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Introduction:
Challenging Norms and Representing Diversity

by Matthias Stephan

We all find ourselves in trying times these days, in the middle of a global pandemic, and with a changing political landscape that rather than drawing us together in the promise of globalization, has resulted in an ever more polarized society. Even with a common threat, the imagined promise of a coming together often found in utopian and dystopian discourses alike, has not materialized. Rather, we are faced with increasing diversity, nationalism, and global divides between regions that have and those that do not. Nations have divided over religion and access to increasingly scarce resources, the Global North and South debate the efficacy of providing vaccines and to whom they should be first distributed. The world has debated individual responsibility and freedom, often rejecting or even Othering those with whom they disagree. This increasing tension has only exacerbated an already fertile landscape for considering the concept of Otherness, the discourses that contribute to its construction, and the processes by which people are Othered, use and even weaponize Otherness, and the consequences of those actions.

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As political tensions run high, and violence erupts in hotspots across the globe – from the farmer's strikes in India, to climate protests in major cities, the gender and racial concerns that led to the #metoo and #BlackLivesMatter movements, to direct violent assaults on governmental institutions – there have also been calls to return to a sense of normalcy, a sense of decorum. There have been calls to return to the common values, to universal constructions of polite discourse, rational debate, and unity. In the US, for example, there has been a look back to its origins, to the Consitution and the Declaration of Independence, as expressing common guiding principles to which all men can participate. Yet, as James Boyd White notes, in considering the opening line of the Declaration 'When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people,' the voice presented "is not a person's voice, not even that of a committee, but the 'unanimous' voice of the 'thirteen united States' and of their 'people'" (232). In framing the Declaration as expressing the will of all Americans, Jefferson helped to forge an American identity, but at the same time his discourse covered over the diversity of the people for whom he purported to speak. As Angela Harris notes, "Despite its claims, however, this voice does not speak for everyone, but for a political fraction trying to constitute itself as a unit of many disparate voices; its power lasts only as long as the contradictory voices remain silenced" (1990, 253). This construction does not create an American identity that is all-inclusive, a 'We the People' that includes all of those who have the right to claim to be American. Rather it constructs a particular set of Americans and normalizes the notion that this subset of a population is the norm by which others should be judged – and rejected. It allows for that rejected population to be Othered should they be, by whatever shifting criteria, not constitutive of that norm.

This normalizing influence, rather than returning a debate back to an unbiased, universally rational platform, actually serves to reinforce a status quo which often supports the very dynamics which led to the increased tension.

Exploring the concept of Otherness, and those situations in which othering happens, allows us to consider the underpinnings of that supposed normalcy, and through consideration of the multiple experiences of those present, and in confrontation with the idea of the Other, change our collective discourse. The set of papers found in this issue of *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, all work, in their various cases and fields, to challenge this sense of normalizing discourse.

In our first issue in 2010, Maria Beville wrote that "Otherness is in many ways, a slippery and difficult term. A contradiction is apparent whereby the very process of naming the other, whether in specific or generalized terms, is bound by the simultaneous disappearance of the concept." That contradiction is brought to the fore when considering the operation of Otherness, in its ability to both construct the 'same' and be separated or rejected from it. The naming of the Other can demystify, allowing the Other to take a place within representation, but by that same operation it is no longer Other. It becomes known. That represents an inviting into the discourse, and reflects an ethical framework. Several of the chapters in this issue draw on ethical discourse, primarily from Levinas.

Levinas' description of the encounter with the face of the Other, the face that demands consideration even before identification or recognition, before ascertaining the intentions of this entity, challenges the notions of tribalism and an inherent sense of the protection of the same. The Other, in its Otherness, produces an ethical obligation, a demand of compassion, protection, and a restriction on the actions of them faced with this Other. With this confrontation, one is not free to act, to assert its will, without restraint. One is now embedded in a community, one must give up an assumption of dominance and superiority – following this ethical stance.

In *On Cosmopolitanism,* Derrida, drawing on medieval tradition in France, develops this stance in his concept of hospitality. In articulating what he calls "*the* Great Law of Hospitality – an unconditional Law, both singular and universal,

which ordered that the borders be open to each and every one, to every other, to all who might come, without question or without even having to identify who they are or whence they came" Derrida presents this Levinasian ethical stance as a Law, binding the actions of the hosts (18). This stance has broad implications, not only for migration and the flow of capital, but on climate change, human rights, and intercultural communication.

Not everyone, historically or even in these times of global pandemic, agrees with this open stance. As Susan Yi Sencindiver, Marie Lauritzen and Maria Beville argue in *Otherness: A Multilateral Perspective* "encounters with strangers often breed suspicion, hostile mistrust and denigration" just as "it can also result in the recognition of the open arms of hospitality – representing the most elementary of ethical self-other relations" (21). Those uses of Otherness also need to be explored, and the challenges to norms by people who seek to divide and Other, as well as seek to understand and open arms, is equally present in the current issue.

