea of a collective gay identity. He denotes that gay and lesbian POC "argue that a discourse that abstracts a notion of gay identity from considerations of race and class is oppressive because it invariably implies a white, middle-class standpoint" (Warner 121). Scholars like Crenshaw and Warner believe that defining homosexuality within the framework of intersectionality is the key to challenge the current state of queer politics, which is often subjected to a great level of heteronormativity. Many examples exist to help embody this paradigm since Hemphill's writings, and one particular pop culture artifact does a good job of exemplifying it.

HBO's *The Wire* is perhaps television's most ambitious attempt to challenge the heteronormative intuitions that encompass queer politics. While Omar Little isn't the urban drama's only stereotype-defying queer character, the Baltimore projects' rebel manages to personify the nature of

intersectionality of African-American masculinity. The complex characterization of Omar viciously attacks the norms of African-American depiction and queer representation on television; radicalization can sometimes come as blunt as a headscarf-wearing black homosexual man wielding two double-barreled shotguns.

What makes the character of Omar stand out the most is that the character directly confronts assumptions and stereotypes of heteronormativity. Explaining his line of work, Omar indicates, "It ain't what you takin', it's *who you takin' from*, ya feel me?" (S4 E6). The armed gangster is a savage street killer, but he has a moral code that he follows: he only attacks and robs drug lords. Perhaps what really distinguishes Omar from other media presentations of gay men is the fact that his queerness wasn't presented at the forefront of his identity. Omar was a masculine, stick-up man who was equally respected and feared by everyone in the hood. Not to say Omar's homosexuality wasn't visible and only existed in silence—in fact, many characters on the show are aware of his sexual orientation, and Omar himself wasn't shy about being visible with his lovers—often times presented as his aid and right hand. Omar's sexuality is so rooted within his everyday life that it's not a distinguishing aspect of his character. The biggest challenge Omar embodies is the spirit of a modern-day Robin Hood who rebels against the rich and corrupt—but also, the heteronormativity of hood politics, and on a larger scale, the favoritism of heteronormativity in black communities.

Omar Little is perhaps the answer to Essex Hemphill's plea for the black community to embrace a queer existence that isn't really coming from outside the community, but rather have always existed within it—constantly overshadowed by the weight of the community's alliance with limiting heteronormative institutions. The heteronormative institutions continue to only service the benefit and comfort of the privileged, with no intentions of ever intersecting with black

communities. Hemphill draws an illustration of this phenomenon in "Loyalty" in the third paragraph of the essay. He argues, "We constitute the invisible brothers in our communities those of us who live 'in the life'....men of power and humble pedantry, reduced to silence and invisibility for the safety they proceed from these constructions. Men emasculated in the complicity of not speaking out..." (70). Hemphill reinforces the idea that many strong figures who are homosexual and have access to power in his community choose to conceal their sexual identity in order to gain the ease and safety that heteronormative institutions provides. Hemphill challenges the masculine perception here and argues that men who hide their homosexuality and leave it to only to reside in silence are actually emasculating themselves and taking away from the authenticity of their manhood -- they are being the anti-Omar Little.

Furthermore, Hemphill attempts to confront the social motivations behind queer invisibility in the black community, which he relates to the illusion of being part of an inclusive, general middle class. He suggests that such aspirations are the result of a history of cruel discrimination endured during the era of slavery: "...rendered mute by the middle class aspirations of a people trying hard to forget the shame and cruelties of slavery and ghettos...the middle class sets about whitewashing and fixing up the race to impress each other and the racists who don't give a damn" (70). Hemphill's address is important to understand the complex reasoning behind the invisibility of queerness and the embrace of heteronormativity in the African American community. A major aspect Hemphill touches on is one that highlights the influence of heteronormative politics in black communities. He urges, "The black homosexual is hard pressed to gain audience among his heterosexual brothers, even if he is more talented he is inhibited by his silence of his admissions" (71). His work aims to illuminate the systemic effect that has been contributing to the process of wiping out

queer visibility, denying it any platform of promotion along the way.

Acknowledging the radical potential in queer politics, journalist Cathy Cohen introduces the idea of queer intersectionality across minority communities as key behind triggering the deconstruction of the oppression from heteronormative institutions. In her 1997 article, Cohen insists that current queer communities and queer politics define its practices largely by its existence opposite heteronormativity, which ultimately only reinforces the systemic heteronormative dominance. She argues, "For many of us, the label 'queer' symbolizes an acknowledgment that through our existence and everyday survival we embody sustained and multisided resistance to systems that seek to normalize our sexuality, exploit our labor, and constrain our visibility" (440). Cohen stresses the potential of radicalizing queer politics, noting that its rise could help fight off the constructed constraints that heteronormative institution perpetuate. She explains, "At the intersection of oppression and resistance lies the radical potential of queerness to challenge and bring together all those deemed marginal and all those committed to liberatory politics" (440).

As suggested before by the call of radical queer politics in Essex Hemphill's essay, and the unconventional representation of the character Omar Little in *The Wire*, Cohen urges that queer politics should channel its focus not solely on identity, but rather creating a radical solidarity movement that ties into many past accounts of oppression. Cohen stresses that in its current identity-driven form, queer politics can only help widen the social gap that insures a certain set of privileges being awarded to a few people from white and wealthy backgrounds. She emphasizes the importance of queer visibility that emerges through intersectionality, which she argues can be achieved through establishing a queer solidarity that acknowledges and

identifies with other historically oppressed communities and groups.

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Hope for Virgil's Salvation: It's Not Over Until Dante Says It's Over

Logan Anderson

Throughout his *Divina Commedia*, Dante constructs a peculiarly contradictory depiction of Virgil, rendering him as virtuous and admirable, yet consigning him to Limbo, "the sad pit.../ [where] punishment is to have hope cut off" (*Inf.* 9.16-18). However, the question of whether Virgil's circumscription within Hell is indeed permanent remains a source of dissension among critics of the *Commedia*. The fact that Dante never explicitly confirms nor refutes the perpetuity of Virgil's consignment to Limbo has prompted many opposing interpretations regarding Virgil's fate: While some commentators contend that all opportunity for Virgil's redemption has passed, others argue that Virgil may yet attain salvation and gain entry into Purgatory and, ultimately, Paradise. Drawing on specific textual evidence from the *Divina Commedia* and from various scholarly arguments both advocating for and refuting the permanence of Virgil's damnation, this essay will further investigate the possibility that Virgil's consignment to Hell is actually *impermanent*—that he may yet attain redemption and transcend the confines of Limbo, ascending to Paradise and to the Divine. Indeed, hope for Virgil's future salvation becomes fortified through other characters' posthumous salvations, including those of Trajan and Ripheus. Furthermore, the possibility of Virgil's

redemption attains legitimacy through his experiences with Dante within the realms of Hell and Purgatory, during which he acquires new insights into the Divine—discoveries of truths that may eventually enact his redemption.

The possibility for Virgil's salvation becomes initially suggested in his being permitted to do that which no damned soul—as far as we know—has ever before been allowed: to transcend the strictures of Hell in order to guide another soul through the afterworld. Inevitably, this breach of Hell's jurisdiction and of God's punishment system casts a pall of uncertainty over Virgil's fate, as it suggests at least the possibility that such other exceptions may yet be made for him. As Ed King notes in his essay entitled "Saving Virgil," "Despite his supposedly eternal relegation to the First Circle, he is miraculously released from it through Divine Grace as soon as he accepts Beatrice's mission to guide Dante through Hell and Purgatory" (84). Indeed, with this observation King acknowledges both the spontaneity and apparent ease with which God's laws can be altered; quite suddenly and unexpectedly, Virgil finds himself liberated, albeit temporarily, from what he had just moments before considered an inescapable and perpetual consignment to Limbo.

With his description of Beatrice's injunction that he act as the pilgrim's guide, we perceive just how swiftly and unpredictably Virgil's release from Hell is enacted. According to his account, Beatrice suddenly appears before him in Limbo and, after briefly apprising him of the task to which he has been appointed, commands: "Now go, and with your ornamented speech/and whatever else is needed for [Dante's] escape help him so / that I may be consoled" (*Inf.* 2.67-69). Though compelled obviously by Beatrice's exquisiteness but perhaps also by the proffered respite from punishment, Virgil consents with equal haste, saying, "O lady of power... /so pleasing to me is your command that obeying, / had it already taken place, is slow; no more is / needed than to unfold your desire" (*Inf.* 2.76,

79-81). Certainly, if Virgil can thus be liberated so inexplicably and suddenly from Hell as is here depicted, what should prevent him from being permitted to do so a second time, through the attainment of his salvation? Mowbray Allan similarly construes Virgil's initial departure from Hell as an opening for, and perhaps even a foretaste of, his future *permanent* liberation from Limbo and admittance into paradise. She reasons, "But in its first action this poem shatters the rule of the past and proclaims the Eternal subject to violent change. What I propose as possible, for Virgil, is established as a possibility by what happens, for Dante, at the beginning" (197). Thus, Allan founds her argument for Virgil's salvation upon Heaven's unprecedented degree of grace shown toward Dante, in allowing him a second chance at beatitude by revealing to him, a mortal, the phenomena of the afterworld. Dante's receiving of a second chance, then, sets a precedent for undeserved and unexpected mercy from which Virgil may also benefit, in obtaining a second opportunity for salvation.

Evidence of the mutability of God's judgments—and thus, hope for Virgil's salvation—manifests itself also in Dante's portrayal of individual prayer as a powerful force capable of advancing and even sanctioning one's own ascent into Heaven. The efficacy of prayer becomes most lengthily explicated by Virgil and Dante when, after encountering the late repentants in Purgatory, several souls confront Dante with supplications for prayer, that their purgation may be shortened. The souls' entreaties confuse the pilgrim, as they seemingly oppose Virgil's assertion in his *Aeneid* that prayers cannot influence or alter God's will. Perplexed, Dante entreats Virgil to resolve this quandary:

"It seems, O my light, that in a certain text
you expressly deny that prayer can bend the
decree of Heaven;

and these people pray for just that: would their

hope, then, be in vain, or is your saying not fully manifest to me?" (*Purg.* 6.28-33).

Virgil then explains that both he *and* the pleading souls are correct; since the coming of Christ, prayers have acquired the power to affect God's judgment. However, during the time when he composed the *Aeneid*—the age of paganism—prayers had no such potency; he elucidates, "where I fixed this point, defect was not / amended by prayer, because prayer was disjoined / from God" (*Purg.* 6.40-42). This particular scene of *Purgatorio* has served as the foundation for many critics' arguments, both for and against the possibility of Virgil's salvation. The passage in the *Aeneid* that Dante and Virgil here reference is that which shows Palinurus praying, futilely, to receive passage across the Acheron before his death. Mira Gerhard contends that Dante's reference to Palinurus forcefully precludes any possibility for Virgil's salvation, as it suggests that Virgil, like his character Palinurus, is "disjoined from God" due to a personal lack of virtue and insolence toward God: she asserts that Palinurus's prayers go unheard because "[h]is pilot's plea to be carried across the Styx [is] contrary to divine decree" (112). Caron Cioffi also attributes the inefficacy of his prayers to unworthiness, describing his pleas as "blasphemous and arrogant" (193), and asserting that he "resents God's verdict...in refus[ing] to accept providential decree" (192). King, however, interprets Dante and Virgil's discussion of Palinurus quite differently; rather than attributing the inefficacy of his supplications to some specific shortcoming unique to himself, King contends that his prayers went unheard simply because they were those of a pagan. He remarks that before the coming of Christ, "God was not inclined to answer anyone's prayers" (King 93).

From these critics' dissenting views, however, we may glean double the hope for Virgil's salvation, by refuting one interpretation and upholding the other. Gerhard and Cioffi may be correct in attributing Palinurus's unheard prayers to his

faults as an individual; yet, they offer no substantial evidence to confirm that Virgil is similarly corrupt and will therefore incur the same fate. Rather, a cursory review of the *Comedy* renders Virgil as virtuous, rather than dishonorable. While Palinurus's guilt apparently lay in "refusing to accept providential decree" (Cioffi 192), Virgil exhibits no such defiance against God's will. On the contrary, he readily submits to the edicts of God, laboring willingly alongside Dante through Hell and then Purgatory. As Dante describes, together they "ente[r] upon the deep, savage journey" for, as he tells Virgil, "one same will is in both" (*Inf.* 2.142, 139). Moreover, Virgil's obedience becomes only more virtuous in its total self-negation; he considers his damnation inexorably permanent. As Raymond Schoder notes, "Virgil's motive for coming to Dante's aid is not...the hope of being rewarded for his trouble by ultimate admission to Heaven. What moves him to accede to Beatrice's request [is] sheer benevolence toward her and Dante" (418). Thus, Virgil's own obvious compliance with God dismantles Gerhard and Cioffi's assertion that any future supplications for grace he may make will remain unheeded.