Alain Badiou argues that those ethical stances, as articulated by Levinas and Derrida, ultimately lie in religious principles, embedded in a particular ethical discourse, and thus not having the possibility to appeal universally. Postmodern scholars, like Lyotard and Derrida, have long sought to understand the underpinning assumptions of our discourse, the mechanisms that allow for us to treat something as universal, as a norm, as binding upon all people. Absent a universal appellant, it becomes incumbent on a consensus to support our actions and discourse, morals rather than ethics, which, like legal discourse, are built on explicit notions, like laws, adhered to by a consensus. Yet, even that is challenged, and thus can be best understood by considering the operations of Otherness. As Maria Beville notes, "whether a relationship defined by fear, hostility and struggles for domination, or by independence, representation and hospitality, polarity in the lexis of otherness consistently arises" (2010).

The invocations of fear, and assignation of our anxieties of precarity, loss of identity, or changing circumstances (personal, political, environmental), to an Other, is also present in a number of the articles in this current issue. Ian Hanley-Lopez defines "a 'race' as a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry. I argue that race must be understood as a sui generis social phenomenon in which contested systems of meaning serve as the connections between physical features, faces, and personal characteristics" (193). That social construction, as he details, is fluid, as our own social structures often shift, and race is not the only identity marker that is fluid in this fashion. We have seen shifting definitions of belonging along lines of citizenship, class, gender, queer, and other visual and non-visual cues – with consequences often rooted in the aspiration or maintenance of power and privilege.

This power and privilege is not limited to political action – in its etymological roots dealing with the city and the population, but also speaks to how we treat our environment as well. The aesthetic considerations of some of the papers, and the appeal to the very structures that we use to organize ourselves and our thinking, speak more broadly than human social conventions. Furthermore, there is also a call to incorporate our frame to consider the situation of non-human animals, questioning the too common convention of othering those that cannot speak for themselves, in a language that we, anthropocentrically, consider the only means of communication. In a contribution to *Otherness: A Multilateral Perspective,* Svend Erik Larsen considers the possibility of narrating the Other, noting that in times of globalization, "we can no longer narrate the other as *Other* – in the heart of darkness, or dress the other up as the gods, demons and monsters of antiquity in order to position it in a particular place with a clear identity. It is embedded in our everyday surroundings, a fact that is enhanced in the multicultural setting of globalized cultures" (202). This spatial consideration,

noting that Otherness is within society and not only an appeal to an outside or distant form, is also found throughout this issue. Whether considering the house, or the battlefield, the city or a dining table, notions of Otherness pervade our discourse.

Consideration of the non-human animal are not distant from other concerns, they function as part and parcel of the discourse and rhetoric of Otherness. Migrants are not only presented as undesirable on economic grounds, but are associated with other elements we are happy to exclude from society – whether that is as criminals or, using the metaphorical association, predators – both human and non-human. As Sune Borkfelt notes, in that same volume, "human perceptions of non-human animals, and also the question of how our representations of non-humans affect our perceptions, warrant further discussion not just because these perceptions determine our treatment of non-human animals. They can also influence our perceptions, and thus ultimately our othering, of some human groups, which we may somehow associate with those non-human animals or with the places where these animals live" (139). In discussing these issues, and making them present, we hope to challenge the naturalness of these frames, the norms upon which they rely, and the universal appeal they make. As we can see, it is the rhetoric of Otherness, which is often invoked to support exclusion, demonization, and abjection, which is the inverse of the ethical obligation to which Derrida and Levinas aspire, the frame of responsibility.

The issue begins with these ethical questions. **J.A. Bernstein** opens the issue with an insightful article that interrogates the human/animal divide after the advent of Modernism. **Where "Beasts' Sprits Wail": Rosenberg, Sassoon, and the Emergence of Animal Philosophy** challenges the naturalness of the use of a human/animal divide, based on a perceived or constructed ontological or cosmological divide. Rather, he contends that it is an ethical divide in how we treat those that share characteristics with humans, such as a common mortality,

that is salient when considering our actions and assumptions. In this he draws on *Animal Philosophy* stating that "It is not reason that makes humans human, according to Levinas, but his relationship with the Other" (Atterton 2012, 54). This is demonstrated through a careful analysis of the poets of World War I, notably Isaac Rosenberg and Siegfried Sassoon, and their treatment of the animals found in the war. These readings destabilize the human/animal divide by denying anthropocentric interpretations, following Darwin and Salt among others, and presenting the commonalities found in their wartime experiences. The cruelty of the war challenges not only the efficacy of war in solving political problems, but highlight the necessity of ethical considerations, not only looking back to the Great War, but forward in our own time's consideration of animal rights and our own ethical framework in dealing with Otherness.

Alice Borrego also draws on Levinasian ethics in her consideration of State-Of-The-Nation novels. Drawing on Ricouer's notion of responsibility, in its historical and political dimensions, Borrego connects this to a responsibility to the Other in its 'unabsorbable alterity' (Levinas…). **The Collapse of Responsibility: Staging Fragmented Communities in State-of-the-Nation Novels** questions the idea that responsibility, as a universal (or normative) framework can exist in a post-WWII society fraught with fragmentation. Through a careful reading of the evolution of the state-of-the-nation novels, she presents the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion, which lead to the 'in-betweenness of the fragile,' positioned as an outcast that needs to be cared for. The chronological presentation then provides a look at more contemporary contributors to the genre, which showcase the individual cut loose from the underpinnings of a normative sense of responsibility and community, exposing the inability of the nation to engage and answer the demands of the fragile.