With King's interpretation, however, we receive valid and reasonable evidence that further fortifies our hope for Virgil. Certainly the coming of Christ has now alleviated that separation from God that beset Virgil in his life, during the age of paganism. Should Virgil eventually undergo redemption, God will now attend to his supplications for grace. Indeed, Dante the poet even affirms the potential power of Virgil's prayers to save him, using Virgil himself as his mouthpiece, saying, "for the summit of justice is not lowered though / the fire of love fulfill in an instant what those who / are stationed here [in Purgatory] must satisfy" (*Purg.* 6.37-39). These words elucidate for us the logic that sanctions the changing of God's will: When a soul exudes love for God, God returns that love with grace; thus, love can compensate for any demands of justice left unfulfilled. By this reasoning, then, should Virgil

eventually attain such love for the Divine, that love may prove sufficient to counteract the necessity of his punishment in Limbo; Virgil, through loving supplications to God, may yet attain salvation.

Of course, some of the most compelling proofs that Virgil's soul may yet be redeemed appear once Dante, nearing the end of his journey, encounters the Celestial Eagle within the Heaven of Jupiter, the sphere of just rulers. Here Dante discovers, in the figures of Trajan and Ripheus, two beneficiaries of Divine Grace—proof that redemption is not necessarily a gift offered exclusively to the living. Through the emission of love and hope—by themselves and by intercessors—these two men have gained salvation even after death. King explains the significance of their unexpected appearance in Paradise, saying, “The hallowed presence of...Trajan and Ripheus in the poem shows that there is also room beyond Limbo for noble pagans who died outside the period of God's grace upon earth, and more especially that the soul of Virgil cannot be damned out of hand through a mechanical application of the faith-is-all-rule” (89). Certainly, it is Dante's unorthodoxy in apportioning his characters' salvation, on the basis of their personal worthiness despite whether they underwent baptism, which invests Virgil's circumstances with such hope. As we learn from the Eagle's words, Ripheus did not receive baptism by the Church, but received it instead through the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love; the Eagle explains, “Those three ladies were his baptism whom you / saw by the right wheel, more than a thousand / years before baptizing began” (*Par.* 20.127-29). This wisdom spoken by the Eagle optimistically refutes those words spoken by Virgil at the beginning of his and Dante's journey, when he asserts that failure to be baptized by the Church, and this cause alone, has provoked the punishment that he and his fellow souls suffer in Limbo; here, he tells Dante, “and if they have merits, it is / not enough, because they did not receive baptism, / which is the gateway to the faith that you believe”

(*Inf.* 4.34-36). So, who is correct—the ethereal Eagle or our reliable Virgil?

Caught between the Eagle's and Virgil's opposing statements, we inevitably find ourselves inclined to accept as truth the Eagle's, who seems a more credible authority on the logic of salvation; the Eagle exists, after all, as the very emblem of justice, containing within it the collective wisdom of the universe's most just rulers. We come, of course, to consider Virgil an authority in his own right, especially regarding the particulars of Hell—in fact, our belief in his authority is most likely why we accept without question his assertion that without baptism, one remains permanently damned. Once we arrive at Jupiter with Dante, however, and hear the Eagle's explanation while recognizing Ripheus there in the Eagle's twinkling eye, we realize—with gladness and relief—that Virgil's despair at his damnation derives from his own misconceptions. Virgil's paganism does not, after all, preclude him from Paradise. Richard Lansing observes, “Dante controls our access to knowledge by presenting information almost bit by bit, but keeping mysteriously secret vital pieces of information for later, and never stating what we can deduce for ourselves” (93). Lansing's observation certainly applies to this instance of the *Comedy*, during which the previously established inexorability of Virgil's damnation becomes totally upturned through the stories of Trajan and Ripheus. Dante permits us to empathize with Virgil's desolation for nearly the entire duration of the *Comedy*, revealing only near the work's end that we should not, perhaps, lament Virgil's damnation, but hope for his salvation.

Moreover, this specific moment in the work disaffirms Teodolinda Barolini's argument *against* Virgil's salvation—that if his salvation were still possible, Dante would have explicitly stated that possibility in the poem. She deliberates, “*My point is that what Dante tells us is what is*—because the *Commedia* is not a world, but a text, and all we know about the possible world

represented by the text is what the text chooses to tell us" (141). I argue, however, that Dante tells us quite straightforwardly, during the pilgrim's encounter with the Eagle, that Virgil's fate may yet prove undecided. After recounting Ripheus's story, the Eagle exclaims:

O predestination, how remote is your root
from the sight of those who do not see the first
Cause *tota* [entire]!

And you mortals, hold back from judging, for
we, who see God, do not yet know all the elect,
and such lack delights us. (*Par.* 20. 130-36)

Through the Eagle's declaration, Dante very explicitly asserts the inability of any soul—not Dante, Virgil, or even us readers—to predict the will of God. God's plan for salvation remains indecipherable even to the Eagle, so inscrutable is the Divine Judgment. Therefore, the Eagle cautions, no one but God can rightly discount anyone's chance for redemption. Indeed, the Eagle's declaration that they cannot foretell the elect, and that this "lack delights [them]" (*Par.* 20.136) seems to emerge from the text as a deliberate and pointed invitation for Dante's readers to sustain hope for Virgil.

Many critics arguing against the possibility of Virgil's redemption point to Dante's depiction of God and His will as unchanging and absolute; if God's will, they contend, has already decreed that Virgil be consigned to Limbo, his punishment there must inherently be permanent because God's will is itself permanent. This argument almost inevitably invokes the following avowal, delivered by the Eagle, as evidence for God's changelessness:

The first Will, good in and of itself, the highest Good,
has never changed.

That is just which is consonant with it; no
created goods draw it, but it by radiating causes
them. (*Par.* 19.85-90)

Admittedly, this statement quite conclusively confirms the immutability of God's will. However, deep within them there perhaps rests an even more meaningful truth: that the Divine Will's very essence functions upon a fundamental *desire* to be transformed. Allan proposes this possibility very articulately as she observes, "The changelessness of the Divine Will lies precisely in Its willingness to be changed by prayer" (199). Indeed, this interpretation of the divine judgment system effectively reconciles two seemingly opposing truths—the professed inalterability of God and yet the power of intercessory prayer to alter the fates of man. In fact, the Eagle itself acknowledges this ability of prayer to change divine will:

The [Kingdom of Heaven] suffers the violence of
burning love and lively hope that overcome God's will:
not as one man defeats another, but they
conquer it because it wishes to be conquered
and, conquered, conquers with its good will. (*Par.* 20.94-99)

Significantly, this Eagle here emphasizes the delight and gratification with which God bends His decrees for those faithful to him, by describing Him as "wishing to be conquered." Thus, by considering that God's most basic unchanging desire *is* that His will be *changed* through prayer, we arrive at this additional prospect for Virgil's salvation: That his salvation *can* and therefore may yet be made possible through intercessory prayer.

Obviously, the most blatant proofs of the efficacy of intercessory prayer emerge in the souls of Purgatory, who "pra[y] to have others pray for them to hasten / their becoming holy" (*Purg.* 6. 26-27), and also in Emperor Trajan, whose salvation has been enacted through Gregory the Great's "lively hope that gave power to the prayers / made to God to bring [Trajan] back to life" (*Par.* 20.109-10). As we hear Trajan's story specifically, we come to ascertain that the potency of intercessory prayer seemingly issues—at least initially—from the intercessor's own emanation of faith; it was, after all,

Gregory's "lively hope" that earned the notice of God and prompted Him to sanction Trajan's posthumous salvation. Recall, too, the Celestial Eagle's reference to "burning love" as another prerequisite to praying effective prayers. If, then, the efficacy of intercessory prayer expands in proportion to the virtues of its speaker, we can expect Virgil's intercessors to pray very powerfully for him indeed, in light of who they most likely will be: Dante, Beatrice, and the Virgin Mary.

Given Dante's love and admiration for Virgil, it seems certain that following his return to the earthly realm, Dante will pray fervently for Virgil's redemption. Moreover, we can assume that his prayers will then prove very potent, as he proves in his final tests with Saints Peter and James that he has acquired an expansive and transcendent understanding of the theological virtues, which include hope and love. We infer that Beatrice will also pray on behalf of Virgil as she promises, "When I shall be before my lord, I will praise you / frequently to him" (*Inf.* 2.72-74). Surely, intercession from such a blessed and beatific individual as Beatrice will garner Virgil considerable favor with God. And perhaps most promising of all is the evidence that Virgin Mary herself has already once interceded on behalf of Virgil, as Beatrice explains, "There is a noble lady in Heaven, who grieves for / this impediment to which I send you, so that she / vanquishes harsh judgment on high" (*Inf.* 2.94-96). Mary bends God's will in order that Virgil may transcend the constraints of Hell and aid Dante through his journey; it is Mary's intercession that ultimately permits this first release from Hell. Certainly, if Mary has made this first intercession for Virgil, she is even more likely to make a second, after having observed the patience and acuity with which he guides Dante through Hell and Purgatory. Therefore, with such ample affirmation that Virgil will receive intercession through the prayers of Dante, Beatrice, and perhaps even Mary, we perceive the now very possible possibility that God's decree of punishment over Virgil may be overturned. Indeed, if Emperor

Trajan can attain salvation through the intercessory prayers of one Gregory the Great, can we not expect the same for Virgil when we consider the goodness and distinction of his own intercessors?

However many intercessory prayers may be spoken for Virgil, his salvation could never be attained without his own spiritual growth and conversion. Virgil begins to undergo such a process of improvement quite immediately, even, toward the beginning of his and Dante's journey: It appears that his sudden liberation from Limbo—and with that, the discovery that God's punishment can be overturned—has initiated the stirrings of hope within Virgil. Significantly, Virgil's very punishment in Hell has been to exist *without hope*; he refers to Limbo as "the sad pit... / [where the] only punishment is to have hope cut off" (*Inf.* 9.16-18). It proves to be of consequence, then, that soon after his liberation from Limbo, Virgil comes to display hope throughout his guidance of Dante. For example, Virgil first demonstrates hope in his interpretation of the inscription on the Gate of Hell. The inscription is intended to inculcate fear and desolation in its readers, warning, "Abandon every hope, you who enter" (*Inf.* 3.9). Yet, Virgil gleans hope and courage from reading it; he tells Dante, "Here one must / abandon every suspicion, every cowardice must die / here" (*Inf.* 3.13-15). Significantly, Virgil thus demonstrates his ability to transcend the languishing defeatism that beset him while in Limbo. Charles S. Singleton recognizes Virgil's damnation as resulting from his "perspective of ancient thought in that pagan line which did not know Christ and therefore cannot see...meanings that are peculiarly Christian" (33). However, in his interpretation of the gate's inscription, we perceive that Virgil begins to understand—however slightly—truths of the Divine. Instead of becoming disheartened by the gate's message, he gleans fortitude from it, responding to its admonitions with a certainty to overcome them.

Virgil also appears not only to aid Dante through the moral betterment of Purgatory, but actually to undergo it alongside him. Evidence of Virgil's participation in purgation appears as, after departing from the first terrace, Dante-the-pilgrim notices increased buoyancy in not only himself, but also Virgil. He notes, "I had moved on, and gladly followed my / master's steps, and we were both already showing / how light we were" (*Purg.* 12.10-12). As the pilgrim's steps are lightened because of his practice of humility in the first terrace, so it seems that Virgil has likewise learned something of humility while on that tier. As King discerns, "Though Virgil's forehead apparently shows no comparable sign of sinfulness, his actions on the Second Cornice reveal that far from being "above" the ritual of Christian penitence as a noble pagan, or "below" it as a damned soul, he is humbly undergoing purgation along with his charge" (97). Does Virgil's seeming purgation, then, imply his future salvation?

Virgil's spiritual growth becomes particularly reflected in his perception of light. Throughout his and the pilgrim's journey, his understanding of light shifts from the worldly to the ethereal. For example, Glenn Steinburg observes that "[i]n explaining why the virtuous pagans are granted the privilege of illumination within the darkness of hell, Virgil associates light with earthly honor and fame" (480). Indeed, this is evident as Virgil tells Dante, "The honor with which their names / resound up in your life, wins grace in Heaven that / thus advance them" (*Inf.* 4.76-78). Once in Purgatory, however, we watch as Virgil's cognition of light, now focused toward Christ, corresponds with what appears most strikingly to be a demonstration of faith. Unable to discern for himself the correct path up the mountain of Purgatory, Virgil therefore employs the sun as his guide:

Then he looked fixedly at the sun; he made his
right side a center for his moving, and he turned
his left side.

"O sweet light in whose trust I enter on the new
path, do you guide us...
in the way one should go here." (*Purg.* 13.13-18)

Perhaps most meaningful within this description is its depiction of Virgil finally voicing an explicit submission of his own authority onto a greater and higher entity, the sun. Additionally, as the sun (later, in Paradise) comes to physically typify Christ himself, Virgil's supplications to it imbue his supplications for help and guidance with even more meaning. This scene vividly demonstrates how far he has come from his beginning in Limbo, shirking his despair and determined separation from God and embracing, instead, faith and hope in an entity greater than his own reason.

We cannot, as Barolini frankly reminds us, derive certainty from a text that offers us only suggestions and implications—that is to say, we cannot accept Virgil's salvation as certain because Dante himself never admits it so explicitly. In the end, we can only hope for the redemption of Virgil; despite readers' most fervent attempts, our diligent combing for evidence and ceaseless theorizations will not save him. That he must do for himself. Certainly, however, Dante provides Virgil with at least the ability to ascend, as we discern in the examples of Trajan and Ripheus, the efficacy of intercessory prayers, and in Virgil's own spiritual enlightenment, which we perceive through his demonstrations of hope and faith during his and Dante's journey through the afterworld.