Moving from a philosophically or ethical approach to an esthetic one, **Veruska Cantelli** considers the position of people with lives on the margins of

society as represented in the prose works of Tomioka Taeko. Cantelli's exploration in **The Dance of Bones: Tomioka Taeko's Stage of Reprobates** uses the esthetic elements of Taeko's prose in presenting the themes of a dislocation of knowledge and its instantiation outside of normative structures. Removed from the implicit meaning-making of society, as well as from traditional narrative tools in placing the characters, the considered novels exemplify both the Otherness and the height of Taeko's prose. In placing these novels into dialogue with other constructions of identity, or ways of framing social structures, Cantelli exposes the challenges of Taeko use of language and its ability to showcase rather than explain. This Cantelli connects with feminism and the writer's collective ('gumi'), which are structured outside the reproductive expectations of Japanese patriarchy, and this dislocation of knowledge, which Cantelli emphasizes, is reflected in the rejection of norms and the embracing of an outside or Othered status.

Continuing the theme of expressing Otherness through imagery, **Belkis González** considers how visual culture can be used in presenting the shifting value of kinship, relationships, and identity. In **Queer Kinship: "Exposed to the Other as a Skin is Exposed to What Wounds It"** González considers the art of Catherine Opie and its visual representations of kinship. In this, she highlights how such representations, situated by astute readings of the photography of Opie and its expressed contextual frameworks, not only represent but also present and make visible marginalized queer identities. González then situates her readings of Opie's own work in comparison to the film *The Kids are all Right*, providing additional contested readings of family through visual media of both the photograph and the visual aspects of the film spaces. The consideration of collective identities outside the normalized frame of society connects this piece to Cantelli's, and González further draws on a Levinasian framework in presenting the self/Other liminality of Opie's photography.

Marshall Lewis Johnson continues with a reading of the portrayal of a visual image, as he frames the construction of the iconic Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde. **"All art is quite useless": The Gothic Doubling of the Portrait in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*** uses the notion of 'circumnarration' to (re)read this well-studied novel in a new light. Johnson juxtaposes the 'monstrousness' of Dorian's homosexuality as depicted (visually) and portrayed (novelistically) with the 'eternal beauty' as expressed at the end of the novel. The image, and his homosexuality, is thus both liminal and Other, which also reflects Dorian's own relationships with these Othered aspects of his identity – as a function of Victorian social norms. Johnson's use of Gothic doubling, or the splitting of the self, shows how Dorian's abjection of parts of himself "acts as a significant indication of the limitations of Victorian social mores along with the far more lasting power of art." Contrasted with the article by González, where Opie uses the perception of her own Otherness to challenge her exclusion from normative frames of family, here Dorian's own abjection of parts of himself is what leads to his self-acceptance of his socially and legally unacceptable (at the time) identity.

Shifting and uncertain identification is also a feature of **Siobhan Lyons** consideration of the Nietzchean notion of the *Übermensch*. **Unmasking the *Übermensch*: The Evolution of Nietzsche's Overman from David Bowie to *Westworld*** charts the interpretations and uses of the concept in a variety of settings, after a detailed consideration of the uncertain framings and definitions of the concept. *Übermensch* is various read as transcending humanity and its anthropocentric goals, in both a posthuman and transhuman framework. Furthermore, Lyons considers the notion of the human as overcome by the *Übermensch.* Each of these frames lie on the liminal nature of the signification associated, whether that falls along the moral lines of good and evil, or the traditional notions of self and Other, Lyons challenges these traditional binaries

placing other forms of relationality in focus. This liminal figure is then applied in pop cultural contexts, notably considering the musical framings of David Bowie, or the conceptual television series *Westworld*, especially those contexts in which humanities own base assumptions are challenged in interesting and meaningful ways, as highlighted by Lyons' analysis.

Rachel Narozniak also considers shifting definitions in her consideration of the policies of Giuliani's stint as mayor of New York. **The Sex That Didn't Matter: Structural Violence in the Giuliani Administration's Redistricting of New York City** presents the framing of disability and difference in New York City's rezoning of the Time Square area. Drawing on both disability studies and historical accounts of the Samuel Delany, Naroziniak shows how The 42nd St. Development project Othered the same-sex population which once frequented the area and how that project determined that they were "bodies that did not matter" as they were bodies that did not conform to the socially imposed norms concomitant with the economic 'development' of the area. Narozniak uses the concept of structural violence, and a social model of disability, to draw attention to what is lost when normative definitions are presented rhetorically and treated legally as universal ideals, Othering a population that doesn't conform and through that action of Otherness is displaced. The construction of the same-sex patrons of Times Square before the rezoning as Other allowed the Giuliani administration to displace them, demonstrating a shifting and politically motivated use of Othering in Narozniak's important spatial and structural analysis.

Following on the theme of the rhetorical use of Otherness in constructing a system, **Eva Pallesen** considers how the concept of organization and management studies is framed through a historical use of Othering. Her analysis in **Organization, seduction and the othered senses: The erotic ear and the poisonous tongue** considers how aspects of the senses, and the priority given in particular to the visual, has reduced our understanding and led to a splitting of

bodily concepts. In readings of literary, philosophical and musical texts, Pallesen argues for the reincorporation of the auditory and taste, providing for a reconciliation of the Otherness created as a legacy of the scientific reliance on Cartesian concepts. Pallesen argues for, using a Levinasian ethical framework, an openness to the Other in an organizational context, and a centring of the corporeal encounter, arguing for the body not only as a site of research but as an active tool, especially in the organizational scholarship of Othered senses.

A similar call to a shift in the ethics around Othering, especially as framed in a scientific context, can be found in our last article by **Sara Schotland**. In **Disfigured, Neanderthal, and Thoroughly Alien" Exploitation of the Other in Asimov's "Ugly Little Boy"** she considers the short story by Isaac Asimov, which through time travel and science fictional frames, allows Schotland to consider the notions of stigma, disability and Otherness in a discussion of the Neanderthal boy, Timmie. In the story, Timmie is not recognized as fully human, and thus is not subject to the same ethical framework as other humans would be. This consideration of the liminal nature of our own identity construction, and how his physical appearance, background, and 'alienness' are used to justify his differential treatment. Schotland argues for a care ethics framework which treats all others as deserving of our care and not limiting our ethical responsibility to those that share certain (ever shifting) characteristics with the self-same. She then uses this to further discuss real-life othering of 'aliens' in the form of migrant populations, who deserve a similar notion of care. This empathetic framework, she argues, should be applied regardless of Timmie's liminal positioning, as man/ape, human/alien, or present/past. This ties both Bernstein's consideration of the human/animal liminality using Levinasian considerations and the notion of a shifting frame of Othering using visual considerations, all within notions of Otherness.

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Where "Beasts' Sprits Wail"
Rosenberg, Sassoon, and the Emergence of Animal Philosophy

J. A. Bernstein

Eleven months before he was killed in fighting near Arras, Isaac Rosenberg, the Bristol-born poet, drafted a play called "The Unicorn." The play was unfinished, and only three early holographs survive. In a letter of August 3rd, 1917, however, he explains that it is about "a decaying race who have never seen a woman; animals take the place of women, but they yearn for continuity" (2012, 342). In another letter, he adds: "It is to be a play of terror—terror of hidden things and the fear of the supernatural" (2012, 344). Indeed, lines from the play – "spectres wail,/ Stricken trunks' and beasts' spirits wail across to mine" ("The Unicorn" 2012, 182) – make it sound like a shell-shocked version of Blake.

While the play is set in some fabled and mythical universe, there is no doubt that Rosenberg, witnessing the carnage around him, transposed the imagery of the trenches into his literary vision. More peculiar still is the collapsing of human and animal into some amorphous composite, or what he calls "bestial man shapes that ride dark impulses" and "[cry] through the forest" ("The Unicorn" 2012, 187). The image would sound even stranger if it did not directly parallel Rupert Brooke's pre-war description, in "The Song of the Beasts," of those "crawling on hands and feet" who "are men no longer, but less and more/ beast

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and God" (2010, 17),[1] or what Siegfried Sassoon, writing, like Rosenberg, in the trenches and describing a pain-wracked body in "The Death Bed," called "a prowling beast" that "gripped and tore" (1949, 35).

Critics like Christina Gerhardt (2006, 159-178) and Karalyn Kendall-Morwick (2013, 100-119), among others, have pointed out that Modernism entailed, among other facets, a basic questioning of what it means to be human, or distinct from other animals.[2] Some, such as Roger Fouts trace this questioning all the way back to Darwin (Fouts and McKenna 2011, 21).[3] Others, such as Keith Tester, point to 1894, the year of Henry Salt's groundbreaking *Animals' Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, as the "epistemological break" and the point at which humans seriously began to reconsider their roles and relations to other animals (Tester 1991, 156). Regardless of exactly when this new conception came about though, it is worth asking what prompted it: what specific forces, such as those of capitalism, industrialization, or atomization, as Marx might have it, forced humans to reconsider their place in the spectrum of creation, especially in the Modernist age? One answer, and one that becomes increasingly clear in looking at the writings of Rosenberg and Sassoon, along with other "trench poets," is the Great War itself, where over nine million human combatants were killed.[4] Alongside them, an unprecedented eight million animals served and died—mainly

[1] Despite the apparent overlap in their imagery, there is no evidence that Rosenberg had read Brooke's pre-war "The Song of the Beasts," much less derived "The Unicorn" from it. In fact, while Rosenberg admired Brooke's "Town and Country," he explains in a letter of 1916 that he does not care for the rest of Brooke's work (Rosenberg 2012, 309).

[2] Others who attribute to Modernism a breakdown in the traditional animal-human distinction include: Rohman, *Stalking* 2008, 12; Ellmann, 2010, 11; Armstrong, 2008, 142; Lippit, 2000, 23. Also see Haraway 2013 [1989], Haraway 2008, 9, 304.

[3] Note that the article contains McKenna's summary of Fouts's lecture, in which he points out that "since Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, this question [of human exceptionalism] has been a central one for many humans." Fouts explains that "Darwin challenged…Cartesian delusions and suggested a horizontal continuum [among species] with no big gaps or radical breaks" (21).

[4] The Great War's casualty estimates are a subject of continual debate and depend largely on which causes of death are included (e.g., disease) and which wars are included (e.g., the Russian Civil War).

horses, mules, oxen, and dogs.[5] Is it a coincidence that writers like Rosenberg and Sassoon paid newfound attention to the animality of the human spirit? Did this attention come from serving alongside the very "beasts" they decried?