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Schooled: The Conflict of Education and Religion in Appalachian Literature

Jessica Barksdale

In her "Appalachian Literature" article, Anne Shelby describes Appalachia as its own region with "a history and culture significantly different from those of the rest of the country, including the Deep South; the culture has produced a body of literature that reflects its own values, history, and ways of perceiving the world" (30). This difference in culture stems from the natural borders supplied by the majestic mountains, resulting in Appalachian communities being isolated from the rest of the country and leaving them to develop their own culture. This produces literature that reflects values important to Appalachian natives such as family, hard work, and religion. However, in Appalachian literature there are works that offer a critique on how this devotion to God can negatively impact Appalachian society, such as Harriette Arnow's *Hunter's Horn* and Barbra Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*. Arnow and Kingsolver demonstrate how their Appalachian-based characters—with a couple of exceptions—favor religion over scientific fact as a result of the subpar education system in their societies and how this infrastructure negatively impacts the lives of the characters.

At face value, Arnow's *Hunter's Horn* and Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* appear to share one similarity: the Appalachian setting. *Hunter's Horn*—a nonstandard hunting tale—takes place in pre-World War II Kentucky and *Flight Behavior* is a political novel set in Tennessee during the twenty-first century. However, a close examination reveals three major parallels

between the novels. Firstly, each novel presents a weak education system brought about by the isolation of the region. Secondly, both depict religion as a cornerstone of their societies in varying degrees of intensity, indicating an imbalance between education and religion in the characters' worlds. This ultimately brings about the third similarity: the Word of God is taken over scientific fact, which results in deadly consequences for the characters. Through it all, the authors paint a world of characters as complex as the Appalachian world in which they reside. They are not depicted as simple or backwards people that refuse to conform to contemporary society, as urban dwellers might assume them to be characterized. They are presented as people who live in a region that is largely ignored by the outside world, leaving them to cultivate their own culture, which naturally brings about unique conflicts such as the imbalance between education and religion.

This imbalance in the novels stems from a weak education system due to Appalachia's isolation. This is seen in Arnow's *Hunter's Horn*, where the children characters are unable to receive a meaningful education. The children are aware the opportunity to receive a worthwhile education is just out of their reach, even describing the chance of attending high school as "far away and unreal as a ship at sea" (Arnow 124). This is due to the parents' need to keep the children home to work making hay or in the fields (Arnow 187). In "Student Resistance to Schooling: Disconnections with Education in Rural Appalachia," Katie Hendrickson states, "Students in rural areas can highly value a sense of community and family relationships. As a result, these students are more focused on the well-being of the family group than individual achievement or personal goals" (39). The isolation of the area fosters a need to stick together and assist where needed, engraining the idea that helping the family maintain its livelihood as a whole is more important than education for oneself. This is a noble and often necessary decision on the part of the characters, yet they

will discover that completely forfeiting education has consequences, as will be explored later.

Additionally, the children's reasoning for staying home is not only due to their sense of responsibility but also largely based on the parents' view towards education. The parents have grown up in similar circumstances as their children, where family and community take precedence; this means they do not emphasize the importance of education in their household because it was never emphasized in their youth. This situation is illustrated between Arnow's characters Suse and Milly Ballew. When Suse graduates from the eighth grade, her mother, Milly, believes Suse should "stay home and work like other girls her age" (Arnow 229) instead of attending high school. Milly expects Suse to stay home because staying with the family and working are the values she grew up with and has never considered anything different for her children, especially since the majority of the people in her area receive more reward for work than education. This is a perspective not solely taken on by Milly, but by the majority of other parents in the community, as indicated by an exchange between Suse and her schoolmate, Andy. When Andy points out the high school bus will reach their area in the fall, Suse is doubtful they will be on it (173). When Andy points out that both of their fathers believe in education, Suse replies, "Believen an aimen an then doen is different things with Pop" (173). Andy's comment about how both fathers support education implies that the rest of the fathers do not support it and Suse's reply shows that even those few that do support education will not necessarily see their children gain it. Overall, Arnow is depicting a community where education is not the main focus for children and those few parents who do dream of their child receiving an education will not necessarily see it come to fruition.

Aside from the lack of desire and encouragement to advance educationally, the state of the school itself presents a challenge in regards to educating its pupils. Arnow shows the state of education by creating the standard one-room schoolhouse and

implying the school is largely not interfered with by the outside world, leaving the school to run independently without guidance or assistance. This leaves the school in the hands of the tender, yet underqualified, Andrew Haynes. The extent of the substandard education is seen most vividly in chapter thirteen, when word spreads that the superintendent is making a rare visit and panic sets in because the townsfolk and students know Andrew's methods will not live up to district expectations. This results in the creation of a charade to fool the members of the school board into believing Andrew is a competent teacher, including Suse giving Andrew this instruction-based note:

Send me and Andy up to the board and let us work them silo problems. . . . Then have Rachel's arithmetic. . . . She's got it real good. . . . Then have me and Andy up in history, tell us to go to the board and draw a map of the US and show each part got here. We do that real good. (123)

To create the illusion that the class is being sufficiently taught, the note suggests Andrew should only ask the most advanced students come to the board, implying the other students are not as capable of completing the work. This façade ultimately crumbles, however, when Andrew reveals that he does not have a lesson plan or grade book (124). Though this chapter of the book does create sympathy for Andrew, it also illustrates his limitations as a teacher and the weaknesses in the education the young characters are receiving.

Though time in Appalachia has elapsed between the settings of *Hunter's Horn* and *Flight Behavior*, education has only marginally changed...and *changed* is not synonymous with *improved*. When scientist Dr. Ovid Byron asks protagonist Dellarobia Turnbow about the state of science classes in the high schools in her area, she replies that the teacher was a basketball coach that usually took the boys in the class to shoot hoops (Kingsolver 222). She goes on to describe how the administration's main concern was sports and insists the

students "wouldn't know college-bound from a hole in the ground" (223-224). As high school is largely unattainable for those in *Hunter's Horn*, the opportunity to go to college seems equally unlikely for students in *Flight Behavior*. This is not a matter purely of lack of desire, as Dellarobia demonstrates when she describes how she tried college-placement exams but failed (231). Her schooling had not adequately prepared her, exemplifying the weaknesses of the education system in her region.

A facet that is not weak in the cultures in the novels, however, is religion. As Lee Morris states in his piece "Give Me the Mountains: On Religion in Appalachia," "Fundamentalism [is] the prevailing theological stance of religion in Appalachia" (34); this influence of fundamentalism is shown to be the cornerstone of the lives of the characters in the novels, especially in *Hunter's Horn*. The fundamentalist practices in *Hunter's Horn* are best shown through Milly, who condemns a set of silver bracelets as "sinful and heathenish" (Arnow 209) and views foxhunting as idle (25). Though this fundamentalism is not as fervent in *Flight Behavior*, there exists a strong emphasis on church attendance and Christian values. Dellarobia describes her church as having over three hundred attendees, implying a substantial portion of the population attends church and adhere to religion (Kingsolver 59).

This religious devotion affects all manner of life for the characters in each novel, with God or religion being a key factor in decision making and the thought process. In *Hunter's Horn*, Nunn frequently ponders the role of religion and damnation in his fox-hunting obsession (Arnow 57) and Hester—Dellarobia's mother-in-law—reads blessings from God in the rain (Kingsolver 20). Even Dellarobia, who is only considered a "911 Christian" (60) and does not have the strong ties to religion as everyone else in her community, takes the Bible into her day-to-day thinking, such as how she describes the scenery and equates it with Noah and the flood (135).

God's omnipresence in the communities in both books can be attributed to geographic isolation. As previously mentioned, Appalachia's natural borders separate its communities from the rest of the nation, largely leaving the culture to function independently without outside interference. Though this creates a rich culture, it also has the consequence of producing schools that make it difficult for students to grasp the language and learn to read (Skinner 131); this limited ability to read makes it difficult for students to grasp what is being taught. Religion, on the other hand, is far more accessible. Instead of having to read to understand, the children can listen to the preacher and they can understand the moral lessons in the sermons. School then becomes a place where children feel subpar and mentally shut down because they cannot understand, while the church allows them to learn without feeling ashamed. This ultimately results in children growing up with a more thorough understanding of religion than science.

Though this leaning towards religion is understandable, the imbalance of religion and education has deadly consequences for the characters. In the case of *Flight Behavior*, it results in the dismissal of scientific fact in regards to the safety of the planet. The arrival of monarch butterflies in Appalachia is a negative side effect of climate change, as reported by the character Dr. Ovid Byron (147). However, members of the community are unwilling to accept his word or scientific facts on the matter due to his outsider status. As Hendrickson points out, teachers who visit Appalachia "lack awareness of local knowledge, values, economics, and social networks and do not have the histories and relationships with the community" (38). In other words, those not from Appalachia might not have the same values as locals and will be met with trepidation. Ovid is an outsider and people are not convinced he holds values similar to theirs, with Hester even asking "is he even a Christian?" (131) as though this credential validates his ability to relay scientific information. While Ovid describes the monarch phenomenon with scientific evidence, they describe it as a "the Lord works in

mysterious ways" type of occurrence. This could largely be because they have a familiarity with God that they do not with science because of the weak education system. God is more tangible and legitimate to them than science, meaning that faith-based knowledge carries more weight than scientific knowledge for them. Unfortunately, as Frederick Buell explores in his article "Global Warming as Literary Narrative," global warming is a twenty-first century problem and there needs to be a focus on "making it into a twenty-first century movement" (Buell 267), but this cannot happen when met with a thought process that dismisses modern scientific fact. The lack of balance between education and religion depicted in *Flight Behavior* produces characters that dismiss a scientific fact, which makes it hard for global warming to be taken seriously in their area and this brings about destruction to the world they live in and, by association, their communities.

As characters in *Flight Behavior* show a lack of urgency towards global warming by dismissing it as "God's will," a similar mentality dictates circumstances in *Hunter's Horn*. As previously determined, the teachings of the Bible outweigh the teachings from school. Those in *Hunter's Horn* will take the word of revival ministers, such as Battle John, and his ideas that only God can lead them to safety (297); without the educational foundation to provide any other form of reasoning, the characters in this society grow up feeling their actions are useless because, ultimately, God will have His way. Thus, while Lureenie is dying in childbirth, the midwife, Sue Annie, is aware that a doctor's intervention would save her (Arnow 284). However, Lureenie's father-in-law—Keg Head—thinks that medical assistance is against the Bible (284) and states after her death that "God's will was God's will" (291). Keg Head's reasoning to not send for a doctor is that he does not want to spend the money on a doctor when God will determine whether Lureenie lives or dies, despite that she needs help (284). Similar to the characters in *Flight Behavior*, the ones here see a clear

issue, but have been conditioned to await God's intervention as opposed to acting.

This shows the consequence of having an imbalance between education and religion, for it impairs the characters' judgment and also decreases their accountability. In her article "Hunter's Horn: Harriette Arnow's Subversive Hunting Tale," Kathleen Walsh points out the hypocrisy in the townspeople following Lureenie's death in which they "damn Lureenie for finally begging for death rather than blaming themselves for not helping her sooner" (45). In short, they use the Bible and the concept of "God's will" as justification for their inaction and refuse all responsibility. Similarly, in *Flight Behavior*, characters such as Dellarobia's husband, Cub, laugh at the concept of global warming and say "Weather is the Lord's business" (Kingsolver 261). This puts the idea in the characters' heads that there is not a need to be responsible for the planet because, in their eyes, God controls the weather and their actions are irrelevant. In summation, the point of church in many ways for these characters is to strengthen moral character, but without education to provide the foundation of logic when to obey God and when to act for oneself results in an imbalance of morals because they lose a sense of accountability by relying on God as a scapegoat.

Undoubtedly, the characters in *Hunter's Horn* and *Flight Behavior* would disagree that to maintain a steady moral compass one needs a positive educational influence. However, the characters Suse Ballew of *Hunter's Horn* and Dellarobia Turnbow of *Flight Behavior* show education has a positive impact on reasonable thinking and strengthening morals. The latter is especially true for Suse. Wilton Eckley points out in his article "Life and Death in Little Smokey Creek" that at Lureenie's funeral "people are more concerned with the bad luck they may be bringing upon themselves by failing to get the coffin covered before sunset than they are about giving Lureenie a better burial" (4). They are blinded by the fundamentalist superstitions and seem unaware of their

hypocrisy. Suse, however, sees right through it. She is more educated than those around her by reading. This has strengthened her analytical mind so when she reads the Bible she can study it objectively (Arnow 324). This makes her care more about what is right and wrong in terms of burying Lureenie than the superstitious concerns of the others.

Similarly, Dellarobia is proof of the positive impact education can have on an individual's reasonable thinking. Dellarobia is intelligent and willing to learn, a trait she has carried since her youth when she attended Honors English (Kingsolver 68). Buell describes adult Dellarobia as "a character [who] doesn't know anything about global warming...[yet] quickly learns of it as an established fact" (265). Dellarobia received more from her education than most students and this predisposed her to understand the information Dr. Ovid Byron brings, while the rest of the town embraces the monarchs as a miracle from God rather than an abnormal global phenomenon (70). Dellarobia, unlike many of the members in her community, can see there is a problem with the world and goes on a course to try to help by working with Ovid and his team. This shows that her reaction to a problem is to attempt to fix it, while the other members of the community rely on God's will alone.

Harriette Arnow and Barbara Kingsolver have both depicted a world where religion and education are unbalanced due to the isolation of Appalachia. Since the region is cut off because of natural borders, there is little contribution from the outside world to nurture Appalachia's education system, as seen in *Hunter's Horn* and *Flight Behavior*. The characters in *Hunter's Horn* abide by a largely fundamentalist religion and have children that are expected to remain at home to help maintain the family livelihood, while in *Flight Behavior* church is depicted as a cultural mainstay and the schools themselves have little regard for education. This imbalance limits the problem-solving abilities of some of the characters and the consequences can be deadly, whether this be illustrated in the death of a character or the death of a planet. By showing this struggle in

their works, Arnow and Kingsolver reveal how the religious values in Appalachia contribute powerfully to cultural identity and, unfortunately, lay the foundation of conflict that has real world consequences.

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Torch of Love, Fountain of Hope: Dante's Views on the Power of Literature

Josh Daniel

A month after my sixteenth birthday, I found myself like Dante, in the middle of a dark wood and losing the straight path. My father had just died, and my grades were slipping so I made the decision to drop out of high school. I abandoned my religion entirely, finding no comfort in the church I was raised in. This was the lowest point in my life, and it was in this darkness that I discovered literature. The books that I read during this time, along with a healthy dose of therapy, were the things that saved my life. They were my guide through the darkness.

Dante Alighieri also recognized the redemptive power of language and textuality, as demonstrated throughout *The Divine Comedy*. With his decision to write in the Italian vernacular about serious philosophical dilemmas, Dante was defying hundreds of years' worth of convention. Until that point, the Italian vernacular had mainly been associated with love poetry and nothing more. He realized that he could bring a whole new audience into the church, and decided to use the language of the people as a way to accomplish his goal. Upon closer examination, the reader will also notice that Dante brought this fascination with language into the narrative of *The Divine Comedy* itself. There are moments within each canticle that demonstrate this fascination with language, and the ways in which it can be used and abused by the reader. The story of Francesca and Paolo in *Inferno*, the meeting between Statius and Virgil in *Purgatorio*, and Dante the Pilgrim's meeting with Adam

in *Paradiso* are all examples of the ways in which Dante viewed language and its power.

Before digging into the narrative and subject matter of *The Divine Comedy*, it may be helpful to reflect on the nature of the text itself and the ways in which Dante challenged societal norms. The vast majority of poetry written before and during Dante's life was written in Latin. Latin was the language of the church and as a result, anything written in vernacular Italian was generally looked down upon and thought of as being less serious and not worthy of serious study. Dante sought to change this perception of vernacular Italian, envisioning a moment when it would seem unpatriotic to write in anything other than the vernacular. Writing in the vernacular also opened up the text to being read by a new and growing female audience. The less restrictive study and instruction of vernacular Italian allowed for this new audience to become literate. By writing in the vernacular and realizing that the people reading his text would be different than his usual audience, Dante aimed to create a new kind of poetry.

That is not to say that Dante completely abandoned the art and technique found in the canon of literature written in Latin. In "Dante and the Two Canons: Statius in Virgil's Footsteps," Ronald Martinez emphasizes the achievement Dante accomplished. Martinez recognized the revolutionary way in which Dante wrote in the vernacular, but also reminds us that Dante elegantly combined this vernacular with some of the stylings and techniques taken from the Latin poets from which he drew his inspiration. The prime examples given by Martinez is the overarching structure of the *Comedy* and the placement of various Dante contemporaries within specific places that corresponded with Dante's opinion on the value of their stylings, such as his decision to place Bornelh beneath Arnaut Daniel in *Purgatorio* (Martinez 153).

Dante's first significant poetic achievement was the creation of the *Vita Nuova*, the work that preceded the *Divine Comedy*. In

the *Vita Nuova*, Dante turns to poetry to process the emotional turmoil experienced after being shunned by a lover. And like Dante, I turned to poetry when it was time for me to finally process the grief of losing my father. While I am obviously nowhere in the same poetic league as Dante, just by getting my emotions down on the page brought a relief that I'd not been able to find anywhere else.

It is here that we also see Dante engage with some of the themes and subjects that he will later condemn and attempt to rectify. The *Vita Nuova* is written in the popular Courtly Love genre, but by the end of the poetic sequence, Dante aspires to write something of greater value. His aim will be to turn from the false love of courtly love poetry and aim towards what he sees as being true love.

As a genre, Courtly Love poetry originated in the south of France near the end of the eleventh century. At the time, marriage among the ruling class was used primarily as a political tool and as a way to create lasting bonds between rival kingdoms. Courtly Love poetry allowed for the expression of a more emotional, passionate love. When modern day readers think of the concept of love, what comes to mind are ideas originating from the Courtly Love tradition. Characteristics of Courtly Love poetry include: heightened passion and emotion, idealization of romantic love, an emphasis on secrecy and (often) adultery. Not surprisingly, some of these ideals conflicted with those found in the Church.

Before Dante presented to the reader examples of the good that can be achieved through language and text, he chose to first offer a warning. In *Inferno*, Dante meets with a distraught Francesca in the second circle of hell, the circle designated for the lustful. In the article "Dante's Francesca and the Tactics of Language," Glauco Cambon argues that the scene between Dante the Pilgrim and Francesca represents the evolution of Poetry, from its birth in unconstrained passion, to its verbalizing of its vision, and ending in a great silence. In

Dante's view "True poetry is a deliverer, not a seducer" (68). We meet Francesca in the whirlwind that represents the punishment allotted for the lustful, and she explains her situation to Dante. One of the reasons for her placement in hell rather than purgatory is her intense refusal to accept responsibility for her actions. Instead of acknowledging that she was at fault in her transgression with Paolo, she lays the blame on the text the forbidden couple was reading.

While her refusal to accept responsibility for her actions is no doubt criticized, it is not by accident that Dante the Poet chooses to reference Lancelot and the tales of passion as a specific precursor to Paolo and Francesca's descent into lustful sin. While reading the text, the two lover's eyes are drawn towards each other. But it is not until they read of the kiss between Lancelot and Guinevere that the two decide to submit to their own desires. Francesca says:

When we read that the yearned-for smile was
Kissed by so great a lover, he, who will never be
Separated from me,
Kissed my mouth all trembling. (*Inf.* 5.133-138)

By linking the romantic tales of Lancelot and Guinevere to the actions of Francesca and Paolo, Dante is implicitly criticizing the type of romantic poetry that he is trying to overcome, and warning of the dangers to beware of when reading texts. If one is not vigilant, they can be seduced by a text and convinced to submit to their basest desires. One can almost sense the guilt Dante the Poet must feel himself, as the poetry described by Francesca is exactly the kind of poetry Dante first wrote in. At the end of the meeting, Dante the pilgrim has a fainting spell. The fainting may be the result of Dante's guilt and realization that the poetry he authored in the past may very well have caused others to fall into sin.

The warning nature of the example shown above is further emphasized by Dante's various addresses to the reader. Throughout the comedy, Dante the Poet seemingly interjects

himself into the narrative and directs his words explicitly to the reader. In "The Addresses to the Reader in the "Commedia"", Leo Spitzer emphasizes the originality and importance of this specific narrative technique. Spitzer insists that until Dante, the only similar narrative technique comparable are the appeals to the gods found in classical epics. Another defining characteristic of Dante's addresses that separates them from those found in the past is the urgency felt (Spitzer 145). Spitzer identifies three main types of reader addresses in the *Divine Comedy*. First, there are the brief addresses meant to have a comedic effect. The second kind of address features Dante confiding in the reader certain aspects of his poetic technique or Dante relating the difficulty and ultimate impossibility of describing certain events that take place in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. The final type of address to the reader is identified by Dante's concern over the correct "dogmatic interpretations of certain passages" (148).

In "Dante's Addresses to the Reader and its Ontological Significance," William Franke argues that the addresses to the reader throughout Dante's *Divine Comedy* is not an attempt by the author to shift the focus away from the text, but to frame the entire poem as both an important text and an event that reveals a truth to the reader and instructs the reader on the correct way to read the poem (119). Using these addresses, Dante is trying use his authorial control to reduce the chances of the reader misinterpreting his words or using them towards more sinister means. Franke also suggests that these addresses may point to Dante's attempt at portraying a biblical truth, which was also a "truth of the written word" (121).

If *Purgatorio* is the place in which souls must pass through in order to attain their salvation, it makes sense that Dante chose to place here an example of the healing and redemptive power of poetry. In Canto 21, we witness a meeting between the poet Statius and Virgil. In the article "Dante and the Two Canons: Statius in Virgil's Footsteps," Ronald Martinez argues that this meeting represents a melding of the old tradition with the new.

Statius took what he learned from Virgil and added to it with his own artistic endeavors, in the same way Dante hopes to achieve. Besides the artistic significance of this meeting, there is a spiritual significance that also comes into play. Statius explicitly states that Virgil and his poetry was the channel through which he became a Christian. In Canto 22, he says "Through you I became a poet, through you a / Christian" (*Purg.* 22.73-74) This was achieved despite the fact that Virgil himself lacked the Christian faith. This example gives Dante the chance to demonstrate the ability of great poetry to point its reader to a greater truth, ultimately leading to salvation. This is one of Dante's ultimate goals in writing the *Divine Comedy*. I can't claim that reading the *Divine Comedy* led me to salvation. I can say, however, that it created the space in which I could question my own loss of faith and begin looking for religious truth once more. And in this sense, I believe Dante's great work is a success.

After demonstrating the dangers inherent in language with the example of Francesca and Paolo, and showing the redemptive power of poetry with the meeting between Virgil and Statius in *Purgatorio*, Dante chooses the final canticle of the *Divine Comedy* to demonstrate the limits of language with his conversation with Adam. But before describing the events found in *Paradiso*, Dante is careful to warn the reader of the increasingly abstract ideas and images he is about to encounter. Repeatedly, the poet points to the limits of language and the impossibility of verbally describing the divine. In fact Robert Hollander, in his article "Dante's *Paradiso* as Philosophical Poetry," discusses the marked differences in style and subject matter between the first two canticles and those found in *Paradiso*. In the first two canticles, Dante is mostly celebrated for his "ample use of monologues of self-narrative" (571). But in *Paradiso*, Dante is far more concerned with expressing philosophical ideas than he is with narrative. Hollander also points out that the self-narratives of characters is one of the key

characteristics of the first two canticles, while *Paradiso's* speakers are mainly presented as lecturers. If we take this stance as being true, then Adam's discourse on the nature of language and the cause of lingual diversity is given even more significance.

Immediately before his meeting with Adam, Dante discovers that he is blinded by the indescribable beauty of Beatrice: "Thus from my eyes every impurity was put to / flight by Beatrice with the radiance of hers." (*Par.* 26.1 76-77). After his vision is strengthened by what he sees in Beatrice, Dante encounters Adam and proceeds to ask three questions. The question that Adam spends the most time answering, implying its importance, is the question Dante poses about the nature of language. In response, Dante, through Adam, corrects an early assumption of the poet that the original language spoken in the Garden of Eden was Hebrew. In "Adam on the Primal Language: *Paradiso* 26.124," Phillip Damon suggests that this correction implies that the original language wasn't superior because it was "extra-human", but because "it reflected a superior mode of human apprehension" (62). It is here that Dante the pilgrim comes to understand the limits inherent in language. Because language is a worldly invention, it is subject to the divine diversification that all physical matter is subject to. The most obvious implication of this discovery is the correction of the belief that the cause of lingual diversity was the destruction of the tower of Babel. Here we learn that there has been language diversity since the creation of earth.

Through the three examples discussed above, Dante demonstrated the dangers and rewards that can result from closely reading a text. We are warned not to fall prey to the seductions of romantic poetry through Dante's meeting with Francesca in *Inferno*. In *Purgatorio*, we witness the redemptive power of poetry through the meeting between Statius and Virgil. Finally, the reader is given an explanation regarding the limits of language itself when Dante meets Adam. These three

examples prepare both Dante the pilgrim and the reader for the Pilgrim's final encounter with the divine. Because Dante's final union with the divine cannot be described with words, the reader is left with a longing in the end to continue the search themselves.

After the death of my father, I never thought that I would be able to find comfort in religion again. And that still may be the case. But thanks to Dante, I've picked up the search again. I'm more open to the possibility of the divine and that's no small feat. The *Divine Comedy* remains a massive artistic achievement, and is a testament to the enduring power of art and its ability to transform a reader centuries after its creation.