What a close look at several of these "trench poems" suggests is the degree to which the Great War itself prompted a fundamental rethinking of the animal-human dichotomy, which had certainly been in flux since Darwin, if not earlier, but took on new urgency in an era of mass human and animal conscription and slaughter. Approaching the poems from this standpoint is helpful, not only for reinterpreting their meanings, but also for gauging their particular conceptions of the pastoral—or the "anti-pastoral," as Paul Fussell (2000, 231) and Sandra Gilbert (1999, 185) term it—as well as the war's broader role in recasting the identity of humans, or, as Wilfred Owen aptly calls them in his "Anthem for Doomed Youth," "those who die as cattle" (1983, 99).

From a critical standpoint, Sassoon and Rosenberg, along with Brooke and Owen, have come to occupy what Stacy Gillis has called "the center" of "literary accounts of the First World War" (2007, 102). This is not to say that their work is in any way the best, nor even the most typical, of the trench poets. In fact, both were deemed perennial outsiders while serving—Sassoon on account of his aristocratic birth and mixed-religious background, Rosenberg by virtue of his Jewish ethnicity, as well as his artistic leanings. Yet their poems remain among the most discussed and thus form a good basis for comparison. They also work as thematic counterpoints, with Rosenberg's poems generally embodying a more mystical vision, and Sassoon's, like Owen's, tending towards the earthly and bodily.

It should be said that animals figure widely and richly in the writings of many of the trench poets—Edmund Blunden, Edward Thomas, and Ivor Gurney,

[5] Estimates of total animal deaths in the war vary considerably. Jilly Cooper, for instance, maintains in her popular history that at least eight million horses alone died in the Great War, a figure that Kata Fowler also cites in her report. Cooper, 2010, 12; Fowler, 2010, 8.

especially—and thus an account of this sort is invariably limited. Moreover, a fuller treatment of the depiction of animals in WWI and their subsequent impacts on human self-conceptions in Britain requires a close look at earlier works of war writing, as well as broader transformations in the history of human-animal identities, both of which I explore elsewhere (Bernstein 2014).

As a point of clarification, the question of how humans *treat* animals is different from the question of whether humans *are* animals. The first pertains to ethics, the second to ontology, or cosmology. As many have pointed out, however, particularly Henry Salt, and more recently Rhoda Wilkie, the two questions are related and should be treated together in so far as the Judeo-Christian conception, according to which humankind is created in the image of God and is granted "dominion" over animals (Genesis 1:27-8), has historically offered humankind a warrant for dominating animals and seeing itself as ontologically distinct.[6] Indeed, it is precisely this "old anthropocentric superstition," as Salt terms it (1980, 13), that finds its gravest challenge in the trenches, where soldiers, as Sassoon puts it in "Remorse," "flounder" and die "like pigs" (1949, 91).

Long before the first guns erupted in France, Nietzsche was forecasting a cataclysmic war that would "say yes to the barbarian, even to the wild animal within us" (Hobsbawm 1989, 303) and Westerners, particularly in Victorian Britain, were beginning to rethink their ontology. Clearly, Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871) also played major roles in questioning human exceptionalism. Of course, Darwin was not without precedent in this regard, as many, including Count de Buffon, Lamarck, Alfred Russell Wallace, and even Malthus, questioned humans' susceptibility to environmental forces, and writers as diverse as Thackeray and Dickens were routinely comparing their

[6] Citing this passage in Genesis, for example, Wilkie points out that "longstanding Judeo-Christian teachings and philosophical perspectives also played a key part in reinforcing the subordinate and thing-like status of animals." (Wilkie 2017, 281).

protagonists to animals, often to great comedic effect.[7] Nevertheless, it is hard to overstate the impact of Darwin's assertion that the "difference in mind between man and the higher animals...is one of degree and not of kind" (1872, 101). As Richard Sorabji explains, *Descent* reframed the debate over origins, since "no trait," according to Darwin, is "unique to man, not emotion, curiosity, imitation, attention, memory" (Sorabji 1995, 131). Donald Worster, the ecological historian, adds that *Origin*'s effect was also shattering, since "the real issue was whether man could admit that he was fully a part of nature or not" (1994, 182-3). Worster actually credits Darwin with having engendered two contradictory impulses: a "Victorian ethic of domination over nature, and an emerging biocentric attitude that was rooted in arcadian and Romantic values" (Worster 1994, 114). That conflict also resonates across the writings of World War I.

Moreover, this question of human animality becomes crucial in appraising the shock that the Great War posed, particularly to Edwardian Britain. As early as May of 1915, for example, the British Bryce Commission, charged with reporting on alleged German atrocities in Belgium, described "the more savage and brutal natures, of whom there are some in every large army," and explained how they are "liable to run to wild excess" (Bryce Report 1915). Certainly, the report reflects a lingering Victorian concern with regulating human temperaments, particularly in the context of unbridled violence. But the description is almost Nietzschean in acknowledging the "savage" element within human nature. Indeed, the report underscores the assessment of Michael Lundblad that "what is new at the turn of