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An Insider's Perspective: Jim Wayne Miller and the Representation of the Mountain Man

Elon Justice

Appalachia is a region marked by misunderstanding. The label "Appalachia" itself is a rather nebulous term regarding the exact geographic area to which it refers: The Appalachian Mountains actually begin in southern Canada and extend to the northern part of the American states Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, but the area thought of as culturally Appalachian is a little more difficult to define. The region most commonly referred to as Appalachia encompasses West Virginia, the eastern parts of Kentucky and Tennessee, western Virginia and North Carolina, and occasionally parts of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia – although these boundaries may shift depending on who is defining it. If understanding just *where* Appalachia is seems difficult, however, understanding *what* it is proves even more of a challenge. Appalachia is rarely mentioned in mass media, literature, or any other form of art that would grant it a national audience, and when it is brought up it has historically been in a way that is both rife with inaccuracies and often disrespectful and demeaning to the region and its inhabitants. This is due in large part to the fact that many creators of this content have little—if any—actual experience with what it means to be from and live in Appalachia. Appalachian artists in fields such as literature, filmmaking, and music who have a following on anything more than a regional scale tend to be in short supply. However, those artists with a large enough voice

to speak for the region tend to do so in a way that is much more truthful about the reality of what it means to be Appalachian. One such artist is author Jim Wayne Miller, a western North Carolina native who frequently wrote about his experience with the people and place of Appalachia, and who through his work became an ambassador of sorts for the mountains. Compared to the most common portrayals of Appalachia in art and media, in which it is generally distorted in some form, Miller attempts to create a more honest preservation of the region's traditional customs, culture, and people without idealization or sentimentality.

Appalachians have been misrepresented in media for nearly as long as there has been the technology for media to exist. Although the details of this misrepresentation have shifted throughout the years, the central theme has always been the same: Appalachia is something "other," something that Dr. Anthony Harkins describes in his book *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* as "in, but not of" America (5). In the mid-1800s, a genre of "local color" entertainment magazines began to create an early version of the stereotypical "hillbilly" image that to this day continues to be associated with Appalachia, portraying mountaineers as "poor whites and backwoodsmen" and emphasizing the notion that Appalachians were outside the American norm (Harkins 29-30). Once Appalachia had reached the national consciousness it remained there for quite some time, and a succession of harmful images soon followed. By the late 1880s and early 1890s, a series of arrests in the region for crimes such as moonshining and murder (many due to the infamous Hatfield-McCoy Feud in Kentucky and West Virginia) caused several widely-read newspapers such as the *Louisville Courier* and *The New York Times* to depict Appalachians no longer as people who were simply quirky and out of step with civilization, but instead as people who posed a real danger to themselves and others (Harkins 34-35).

The rise of the silent film industry continued this perception through the nearly 500 films released on mountain people from 1900 to 1929, but by the end of the Depression Era entertainment media had traded in the persona of the frightening, brutal savage for a new, more comical approach to the hillbilly (Harkins 58). Newspaper comics like *The Mountain Boys* and films such as *Kentucky Moonshine* established Appalachians as the fools of America with characters who were lazy, comically violent, ignorant of modernity, and altogether “absurdly degenerate” (Harkins 105-106; 154). Negative images of Appalachians in media declined after the 1930s until Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” in the 1960s brought the region to the forefront of the nation’s attention once more with news coverage of what Harkins describes as “backward and degenerate men and women who...threatened the comity of the industrial heartland” by moving out of the region to find work (Harkins 174).

All these images remained pervasive in how the rest of the nation perceived Appalachia, but none can surpass the influence of the 1972 film *Deliverance*. Set in the backwoods of northern Georgia, *Deliverance* features a slew of “hillbilly” characters that are deranged, ruthless, and terrifyingly violent upon meeting a group of canoeists from Atlanta. The movie also includes references to inbreeding, an almost bestial rape scene, and several gruesome deaths (Harkins 207-209). Daniel Roper of the *North Georgia Journal* best describes the film’s impact on the area: “*Deliverance* did for them [North Georgians] what *Jaws*...did for sharks” (qtd. in Harkins 206). *Deliverance* has managed to remain influential in the national perception of Appalachia long after its time in theaters, albeit in a more humorous context. Says Harkins:

The film’s infamous scenes of sodomy at gunpoint and of a retarded albino boy lustily playing his banjo became such instantly recognizable shorthand for demeaning references to rural poor whites that comedians needed to say only “squeal like a pig” (the command of one of the rapists to his

suburbanite victim) or hum the opening notes of the film’s guitar-banjo duet to gain an immediate visceral reaction from a studio audience. (206)

Thus, *Deliverance*’s effect has been twofold: It has helped perpetuate the concept of Appalachia as both a place to be feared and a place to be mocked.

There are further inaccuracies even within the already erroneous portrayals of Appalachians. As Mary K. Anglin explains in her essay “Erasures of the Past: Culture, Power, and Heterogeneity in Appalachia,” most representations of Appalachian regional culture focus almost exclusively on Caucasians in the region, especially Caucasian men (76). Mae Miller Claxton affirms this statement in her article “Remapping the South: New Perspectives in Appalachian Studies,” stating that Appalachia is much more diverse than many Americans realize (116). Women and the significant minorities of African Americans and Native Americans, though important cultural actors in the region, are rarely discussed as separate groups from the white male majority; rather, their histories, achievements, and identities tend to be overlooked (116-117). This holds true for representations of the area in mass media, literature, and other forms of art: Portrayals of Appalachia are overwhelmingly white and male.

These inaccurate and negative depictions of Appalachia nearly always originate from creators who are not from and do not understand the region. Paul Webb, the artist behind the 1930s comic strip *The Mountain Boys*, was born in northern Pennsylvania and never even set foot in Appalachia until six months after his first comic was published (Harkins 105). *Deliverance* director John Boorman was born in Surrey, England—a far cry from the hills of Appalachia (IMDb). As a response to these overwhelmingly negative portrayals, many writers, photographers, and other artists through the years have attempted to create a separate persona: what Harkins describes as the “stalwart, forthright, and picturesque mountaineer” (4).

However, Harkins notes, even this more positive, romanticized interpretation of mountain life is based on the same notion of a people set completely apart from modern civilization (4-5). As a result, the movement intended to dispel inaccurate Appalachian stereotypes has only served to reinforce them.

Faced with the colossal amount of incorrect, degrading, and often outright offensive material aimed at Appalachia, the task of the Appalachian artist to portray the region in a more fair and balanced way can seem insurmountable. However, Jim Wayne Miller began writing in a period when many Appalachian writers were attempting to do just that. Carolyn Neale Hickman explains in her dissertation *“What to throw away/what to keep”*: *Mobilizing expressive culture and regional reconstruction in Appalachia* that Miller was part of the first generation of scholars, artists, and activists who worked to give shape to the emergent “Appalachian movement” of the 1960s and 1970s (23). Born in 1936 in the mountains of western North Carolina, Miller grew up working both sets of grandparents’ small farms and was accustomed to a largely pre-industrial, traditional way of life in Appalachia (Hickman 32). He attended Berea College in Kentucky, a school whose mission is to serve the Appalachian territory, where he gained both a new perspective on his native region as a place unique in its culture and history, and also a desire to use his talents to give its people a more empowering collective identity (Hickman 33; 23-24). Although Miller’s education was largely in German literature and language, receiving a doctorate from Vanderbilt University in Romance Languages and going on to become a professor of German at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, his work as a writer often focuses on the life he knew back home (Hickman 23; 32). Miller’s acute familiarity with the culture, customs, and people of Appalachia allows his work to portray the region in a positive light while avoiding the pitfalls of romanticizing or sentimentalizing it. His poetry and fiction display the nuances and contradictions of mountain life, its

struggles and its triumphs, in a way the stereotypical hillbilly image could never hope to replicate.

One of the most interesting issues Miller addresses in his work is the idea that Appalachians have, as Miller describes in his essay “I Had Come to Tell a Story: A Memoir” (found in a book of his selected works, *Every Leaf a Mirror: A Jim Wayne Miller Reader*), a “complicated ‘triple history’—a history shared with the rest of the United States, one shared with the American South, and a history all its own as a kind of separate South” (193). In fact, much of the poetry in *Every Leaf a Mirror* can be separated into two categories: those that deal with contemporary American life and those that deal with life as an Appalachian or a Southerner. Miller’s poems “A House of Readers” and “Living with Children” both focus on typical suburban American life—having a house, a wife, and kids. Conversely, poems such as “Hanlon Mountain in Mist” and “In a Mountain Pasture” contain farming, foxhounds, and rural mountain settings—features that apply much more specifically to Appalachia than the rest of America, or even to the rest of the South. Certain poems, however, are crossovers between these two groupings: Miller states in his memoir that in “A House of Readers,” “I [see] myself as essentially a farmer, raising a crop of kids” (197). This perspective is made apparent in lines such as “Like a tendril growing toward the sun, Ruth / moves her book into a wedge of light” and “Fred is immersed in magic, cool / as a Black Angus belly-deep in a farm pond” (“House” 3-4; 7-8). Just as he tended cattle and raised corn on his grandparents’ farms as a child, in “A House of Readers” Miller is now cultivating his two children. Miller (who is the both the poem’s author and narrator) cannot entirely remove his Appalachian background from his suburban life because, for him, they are intertwined.

The opposite situation occurs in “How America Came to the Mountains,” which tells the story of industrialization coming to Appalachia:

It was that storm that dropped beat-up cars
all up and down the hollers, out in fields
just like a tornado that tears tin sheets
off tops of barns and drapes them like scarves
on trees in quiet fields two miles from any settlement.
(38-42)

This poem contains imagery of both modernization and traditionalism: Cars, quiet fields, and barns all exist in the same space. Miller's description of industrialization as something like a tornado sweeping across the land depicts how quickly and abruptly modernization changed the way of life in the mountains (and, as the image of roofs being torn off barns may hint, perhaps not in a way of which Miller is in favor) – but it shows that it changed nonetheless, just as the rest of America did during the Industrial Revolution. Miller explains the intermingling of modern America and traditional Appalachia in his poetry in an interview with *Appalachian Journal*: “You don't deny the reality of contemporary America nor the reality of this inherited traditional culture. And it's not a matter of choosing one or the other. They are both there and they are all interpenetrated and mixed” (“An Interview with Jim Wayne Miller” 211). This stands in stark contrast to the image of the stereotypical portrayal of Appalachians: Whereas the hillbillies shown in media are something completely “other” than the rest America, Miller proves that Appalachia is not, in fact, a place entirely apart. The mountains felt the effects of the Industrial Revolution just as the rest of the country did; Miller feels the influence of his rural upbringing even in his suburban lifestyle as an adult. To Miller, being Appalachian is simply part of his being American.

While Miller's above poetry deals with the concept of Appalachia as part of contemporary America, much of his fiction looks more closely at what it is that makes Appalachia unique. Perhaps the work that does this best is his 1993 novel titled *His First, Best Country*. The novel tells the story of the homecoming of a man named Jennings Wells, an Appalachian

native who has moved out of the region, attended graduate school, and become a writer – mainly writing about the home he left behind in an overly romanticized way. Upon his return, Jennings meets a woman named Roma, who is, as Joyce Dyer describes in her article “The Brier Goes to College,” “the essence of country” (223). Dyer goes on to explain that through the course of the book Roma “is able to force Jennings to see how snobbery and high-brow ways have made him forget his heart and his home, and to know his people ‘more as an idea than as individuals’” (223). Roma reflects Miller's personal belief, as he reveals in an interview with *Appalachian Journal*, that place should not be romanticized in literature and should instead be portrayed honestly (“An Interview with Jim Wayne Miller” 217). Hickman describes Roma's frustrations with Jennings, who bemoans the changes that have occurred in his hometown, Newfound, while he was away:

Roma finally becomes fed up with [Jennings's] lamentations about Newfound as a community irrevocably transfigured. “Get about two hundred miles from here, and you'll be able to like Newfound again. You can think you understand it, and we'll all be nice smooth people—no rough edges,” Roma tells him scornfully. “Maybe you can finish your book—”, she taunts, “about how wonderful it is to be a part of some place, rooted.” (67)

Through the character of Roma, Miller is able to remind the audience that Appalachian life is complex, its people are not simple, and there is much variation in how life occurs there (59-61). Once again, Miller's description of Appalachia stands in glaring opposition to traditional one-dimensional representations of the area. Furthermore, through Roma he rebukes those who believe they can portray the region honestly without actually experiencing it first.

Of all Miller's work concerning Appalachia, his best-known and most influential contribution is certainly his character the Brier. Appearing in several of Miller's poems throughout the span of his career, the Brier is what Miller describes in an

interview with Loyal Jones as the “Appalachian Everyman” (“In Quest of the Brier: An Interview by Loyal Jones” 162). He further explains what this means in his interview with *Appalachian Journal*:

The Brier is a kind of quintessential or typical or representative mountain man. Not any stereotype of a mountain man. Not an old-fashioned mountain man. Not the classical mountaineer, necessarily. But a man living and thinking and experiencing in this time, in contemporary time, gaining some awareness of a sense of community with a larger group of people than he’d ever dreamt of. (“An Interview with Jim Wayne Miller” 209)

The Brier, then, functions as a sort of culmination of the Appalachian experience—the essence of what it means to be from Appalachia. Throughout Miller’s Brier poems, the Brier displays a keen love and respect for the mountains, although Miller assures that he is not blind to “all the inadequacies and insufficiencies” of the region (220). This is perhaps best seen in Miller’s highly acclaimed poem “Brier Sermon—‘You Must Be Born Again.’” Miller’s longest poem, “Brier Sermon” follows the Brier as he lectures to passers-by on a street corner. He chastises his Appalachian audience because he believes they have as a whole attempted to forget their heritage. He preaches:

Our foreparents left us a home here in the mountains.
But we try to live in somebody else’s house.
We’re ashamed to live in our father’s house.
We think it too old-fashioned.
Our foreparents left us a very fine inheritance,
but we don’t believe it.
.....
You’ve wanted to run off and leave it, this inheritance.
You didn’t want to see it,
ashamed to hear about it,

thought it wasn’t pretty because it wasn’t factory-made. (“Brier” 45-50; 53-56)

The Brier believes that the modernization of Appalachia has caused its people to think that their traditional mountain culture is inferior to that of contemporary America, that it is not worth saving because it is not “factory-made.” The Brier has no problem with modern American culture in Appalachia, but he recognizes the importance of Appalachia’s history and traditions and believes that others should honor it even as they live in a modern society:

You don’t have to talk old-fashioned,
dress old-fashioned.
You don’t have to live the way your foreparents lived.
But if you don’t know about them
if you don’t love them
if you don’t respect them
you’re not going anywhere.
You don’t have to think ridge-to-ridge,
the way they did.
You can think ocean-to-ocean.