[7] Thackeray, for instance, delights in comparing Becky Sharp to a "viper" (226) and Joseph Sedley to an "elephant" (Notes 945) in *Vanity Fair* (1848), remarking on the irony of their courtship: "A woman with fair opportunities, and without an absolute hump, may marry WHOM SHE LIKES. Only let us be thankful that the darlings are like the beasts of the field, and don't know their own power. They would overcome us entirely if they did" (Thackeray 1999, 34). Dickens sounds an equally acerbic and cautionary note when, in *Dombey and Son* (1848), he explains, "Mrs. Pipchin hovered behind the victim, with her sable plumage and her hooked beak, like a bird of ill-omen" (Dickens 2002, 164). Nearly all of Dombey's characters have animal names—Cuttle, Chick, Gills, MacStinger, Nipper, the Game Chicken—and animalesque descriptions pepper the novel, much as they do the bulk of his satirical works.

the [twentieth] century can be broadly characterized as a shift toward thinking about the human being as just another animal" (2009, 498).[8]

Paul Fussell, whose *Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) remains perhaps the defining critical account of WWI, surmised that it "took place in what was, compared with ours, a static world, where the values appeared stable and where the meaning of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable" (21). He is referring to a world where words like "honor" and "sacrifice" were used without irony to rally the masses (and they do show up repeatedly in publications like the Bryce Report).[9] But what that perceived stability overlooks is the degree to which humankind, as Lundblad, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, and many more have pointed out,[10] was already at war with itself, *over* itself, long before the shells started firing in France.

Sassoon composed "The Rear-Guard," one of his most-discussed poems, while serving on the Hindenburg Line in 1917. Like Owen's "Strange Meeting," which it may have helped to inspire, "The Rear-Guard" envisions a meeting between the speaker and a deceased soldier. Unlike in Owen's account, however, there is no intimacy in the ensuing encounter, as the victim, whose "fists of fingers clutched a blackening wound," is already ten months dead ("The Rear Guard," Sassoon 1949, 15). To the extent there is a realization, it is one of sheer "horror" and a pondering of the rigor mortis state of the dead. Equally notable are the bestial descriptions of the protagonist – "savage, he kicked a soft, unanswering heap"

[8] Lundblad's remark comes within the context of Jack London and turn-of-the century America, although there is little reason to think that his argument about "shifting constructions of the animal" could not apply to Great Britain, if not the Anglosphere generally, given the importance he ascribes to Social Darwinism and "post-Freudian frameworks" (Lundblad 2009, 498).

[9] The Bryce Report itself makes no mention of "sacrifice," but most official British reports of the period, such as Sir John French's 1st Despatch of 7-14 September 1914, do.

[10] Agamben's *The Open* explores in fuller detail how humans' uncertainty over their metaphysical status leads them to violence, among other acts, culminating in what he calls "the animalization of man" (Agamben 2003, 77). Derrida makes a similar claim in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, although he finds the problems of animality more grounded in language than metaphysics, arguing, for example, that "a certain wrong or evil…derives from" the word "animal" itself (Derrida 2008, 32).

(Sassoon 1949, 14) – and those he confronts in this semi-mythic "hell": "the dazed, muttering creatures underground/ Who hear the boom of shells in muffled sound" (Sassoon 1949, 15).

From an historical standpoint, Sassoon would have been no stranger to these "creatures"—human and animal alike—stationed along the front. By the end of the war, an estimated sixteen million horses had served (Roberts and Tucker 2005, 103), with roughly half of them having been killed by artillery, gunfire, starvation, hypothermia, and diseases like ringworm (Fowler 2010, 8). Sassoon encapsulates their slaughter in, among other works, his 1918 poem "The Road" where "stretched big-bellied horses with stiff legs,/ And dead men, bloody-fingered from the fight/ Stare up at caverned darkness winking white" (1949, 32). In *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), Sherston, his semi-fictional protagonist, dwells on such slaughter, admitting: "for I disliked the idea of good horses being killed and wounded, and I had always been soft-hearted about horses," a sentiment that was not atypical for the time, particularly among the officer class (Sassoon 1930, 135). Indeed, Robert Graves says much the same thing in *In Goodbye to All That* (1929), reflecting on the carnage of the Somme: "The number of dead horses and mules shocked me; human corpses were all very well, but it seemed wrong for horses to be dragged into the war like this" (1958, 209).

Outside of horses, an estimated 200,000 mules, 47,000 camels, and 11,000 oxen served, primarily, though no less fatally, in transport (Kean 1998, 167). Carrier pigeons were also routinely deployed and shot down. Finally, dogs were used widely as messengers, mascots, and even pack animals for carrying litters and guns. Estimates of the numbers of dogs that served range from 50,000 to a million, but all agree very few lived. As Henry Salt put it, "more suffering was caused to animals in a day of war than in a year of peace" (Kean 1998, 168-9), a fact of which Sassoon was undoubtedly aware.

Indeed, later poems like Sassoon's "Man and Dog" would highlight this affinity for dogs and the value they would come to embody for him in an otherwise degenerating world. As Jean Moorcraft Wilson explains in her biography of Sassoon, by the end of 1942, with the toll of the Second World War mounting, "his old Dandie Dinmont seemed one of the few 'decent things' left to him" (2003, 335), prompting him to write:

> What share we most—we two together?
> Smells, and awareness of the weather.
> What is it makes us more than dust?
> My trust in him; in me his trust.
>
> Here's anyhow one decent thing
> That life to man and dog can bring;
> One decent thing, remultiplied
> Till earth's last dog and man have died. ("Man and Dog," Sassoon 1949, 268)

Although Sassoon's account is by no means a vindication of animal rights or liberation – the poem's likely reference point, to be sure, is hunting – his verse emphasizes animal cognition and sensation, along with the blurring boundaries between human and animal, much as he does in "The Rear-Guard" in describing the "dazed, muttering creatures underground/ Who hear the boom of shells in muffled sound" (Sassoon 1949, 15). The sensations he "[shares]" with his terrier in "Man and Dog" (Sassoon 1949, 268) also go a way in debunking the myth of human exceptionalism, or what later critics like Carol Gigliotti would call "the idea that humans are radically different and distinct from or better than the rest of nature and other animals" (Gigliotti 2017, 192). In fact, these "[shared]" "smells" and "awareness of the weather" ("Man and Dog," Sassoon 1949, 268) anticipate a passage, that Gigliotti cites, by Barbara Noske, the Dutch anthropologist, in her groundbreaking work, *Beyond Boundaries* (1997): "Animals see smell, feel, taste, or hear the world against the background of their own frame of reference; they like us distinguish and select among sense impressions distinctions which we do not even know are there" (Gigliotti 2017, 192). Where Noske stresses the

unknowability of animal sensations, however, Sassoon stresses their perceived overlap with humans and the shared bond of "trust" that is engendered between the species, especially in the face of what he increasingly comes to see as their common mortality ("Man and Dog," Sassoon 1949, 268).

As Simon Featherstone remarks, one of the critical debates over the trench poets has been the extent to which their poems should be seen as "mythologizing" (Featherstone 1995, 21), with Bergonzi claiming in *Heroes' Twilight* (1965) that a more grounded and anti-propagandist reality was what the poems sought to convey, and Fussell, in contrast, arguing in *Modern Memory* (2000) that the effort was largely performative, and that the classical, mythical tradition gave the poets a more graspable mode of expression, or a language in which they could speak. As Fussell explains, pace Bergonzi, "the movement was towards myth, towards a revival of the cultic, the mystical, the sacrificial, the prophetic, the sacramental, and the universally significant. In short, towards fiction" (Fussell 2000, 131) Bergonzi, however, later altered his claims in the revised, 1996 version of *Heroes' Twilight*.[11] Even the original, 1965 version cites Borges's dictum that "all literature begins in myth, and ends there," a sentiment very much in the vein of Fussell's critique (Bergonzi 1965, 212).

Much of this debate might also depend on how "mythical" itself is defined and the extent to which the poets were merely revisiting classical sources or actually conjuring up worlds of their own. Sassoon does both, and in the case of "The Rear-Guard," the mode of mythology is what, among other factors, allows humans to shift between forms—from animal to human and living to dead. In fact, it is this very transmutability that helps to convey the dehumanizing essence of what many soldiers—and civilians, as we will see—experienced as a result of the war.

[11] Douglas Kerr first called this revision to my notice (Kerr 1997, 85).

In Sassoon's case, he could as easily be "running tireless, floating, leaping/ Down your web-hung woods and valleys" ("A Letter Home," Sassoon 1949, 41) as he could be "[standing]" with "the shapes of the slain in their crumpled disgrace" ("I Stood With the Dead," Sassoon 1949, 103)). Indeed, in a verse letter to Robert Graves, he describes the ghostly reappearance of their dead friend, David Culbert Thomas, a fellow-officer killed at Fricourt:

> We've been sad because we missed
> One whose yellow head was kissed
> By the gods, who thought about him
> Till they couldn't do without him.
> Now he's here again; I've seen
> Soldier David dressed in green,
> Standing in a wood that swings
> To the madrigal he sings. (Sassoon 1949, 42)

Ironically, the poem recalls the "dryads," or woodland nymphs that Sassoon depicted in his earlier poem of that title, written six years before the war erupted ("Dryads," Sassoon 1949, 54). While Avi Matalon notes that "the once timidly Georgian poet became more and more ferocious as the war progressed and casualties piled up" (Matalon 2002, 31), the truth is that Sassoon also underwent a strange return to pastoralism—a term I will explore shortly—in his verse, especially around 1917, and probably because of the trauma he endured at Mametz. In "When I'm a Blaze of Lights," for example, he admits, "Sometimes I think of garden nights/ And elm trees nodding at the stars" (Sassoon 1949, 14). And in "The Hawthorn Tree," he ponders his removal from the war, observing that "there's been a shower of rain/ And hedge-birds whistle gay" (Sassoon 1949, 80). Of course, Matalon is also right in that some of Sassoon's most bitter, direct, and anti-pastoral poems come out of this period, most famously "The General," where he describes the staff officers as "incompetent swine," and "Does It Matter?" where he sarcastically remarks that being blinded or crippled will not hinder a soldier, since "people will always be kind" (Sassoon 1949, 75, 76).

Certainly, the pastoral itself varies widely across periods and genres, and, as Raymond Williams pointed out, is extremely hard to define (Williams 1975, 14).[12] More recently, Ken Hiltner, among others, has come to see the pastoral in primarily ecological—although not specifically animal-based—terms. Looking at Renaissance writings in particular, he reads the pastoral as embodying an emerging "environmental consciousness." As far back as the Early Modern period in England, "nature," he explains, became something "worth fiercely fighting to preserve," even if it would be "as free as possible of human habitation" (Hiltner 2011, 6, 132). Although Hiltner's *What Else is Pastoral?* does not cite the Georgians or Modernists, his ecological approach goes a way in explaining what a poet like Sassoon might find so appealing in the "bird-sung joy/ Of grass-green thickets," as he calls it in "Prelude: The Troops" (Sassoon 1949, 67).