You say, I’m not going to live in the past.
And all the time the past is living in you. (96-107)

The Brier sees that Appalachians do not have to choose between traditional mountain culture and contemporary American culture. As long as they remember and honor their roots, the Brier believes, the spirit of Appalachia will live on.

The character of the Brier serves as Miller’s biggest opponent to the stereotypical hillbilly image. The Brier is someone deeply in touch with his traditional Appalachian heritage, but he also exudes wisdom, compassion, and awareness of the world around him – unlike the violent, unintelligent, and ignorant Appalachians depicted in most media. Furthermore, the portrayal of the Brier as the

“Appalachian Everyman” means that he represents *all* people from Appalachia – white and black, men and women—because his only concern is the culture of the mountains, not the race or gender. Because the Brier is meant to stand for every Appalachian person, he serves to offset the typical white-washing of the region.

Much of what America sees about Appalachia on television, in newspapers and books, and in photographs is stereotypical, misleading, and insulting to those who live there. In the midst of so much negative content it is imperative that artists who are from and understand the Appalachian region make their voices heard and show the mountains as they truly are: a place that is part of but unique within America, with a people and culture that are varied and complex. The writing of Jim Wayne Miller and many artists like him provides an excellent counterpoint to the degrading images of Appalachia with which most Americans are familiar. Although Miller himself passed in 1996, the honesty, intricacy, and beauty of his works ensure that they will live on for years to come.

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Young Adult Literature in the Secondary English Classroom

Allison Millay

In the modern secondary English classroom, teachers have, for many years, strictly used the canon's plethora of acclaimed literature as a means to teach vital skills, such as critical thinking and text analysis, as well as writing skills and even grammar functions. Though the canon provides for teachers a rich literary history and contributes to our nation's identity, canonical works can, in some circumstances, leave something to be desired in the high school classroom, especially in terms of student engagement. Research by experts in education have found that student engagement is a key factor in success and learning at all levels. In order to create a truly student-centered classroom, teachers can implement use of material that is more engaging for students, yet still targets appropriate learning standards. Using young adult literature in the classroom alongside the canon not only provides students with the content knowledge they need meet learning targets, but also increases student engagement, with then facilitates deeper, conceptual knowledge of content, and thus, increased success in school.

Although the modern English classroom may look significantly different now than it did years ago (by way of technology advancements, inclusion of racial minorities, and female authors, among others), it seems that the general content

students learn has not changed much with the times. As Chris Crowe attests in his 2002 article "Young Adult Literature: 'De Facto' YA Literature and False Expectations," the high school English literature curriculum has changed very little since even his own time in high school, which began in 1968. He explains his own practically fruitless experiences with *Romeo and Juliet* and *Great Expectations*, and relays how little he took away from this instruction as a student. Crowe discusses further that in these classes, he remembers less of the significance of the works, and more of his classmates' reactions to having to learn such outdated material (Crowe 100). Students in today's culture are subjected to the same or very similar lessons using canonized works that have transcended the ages. The content, which is still taught in many secondary English classrooms, was considered by students to be outdated almost 50 years ago, and is still being used in today's curriculum.

Regardless of these consistencies, however, the canon has evolved substantially since Crowe's time in school. Formerly, the canon mainly addressed the works of well-established white men of the day. However, in recent years, due to more complete integration and respect for female and minority authors, the canon has become more inclusive and representative of literature (and culture) as a whole. Although the works of Twain, Emerson, and Shakespeare are still prominent, authors such as Zadie Smith, Flannery O'Connor, and Toni Morrison have emerged as representatives of female and African American experience. The inclusion of these great authors is promising in making the canon more representative of the richness of literary history, and provides positive examples for minority students who one day hope to rise to such ranks.

The canon's recent inclusivity, however, should not guarantee its continued monopoly of the classroom literature because it does not necessarily deliver content in a way that is beneficial for students. According to these state academic standards, teachers are meant to teach not only writing

technique and style through literature, but also our nation's heritage as documented in canonical literature (*Kentucky Academic Standards—English and Language Arts*). In teaching canonical works, teachers not only have the opportunity to delve into the richness of Shakespeare's technical power, but also the history of our language and the ways it has changed over time. For instance, as a culture, we can look back at stories such as *Of Mice and Men* and explore issues of justice and personal identity during the time of the dust bowl, and for those who are mentally disabled. In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, we can understand the role of women in the early 20th century, and the ways in which it negatively impacted their lives. These pieces of canonical literature, as well as many others, express the complexity of human history, and illustrate the progression from these such times to the world we live in today. In teaching pieces such as these in the classroom, teachers provide for students an understanding of how and why the world has changed and is changing today, which aligns with the state's academic standards. Through literature, and the use of the classics, teachers not only have the opportunity to discuss important stylistic elements of the works, but also the cultural significance of the work as an artifact of US history. Because of this, teaching the canon is a critical part of secondary English classrooms. However, teachers can also incorporate young adult literature in their classrooms to meet similar levels of competence and understanding in their students while also promoting deeper student engagement with the texts, which in turn, generates deeper learning. The standards, by which teachers are required to abide, allow teachers to explore their options and chose literature that is best suited to their students in regards to achieving student engagement and learning, rather than mandating that they use literary works that are a part of the rich history we call the canon. The literary canon, as it is used in the classroom according to Kentucky English and Language Arts Deconstructed Standards, provides a framework for teachers to discuss a wide variety of issues and literary

techniques, while also preserving a large aspect of cultural identity and history. However, their flexibility allows teachers the opportunity to make choices which reflect the needs of their students, while still meeting their learning goals. In diversifying the literature used in the classroom by including young adult literature with the canonical works, teachers can both expose their students to rich literary history, while also capitalizing on students' own experiences to increase engagement, and thus, learning.

While the canon can be used to teach these important skills in modern classrooms, used alone it is less effective than using literature with which students are more able to connect for a number of important reasons. In order for teachers to make effective use of canonical literature in their classrooms, they need a variety of different skills. First, teachers themselves must have knowledge of the content, but also a deep, conceptual understanding of appropriate pedagogical practices within that content. Although English teachers go through rigorous and extensive training over canonical works that are critical to literary history, their personal insight into works within the canon is not enough to effectively communicate that material to students. According to the work of Lev Vygotsky, a key proponent of effective pedagogical practice, learning occurs when students are engaged in a meaningful task with a more knowledgeable other (Eggen and Kauchak, 46). The teacher, being the more knowledgeable other, is not the most important aspect of the lesson—Piaget and Vygotsky both hold that students actively create their own knowledge and understanding rather than taking it explicitly from some outside source (Eggen and Kauchak, 49). Because of this, being engaged in an activity which promotes connection and growth based on previous experiences is key. In order to bring more engagement into the English classroom, teachers should chose activities that not only appeal to students, but allow them to

connect and become engaged with their previous knowledge, called schemes.

In Piaget's research, he discusses the importance of a student's schemes, or previously formed ideas on particular topics, and the ways in which they contribute to learning within the stages of cognitive development. Being that YA literature is more relatable to students, engagement increases, and student learning improves, in turn. By promoting the use of young adult literature in the classroom, teachers can produce more successful students. Because YA literature is directed to a youth audience, students will be able to more easily connect the text with their current schemes, and expand upon both those schemes, and their schemes for English class and the content discussed there. As Piaget's research holds, the more interconnected a student's schemes are, and the more concrete and relatable examples they have within those, the more deeply they will understand the content. Thus, the lesson will be more successful (Eggen and Kauchak, 36).

A solution, then, to the canon's monopolization of the secondary classroom, is to integrate other kinds of literature into curriculum. Rather than focusing solely on works like *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Scarlet Letter*, teachers should work toward creating a curriculum that is both interesting and engaging for their adolescent students. Mike Roberts, a secondary teacher and who has published several articles on teaching YA Literature, for *The English Journal*, stresses the importance of young adult literature as a classroom tool for increasing student achievement. In his final column, titled, "Teaching Young Adult Literature," he states:

High-achieving students in your class can dissect YAL for the literary elements contained within the pages. Proficient students will be able to make text-to-self connections. Finally, struggling students will benefit because they will be able to read and understand the story line easily enough to

truly enjoy the book, something that they often aren't able to do with the classics. (Roberts 90)

As Roberts explains, young adult literature can not only be used as a teaching tool for prominent ideas like literary elements and making personal connections, but goes one step further than does the canon—it presents material that is easily comprehensible for its audience. Often, students stumble with the complexity and remoteness of canonized literature. Young adult authors are able to incorporate the same skills into their writing that are taught to students through classics, while also being easy to read and more relatable.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning supports this, through his claim that an important aspect of student learning is engagement (Eggen and Kauchak, 47). In order to maximize student learning and improve engagement, teachers should choose content that students can connect to the real world. In reading literature that is relatable to their own lives, students can more easily engage their prior experiences with the material they are reading, and thus, gain a clearer understanding of the content.

Fortunately for students, many educators are speaking out about the importance of using literature more suited to young adult audiences in order to teach content standards in the modern classroom. Teachers are singing praises for the use of young adult literature in the classroom as a means to engage their students and promote academic achievement. In his journal article titled "Why Literature in the High School Curriculum," Michael Bancroft discusses the merits of literature as a tool for teaching content standards in the English classroom. Bancroft, who is also a proponent of using young adult literature in the classroom, claims that canonized works can often cause students to glaze over and lose interest in class discussion. Students tend to lose interest in his class when they are focused on canonical works, but teachers do little to refocus their students. He also comments that with so much dispute

between educators on how and what to teach in the English classroom, it is hard for students to leave school with a comprehensive understanding of English studies as a whole. He states, "If those who think most deeply about literature are in disagreement, how can a pedagogy be developed?" (Bancroft, 24). Overall, he argues that since many educators are lost on the best literature to teach in the classroom in order to best engage students, students should have some choice in what they read in class, thus use literature better suited to their needs.

By reducing our emphasis on canonized works and moving toward more student-centered content, we can pave the way for more rich instruction with which students want to be involved. As teachers, it is important that we embrace progressivism in the classroom rather than perennialism; student needs and desires should be the focus of the classroom, rather than teacher's own interests. In his own classroom, Bancroft allows students, one period each week, to engage in reading any media of their choice (Bancroft 24). By allowing the English classroom to be a conduit for outside reading, teachers afford their students exposure to literature of all types, and encourage their students to have a positive relationship with reading. In doing this, teachers can help promote literacy, critical thinking, and analysis of content.

Studies undertaken by researchers and university professors have generated enlightening information on the value of young adult literature in the classroom. Gay Ivey and Peter Johnston, in a study called "Engagement With Young Adult Literature: Outcomes and Processes," discuss the outcomes of using young adult literature in the classroom as a teaching tool. In regards to student engagement, their study concluded with interviews of students who had been involved in classrooms where teachers used young adult literature rather than canonical fiction. Student comments to their interviewers revolved around the idea of increased reading and engagement even outside of the classroom. One student, identified as Josiah, states, "I be getting

in trouble for reading my book when I'm not supposed to be, in math class or something" (Ivey and Johnston 260-261). Josiah's comment illustrates the idea that students are not only interested in reading in the English classroom, but also in outside circumstances. Student interaction with literature that is more relatable to their personal lives generates a level of engagement that is unknown in many classrooms that focus solely on the canon. By utilizing young adult literature as an essential resource in the classroom, students become more interested in the content behind the story and improve their skills while also increasing understanding of content.

Other high school teachers are speaking out on the successes of curriculum based around the use of young adult fiction rather than simply incorporating it sparingly. In a journal article titled "Young Adult Literature in the 21st Century Classroom" for *Library Media Connection*, Katy Avoli-Miller discusses her own personal successes in implementing a curriculum using young adult literature in the classroom in various different ways. As an educator herself, Avoli-Miller relays the ways in which her students excelled after she began to implement curriculum that was geared more toward her students rather than solely on the classics. She states, "Students are engaged because they are able to relate to the contemporary themes in modern YA literature" (Avoli-Miller 16). Her students are able to connect to the books they are reading and engage with them in different ways that they are able to with canonized works, which increases their involvement in the classroom, and thus, deepens their level of understanding. She further explains that in making the transition from strictly canonical works (in which most English teachers have been trained) to young adult literature, librarians are a prominent resource for teachers. She states, "the librarian and teacher will need to collaborate to determine the teacher's goal for the class" (Avoli-Miller 16). She points out that librarians, whose job it is to be aware of the literature circulating in schools, can help teachers create their

own lesson plans using young adult literature in order to teach the standards. Librarians can collaborate with classroom teachers on the best novels to use for certain lessons, and explain the best ways to integrate YA literature into their discussions of classic works.

She also includes in her journal article a table of canonical works and their YA counterparts as a tool for teachers to understand what kinds of content they can teach using novels more suited to their students. This table includes works like Elie Wiesel's *Night* paired with Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, and Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* paired with Stoker's *Dracula* (Avoli-Miller 17). The young adult novels mirror the themes included in the canonized works, but are written for an adolescent audience. Teachers can expand on their students' understandings of prominent literary ideas while also piquing their interest. In my own research for my *Dracula* project, I discussed the parallels between *Twilight* and *Dracula*, and how prominent themes of Stoker's classic novel has transcended time and reappeared in Meyer's. Personally, I expected that I would have to stretch my imagination to find commonalities between the two novels, but in fact, the similar themes were extremely noticeable. Just as I explored in my research, high school teachers could use *Twilight* alongside of *Dracula* or on its own to explore such concepts as xenophobia, otherness, and prejudice. *Twilight* explores other interesting concepts on its own as well, such as the ideas of "good" vs. "evil," and the consequences of their reversal. These are complex, and sometimes tedious ideas, but if presented by educators in the appropriate format, student engagement and willingness to learn can improve.

Similar to my own research on *Dracula* and *Twilight*, school librarian Katie Porteus discusses in her journal article titled "Easing the Pain of the Classics" that using young adult literature as a buffer alongside classic works such as *Lord of the Flies*, as a way of "softening the blow" (Porteus 16) for both teachers and students alike. As she explains, trying to get

students to read classic literature can be at times, like "pulling metaphorical teeth" (Porteus 16). However, by using young adult fiction to aid in students' understanding of the canonical novels, teachers can promote further engagement with the text. Porteus offers further support for teachers, explaining ways they can use companion novels, alternate point of view novels, and a plethora of other channels to get in touch with even their toughest student-critics (Porteus 17). By providing these sorts of resources to teachers, people like Porteus make the transition from a classroom based solely on canon to a more student-oriented classroom seem attainable and practical. By using the techniques she discusses, teachers can improve upon their class' understanding of important literary ideas and prepare them for further critical thinking in their post-secondary careers.

Overall, young adult literature is a powerful tool for secondary teachers to increase student engagement in their classrooms. As discussed in Crowe's article, the literature students are introduced to in their high school English classes is often the last exposure they will have to what are considered "great works" (Crowe 101). Due to this fact, it is crucial that teachers implement strategies that heighten student engagement in the classroom, as not to hinder their relationship with literature in the future. Fortunately for students, YA literature is proven to be an effective tool not only for teaching important material, but also in engaging students. As a future teacher, this fact is extremely important to me; I hope to someday leave positive impacts on my students. By using young adult literature in the classroom, I plan to show my students the integrity of literature as an important channel for critical thinking and self betterment. In my own classroom, I will add young adult literature to my arsenal of tools to light a fire in my students for a passion for learning and continued growth. By relating to them, and understanding their needs as not only students, but as individuals, I can improve my skills as a teacher and enhance my students' experiences in English

class. It is my sincere hope that other educators come to understand the merits of young adult literature in the classroom as a conduit for improved student engagement and achievement.

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Finding Roots: The Legacy of African Americans as Portrayed in “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” and “Fifty Years”

Megan Skaggs

The history of African Americans is undoubtedly a long and complex one. African Americans suffered greatly in the nearly 250 years before they were freed from the bondage of slavery in the United States. Yet, despite the complexity of their history in America, the roots of their heritage can be traced back to even the oldest civilizations of humanity. Indeed, many authors of the Harlem Renaissance call attention to the fact that their history is linked to the ancient world. Taking place in the 1920s and 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance was a period of cultural and artistic growth during which many African Americans were able to express their own experiences living in the U.S. through various forms of art, including poetry. Particularly, Langston Hughes’ “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” (1921) and James Weldon Johnson’s “Fifty Years (1863-1913)” (1922) harken back to the ancient days, shedding light on the fact that African American roots predate even that of the white population that continually demeaned their existence. In this way, both authors convey the fact that the heritage of African Americans is in fact a noble one, and it was only through their physical, emotional, and mental sacrifice that the United States could grow into an economic and international superpower that it is today.

In a time in which African Americans were attempting to establish themselves in a society that had long scorned and ostracized them, it is clear why Hughes and Johnson might have sought to create poetry that fortified their place within society. The Harlem Renaissance was a time of change: changes in society, in gender norms, and in opportunities. While this change may have been beneficial for African Americans in some regards, in many ways it was also a period in which African Americans were called to prove themselves to a populace that threatened their success. Indeed, though this was a time of growth for a population that had often been purposefully suppressed, the burden of such oppression was not so easily overcome. According to the “Press and Lynchings of African Americans” by Richard M. Perloff, from 1882 to 1968, nearly 4,742 individuals were lynched. Not only that, but the brutality knew no bounds, as illustrated in the fact that, “typically, the victims were hung or burned to death by mobs of white vigilantes, frequently in front of thousands of spectators, many of whom would take pieces of the dead person’s body as souvenirs to help remember the spectacular event” (Perloff 315). The summer of 1919 (known as Red Summer)—just a few short years before the publication of these works—clearly indicated the political climate in which Johnson and Hughes worked, as racial tensions escalated to the point of mass killings of African Americans. Achieving artistic or intellectual respect in such a turbulent time was thus no easy feat, but these circumstances reveal the significance of both Johnson and Hughes’ chosen topic. In essence, both authors strove to not only prove themselves or their writing ability to their audiences, but to win the “literary authority they desired for themselves and their stories” (Andrews 23). Their writings served a deeper purpose than literary fame or mere entertainment. By illustrating the depth and significance of African Americans throughout both world and United States’ history, these poets are able to pave a way for African Americans for the future.

The pursuit of this form of validation stems not only from the necessity to prove themselves and the nobility of their race, but also from a mere longing for understanding regarding a past lost to slavery's clutches. Indeed, according to *The Secret Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation After the Genome* by Alondra Nelson, "the ravages of the Civil War left vital records and slave-plantation paperwork degraded or destroyed" (5). Thus, in an effort to understand a part of their history erased—or purposefully excluded—from genealogical records, both Hughes and Johnson provide evidence of a legacy long predating the Civil War, Middle Passage, or even the beginning of the slave trade. Because the majority of slaves had been denied information about their genealogy, heritage, or parentage in an active effort to isolate them from a lineage that might empower them, works such as these poems were particularly valuable to the African Americans. In this instance, both authors harken back to a time in which African Americans served a noble and pivotal place in society and attempt to draw attention to the connections between African American communities at different points in history. Seemingly acknowledging this need, the works of Hughes and Johnson served to quench an ever-present longing for knowledge of one's ancestral history for many in the African American community at the time.

Langston Hughes' work, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," specifically calls attention to the experiences of African Americans over the course of world history in an effort to authenticate place of African Americans in the realm of literature. Painting a picture of ancient rivers, Hughes seems to insert himself in the midst of the world's earliest and renowned civilizations: "I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young / I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep. / I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it" (Hughes 5-7). It is certainly no coincidence that he mentions the Euphrates River in particular. With this reference alone, he

establishes the fact that African Americans were present in what is known as the "cradle of civilization," and are thus part of the development of the human race as a whole. His mention of the Congo River, too, signifies that the ancestors of African Americans lived throughout myriad regions, and also hints at another place where Africans were horrifically abused for the sake of financial gain. In history, the Congo region is often associated with the many attempts to extract resources and its people for slavery. Yet, despite having suffered through such events, the ancestors of many African Americans were able to overcome them, proving their strength over time. Following this logic, the strength of their roots predates even what are widely acknowledged as the greatest empires in world history, and provides credibility to their race that even the society of the time could not overlook.

Not only does this poem seek to instill a sense of pride among African Americans for their noble line of ancestors, but it also reveals to white audiences that they have a lineage that has long outlasted the ancestry of even European Americans. Indeed, it brings to life a world that many African Americans at the time had not envisioned before, offering a connection to a past that had been barred to them. As is demonstrated in the article, "Black Atlas: Geography and Flow in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature," author Judith Madera emphasizes that the use of literature at that time specifically worked to project a visualization of a world otherwise unknown. Rather than the typical white-centered geographic imagery found in most other forms of literature, Hughes and Johnson break the norm by projecting geographic spaces through an African American lens. Madera accurately surmises the significance of the use of this geographic imagery in literature by stating: "It also confers shape on spaces that go unrepresented in traditional cartography" (3). Thus, though Hughes himself had never visited the Congo River or beheld the "cradle of civilization," his words give life to a geographic

space embedded with meaning. In a way, this poem paves a way not only to an understanding of the past but to a clearer future.

Despite his use of first person throughout the poem, this is not merely Hughes' personal account. It is important to note that though he pens the poem as though he himself experienced these rivers of ancient times, he seems to use first person as a literary device rather than a means of telling his own story. Ostensibly, Hughes was not there himself. Rather, the "I" indicates the unification of African Americans in one voice, hinting at the fact that even African Americans of the present have links to the wonders of the ancient world. Indeed, the fact that he begins the poem with similar phrasing as the end serves as a means to reinforce the idea that African American roots are deeper than society at the time understood: "I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins/ My soul has grown deep like rivers" (Hughes 3-4). Their ancestry, then, seems to precede civilization itself. African Americans, he implies, were making progress for humankind long before even the establishment of many European empires or monarchies, and thus hold an important part in the development of humans today.

In slight contrast, Johnson's poem, "Fifty Years" urges readers not only to recognize the role that African Americans have played throughout their history, but to acknowledge their part in the more recent development of the United States. Though this was written particularly to address the fifty years that had passed since the Emancipation Proclamation, the content also refers to the role that African Americans have played in forming the United States, and its history in general. Johnson's rather bold assertions address the legacy of African Americans by first asking the reader to recall the history of the race and then challenging them to remember their part in the U.S.'s own history. Indeed, he first pens that "Yet as we look back o'er the way / How distant seems our starting place"

(Johnson 7-8). With this statement, he suggests, like Hughes, that their roots run deeper than their history in the Americas, and perhaps even deeper than the history of the communities from which they were stolen.

Rather than using the pronoun "I" as a representation of African Americans as Hughes does, Johnson directly addresses an African American audience by using the pronoun "our," as was the case in the lines: "This land is ours by right of birth, / This land is ours by right of toil" (Johnson 13-14). Johnson draws attention to the concept that African Americans have thus earned their place within American society and should claim its success and legacy as their own. Rather than attempting to address a larger audience, he specifically includes his fellow African Americans, utilizing this concept of community by referring to the reader as "O Brothers mine" (1) to indicate a sense of camaraderie. Through his words, his fellow African Americans—and Caucasians alike—can see the significance and interconnectedness of African Americans over the course of U.S. history. He even remarks upon their role in the American Revolution, referring to the first African American and individual who was killed during the Boston Massacre: "Remember, its first crimson stripe / was dyed by Attucks' willing blood" (Johnson 27-28). The fact that he referenced Crispus Attucks signifies the importance of the African American sacrifice for the freedom of the American people as a whole. African Americans, he seems to tell us, not only have a long history but an honorable one, and one that should be recognized as a key component of the development of the United States. The United States, after all, was built upon an extensive amount of so-called "free labor" through the cruel institution of slavery. Freedom and economic prosperity come at a cost. And after countless accounts of rape, beatings, murder, and unusually cruel punishments, it is clear that African Americans were among the first to pay that price. The death of Crispus Attucks is but one representation of the

brutality African Americans experienced for a freedom they could not fully enjoy for many generations, but it certainly demonstrates the complexity of true freedom and sacrifice.

Hughes and Johnson not only establish their own name within literary history, but also give credit to their race through revealing the roles they have played—and will continue to play—in the course of both American and world history. Despite the abuse many of their ancestors suffered and the difficulties of adjusting to the ever-changing society during the Harlem Renaissance, their words offer a sense of belonging to a population that had previously been excluded from nearly every aspect of civil life. Similar to the blue bloods of the upper echelon of society among the white population, these poets and other African American authors of the time brought to light the idea that they themselves are part of a race with as much prestige as their white counterparts, albeit much older.

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And Now For Something Completely Different: Noir Homage and its Uses in Serial Television

Phoebe Zimmerer

The Out-of-Genre Experience, where an episode of a series suddenly shifts to a whole new genre, is as commonplace a phenomenon in the realm of television as having the lead couple almost getting together and then grinding into reverse at the last second. It is the circumstance that gives rise to musical episodes, mockumentary episodes, amnesia episodes, and even footloose episodes, which occur more often than one would think. The very best of these episodes are there for a reason; while Out-of-Genre Experiences can often be uninspired or simply grabbing for laughs, when executed correctly they can become some of the most important and meaningful episodes in a series. *Xena: Warrior Princess* was a serial offender of Out-of-Genre episodes, including “The Bitter Suite,” a musical episode, and “The Play’s the Thing,” an homage to *The Producers*. Nearly half of the episodes of Dan Harmon’s *Community* utilize some form of the Out-of-Genre experience, be it through a bottle episode (an episode taking place entirely in one location) such as “Cooperative Calligraphy,” a mafia drama like “Contemporary American Poultry,” or a Claymation Christmas special, “Abed’s Uncontrollable Christmas.” Each of these episodes provided an introspective look at either specific characters or the show itself through the conventions of other genres.

Also present in *Community* is an all-too-common form of Out-of-Genre Experience, the Noir Episode. The stereotypical Noir Episode is utilized in various mediums, to varying degrees, functioning as either an homage or parody of classic film noir. More than a few video games, including *Metal Gear Solid 4*, have even incorporated noir-inspired level designs, and numerous comic books lay claim to a noir style issue. Even popular comic strip *Calvin & Hobbes* makes its own nod to film noir with Calvin’s recurring private-eye alter-ego, Tracer Bullet. Most commonly, however, the phenomenon occurs as an otherwise non-noir TV show suddenly goes to black and white for an episode, likely featuring a stylized private-eye monologue. The Noir Episode employs the stylistic conventions and narrative devices of film noir to enhance the show’s existing storyline in unorthodox but potentially deeply impactful ways.

Every show approaches what it means to be a Noir Episode differently. In the case of *Community*’s “Competitive Ecology,” the general form of the episode goes mostly unchanged with the exception of Chang’s character suddenly undergoing overly dramatic P.I.-style inner monologues as he attempts to solve the “case,” making wild connections in his head while staring pensively into the distance: “Maybe I was crazy. Or maybe I was finally sane.” A commonly used trope for the initiation of Noir Episodes, especially in detective dramas, is to have the characters unearth and solve a cold case, usually from the ‘40s-‘60s, through the convention of noir-style flashback. Examples include *Castle*’s “The Blue Butterfly” and *Psych*’s “1967: A Psych Odyssey.” Utilizing a variation on the above trope, to a much less conclusory level, is the *Moonlighting* episode “The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice.”

“The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice” is one of the best-known and most true-to-form film noir homages to air on television. In fact, at the time the episode aired in 1985, the very idea of a Noir Episode was so revolutionary that the episode opened with an address from Orson Welles to the audience

explaining that the black and white was not a result of there being anything wrong with their TV. Orson Welles ended up dying five days before the episode aired and it was dedicated to his memory.

Throughout its five season run, *Moonlighting* aired no less than ten dream sequence episodes, but “The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice” continues to be “one of the most popular television dream sequences in all of TV” (Burkhead 75). The series had a habit of winking at its audience through fourth-wall breaks and other types of self-referential humor. Even the episode title “calls attention [sic] to the formal element adopted to present the story” (Burkhead 75). By “drawing attention to the textuality of television,” this episode “invites the viewer to participate in the ‘process of making meanings’” (Burkhead 75). This provocation of the audience to further analyze the story, as well as the conventions of the medium, on their own is one of the trademarks of a well-executed Out-of-Genre Experience.

Moonlighting’s overarching theme of the battle of the sexes was present in every episode, and the writers’ love-letter to film noir was no different. The episode’s plot revolves around the notorious “Flamingo Cove murder,” named after a popular night club during the mid ‘40s where a jazz singer and a trumpet player allegedly had an affair and murdered the singer’s husband. They were both sent to the electric chair, each one swearing the other did it. Destined as they are to get in a screaming match at least once an episode, the two main characters, Maddie and David (as portrayed by Cybil Shepherd and Bruce Willis), come to a heated disagreement about which person actually committed the murder. After going home, each has a separate dream about how they think it happened, and with those dream sequences the story is transported back to a monochromatic world where everyone smokes and crime is the crux of all.

Each dream follows the tale of Rita (a clear nod to Rita Hayworth) and Zack: how they met, fell in love, and ultimately

ended up murdering Rita’s husband, Jerry. Roger Ebert defines one of the signature characteristics of film noir as being “a movie which at no time misleads you into thinking there is going to be a happy ending,” an observation that proves too true for each of the stories we are told, seeing as how even from the start we know it can only end with an execution (Ebert). In Maddie’s dream, Rita is a happily married woman until Zack comes along; he continues to pursue her despite her trepidation, and an uneasy affair is started. Rita insists that what they are doing is wrong and so Zack takes it upon himself to club Jerry over the head with his own clarinet and then rig the body to look like an accident. The crime’s accidental nature comes into question, however, when one of the clarinet valves is found to be dented and, now thrown under suspicion, Zack turns over Rita without a second thought.

More stereotypically noir and also distinctly more self-aware is David’s dream. The starry-eyed beauty is replaced with a mouthy, innuendo-spouting, booze-swilling, sexual praying mantis, the husband a thuggish brute, and over the whole story is a wise-cracking, fourth-wall-breaking, retrospective narration delivered by Zack. Rita becomes the classic *femme fatale*, mirroring the “male fantasy” of film noir, manipulating her hapless lackey into doing her dirty work (Place 47). As far as Rita’s performing goes, the mournful ballad, “Blue Moon,” is replaced with a sexually deviant tune, “I Told Ya I Loved Ya.” Her attire is also noticeably changed, more than a little reminiscent of Gilda’s outfit from her notorious strip tease scene, and Rita’s performance even includes Gilda’s characteristic hair flip. In one particularly noir shot, Zach is seen playing his trumpet in an open window, again representing one of Ebert’s requirements, “shabby residential hotels with a neon sign blinking through the window” (Ebert). Filled to the brim with dangerous liaisons, curling wisps of smoke, and faux-poetic one-liners (such as “cause if you stop dreaming, you’re just wasting eight hours a

night” or “she smelled of violets and rainy nights, what I didn’t realize at the time was that she also smelled of trouble”), this episode is immensely true to the style and narrative devices of film noir. Furthermore, the whole plot embodies yet another of Ebert’s conditions of classic noir: “relationships in which love is only the final flop card in the poker game of death” (Ebert).

The character of Rita, as depicted in both dreams, serves as a perfect representation of the two female archetypes commonly found in film noir: the *femme fatale* and the “woman as redeemer” (Place 60). As the story transitions between dream sequences, so does her entire characterization and role in the story, alternating between a woman who gets things done and a woman whom things are done to. Maddie’s version of Rita “gives love, understanding (or at least forgiveness), asks very little in return (just that he come back to her) and is visually passive and static” (Place 60). The nurturing Rita stands unaware of the plan to kill her husband until moments before the murder occurs and when it does she is made to stand to the side and let it happen, the truest argument for her passivity. Meanwhile David’s Rita, a construct of male fantasy, “is defined by her sexuality;” as “the dark lady” she “has access to it and the virgin does not” (Place 47). She “is exciting, criminal, very active, and sexy” and her contrast to her much safer counterpart could hardly be more drastic (Place 61). In a way, the inherent duality of her character is indicative of an all too common theme in film noir: the “duplicitous nature” of the feminine model (Place 58).

As dream sequences are wont to do, each of these dreams serves as a representation of how Maddie and David perceive their world, and allow us a closer look into both character’s worst fears: each other. Maddie and David had one of the most aggravating will-they won’t-they relationships in television at the time, largely because they were both so obviously interested in the other and refused to do anything about it. “The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice” offers us a sneak peek into why

that is. Their refusal to move forward in the relationship stems from an intense fear of being hurt by the other; their noir-inspired dreams are less a projection of what they believe happened and more a worst-case scenario for a potential relationship with the other. In their own 1980s “real world,” these fears are overly dramatic and irrational. However, in the world of film noir, where all relationships are doomed to overwhelming disaster, they take on a certain plausibility and through the conceits of the genre the audience is granted a unique look into the characters’ subconscious.

“The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice” was a love-letter to the traditional noir of the ‘40s and ‘50s. On the opposite side of that spectrum, you have “Brown Betty,” one of *Fringe’s* most memorable episodes. Following the departure of his son, who left town after learning some unpleasant truths about his father, Walter Bishop smokes a copious amount of a strain of marijuana he has dubbed Brown Betty. When he and his lab assistant are then called upon to watch their boss’s niece, Ella, she requests that Walter tell her a story. What follows is a tale containing one of the strangest mash-ups of genres ever seen. Feeding off the show’s sci-fi roots, the story also takes on characteristics of film noir, musicals, and fairy tales. Walter’s mission with this tale is to tell the kind of story his mother would have loved: according to him, she was a lover of musicals and detective stories, particularly those of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. And so, Walter regales young Ella with the tale of private eye, Olivia Dunham, who could not solve the case of how to mend a broken heart. She is set on the trail of Peter Bishop by a woman who turns out to be an actress hired by a scientist named Walter Bishop. Walter Bishop is the inventor of all the wonderful things in the world: bubblegum, flannel pajamas, rainbows, even hugs, not to mention one of his latest, singing corpses. However, a special glass heart that had been keeping him alive was stolen by Peter Bishop. It is later revealed that Walter gets his inventions by stealing the dreams

of children and replacing them with nightmares, and that the heart was Peter's all along. Walter begs Peter to give him a second chance, but Peter refuses and he and Olivia leave with the heart. The ending is later revised by Ella to be a happy one, "a proper ending."

"Brown Betty" functions, in both form and style, as though modern day characters were dropped into the world of hard-boiled fiction. Each stereotypical element is present but with its own unique and contemporary twist. Our protagonist: a jaded private-eye in the thematic style of Hammett, Chandler, and Hemingway who, twist, is a woman. Our antagonist: a dangerous, manipulative woman who, twist, is not sexualized. Our great whatsit: a glass heart which, twist, can be shared. The first two twists, however, are probably the most significant. Even aside from the color, the technology, and the intermittent singing, one of the aspects of "Brown Betty" that differs so from classic noir is its representations of women. Olivia Dunham, Private Eye, her assistant Esther, the wily Nina Sharp, all reject traditional noir's low necklines, floppy hats, and high heels (Ebert). Each is neither solely a "grim heroic victim" nor purely "respectable but callous" (Durgnat 47). They each exhibit something that was not often afforded female characters of the '40s: depth. This phenomenon is driven home all the more with Janey Place's "spider woman" being replaced by Walter's *homme fatale*. The seemingly up-right client who in turn is revealed to be villainous in more ways than one, and leads himself to his own destruction. Nina Sharp's all-male henchman even defect to Walter's side by the end of the episode. In "Brown Betty," it is the men who are "constantly shifting" (Place 51). The women become the "stable" and "dependable" sex (Place 51).

By far one of the most intriguing aspects of this episode is the world of the story, as painted through the mise-en-scene and narrative choices. The sets, clothing, and speech are all reminiscent of the '40s and '50s: jazz clubs, fedoras, and "cops

on the beat." That being said, the world is also vibrantly colored and technologically advanced. People talk on cell phones and cut out other people's hearts with prototype laser knives. Add to that the glass heart, so strong that it is a sought-after power source, some hybrid of technology and magic. These characteristics categorize "Brown Betty" as future-noir. This subgenre "originates in science fiction and the noir thriller genre. The affinity between science fiction and future noir is the result of the first's evolution and expansion and the latter's association with noir's structure, mood and convention" (Aziz). Indeed, Walter's unabridged story is a prime example of noir's mood; his original ending dooms a man, one pleading for a second chance, to die. Forgiveness is begged for and not given. However, the themes of science fiction are just as present: the evolution of technology, its effects on humanity, and just how far we can go in the name of science.

However, the truly exciting thing about "Brown Betty" is that its identity does not stop with future noir. Bits and pieces of musical numbers litter the story and the fairy tale elements of magic, "once upon a time," and "happily ever after" tie the story together. Most importantly, the components of *Fringe's* own overarching plot co-exist within Walter's story. The season was not blatantly interrupted by a quirky sci-fi, musical, film noir with the sole purpose of being different, but instead played on the attitudes of each separate genre in order to step back and provide the audience with a finer depth of field. Walter's story serves as a representation of how he sees himself and his relationship with his son. Just like him, the story version of Walter has done reprehensible things under the guise of good intentions, and when we, the audience, see Walter refuse to give his fictional counterpart a happy ending we are made to understand that he does not feel he deserves one. Staying true to one of the most important tenets of film noir, "at no time misleading you into thinking there is going to be a happy ending" (Ebert), the story's original ending has Peter turn his

back on Walter, remarking "It's too late, Walter. Some things you can't undo." It is a truly heart-breaking moment, especially as it pertains to Walter's current mental state, and it is made clear that the real Peter's departure has left Walter feeling empty and dying, as though his heart has been taken away.

There is no perfect formula for a Noir Episode, same as there is no perfect formula for a film noir itself. Every show approaches the concept in its own unique way and a writer is required to answer numerous questions about how they wish to proceed. Is this episode a continuation of the story or a simple filler episode? Will its categorization as a Noir Episode be ordained by the insertion of select noir elements or will it be a full-blown homage, pulling out all the stops? Is it going to function as a more traditionalist noir? Or perhaps maybe future or neo-noir? Most Out-of-Genre Episodes are utilized as palate cleansers, meant to help the audience relax after a series of high-intensity episodes. More often than not they are meant to be fun, light-hearted, and a much-needed break from the "real world;" *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* musical episode "Once More, With Feeling" was one of few Out-of-Genre Experiences that turned that function on its head, as less of a filler episode than many of the show's in-genre experiences. Similarly, episodes such as "The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice" and "Brown Betty" proved that a genre shift did not have to be disruptive; through the use of film noir elements and conventions, they managed to push the story along and develop depth of character in ways that a typical episode never could.

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