In "Prelude," Sassoon recounts how the soldiers "march from safety, and the bird-sung joy/ Of grass-green thickets, to the land where all/ Is ruin, and nothing blossoms but the sky" (Sassoon 1949, 67). Certainly the pastoral elegy has been long been conceived as a form of mournful reminiscence, with Milton's Uncouth Swain, for example, mourning his lost friend in "Lycidas," a prototype for the mode. In Sassoon's case, it is questionable whether the thickets or birds ever existed, or instead operate as ideals of a peaceful and severed past, or what Jon Silkin, looking at Sassoon's poem, calls a "pre-lapsarian pastoralism" (Silkin 1998, 155). Where Milton claims a present interaction with the natural world—"I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude/ And with forc'd fingers rude/ Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year" (Milton 1957, 120)—Sassoon's departing

[12] William Empson famously characterized the pastoral as "putting the complex into the simple" (Empson 1974, 22) and others, like Frank Kermode and Williams, ascribed an anti-urbanism to it (Kermode, 1952, 17; Williams 1975, 69). Paul Alpers, for his part, saw the representation as more literal and focusing exclusively on the "anecdote" of shepherds (Alpers, 1997, 15). Within the sphere of Romantic poetry, particularly that of Wordsworth, Jonathan Bate reads the pastoral as possessing an "evergreen language" (Bate 1991, 18). Within the elegiac pastoral tradition, Jahan Ramazani finds the Pathetic Fallacy to be the mode's "central trope," although he is quick to point out that Owen and other Modernists inject a strong element of irony into it (Ramazani, 1994, 71).

soldiers can only reflect on the current irony: that the sky is blossoming (presumably with shrapnel) and the land is devoid of any life. In fact, the central irony of "Prelude: The Troops" might well be that it represents an elegiac pastoral for soldiers who are still alive, raising the question of who is speaking, when, and under what circumstances.

Sassoon's grim vision of the pastoral, or the "anti-pastoral," as Fussell and Gilbert call it, frequently aligns humans with animals in their states of degradation. Sassoon's soldiers are "gnawed by rats" in "Dreamers"; die like "[flapping] fish" in "The Effect"; and fall down dead among the "big-bellied horses" in "The Road," all of which would suggest a kind of moral parity, if not conterminousness, with animals as a result of the war's senseless slaughter (Sassoon 1949, 72, 73, 32). Indeed, the fact that Sassoon never entirely abandoned the pastoral, despite his increasingly anti-war sentiments, also explains his lingering sense of human animality. It emerges strikingly in "Prelude: The Troops," where he addresses a group of dying soldiers: "O my brave brown companions, when your souls/Flock silently away, and the eyeless dead/Shame the wild beast of battle on the ridge" (Sassoon 1949, 67). The word "flock" could connote birds, a common metaphor for souls, in this case en route to Valhalla, and paralleling the "bird-sung joy" of the second stanza. Alternately, "flock" could connote sheep, highlighting the Arcadian resonance, if not the more common refrain of soldiers-as-herded-animals.[13] Certainly, the latter reading echoes Owen's question in "Anthem for Doomed Youth" of "what passing-bells for those who die as cattle?" (Owen 1983, 99)

It also worth asking whether Sassoon's depiction of his "companions" as animals does not correspond with a broader change unfolding across Great

[13] David Jones's epic poem, *In Parenthesis* (1937), for example, portrays the soldiers as "[hunted animals]," "lambs of the flock," men who slept in "horse-stalls," and figures "entrained in cattle trucks" (Jones 2003 [1937], 2, 6, 8, 9). As Paul Fussell remarks, their "world is now assuredly animal" (Fussell 2000, 147).

Britain. In a remarkable chapter on the history of animal rights, Hilda Kean details the role of the Great War in fomenting compassion for animals. Highlighting how animals were perceived as fellow "sufferers" on the front, she documents—and perhaps overstates—how much enlisted men valued dogs, and officers horses, as well as how much pity the sight of wounded animals could evoke from those on the home-front. She lists a variety of efforts, ranging from animal field hospitals to the establishment of Blue Cross charities, that attempted to relieve animal suffering in war, in ironic contrast to the conditions of the soldiers. In fact, by 1917, operations had been performed on over 1,600 dogs at field clinics, and veterinary medicine was becoming increasingly prevalent at home (Kean 1998, 169). Above all, Kean describes the emotional appeal of the animals, which, she claims, "proved to be companions and ciphers of sanity in an insane world" (Kean 1998, 165). She also mentions a *Times* article from 1917 describing the conditions at the Front: "It is the dogs who enlist the sympathies more than anything else. Like frightened children they join the ranks, nestling down by the side of the men for warmth and protection" (Kean 1998, 173).

In the case of Sassoon, whom Kean herself cites (though without mentioning the question of his mental sanity, as he saw it), the suffering of horses comes to emblematize the war's cruelty, personified most trenchantly, perhaps, by the ending of *Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man* (1928), where one gets violently snagged on barbed wire. It is also interesting to compare Sassoon's description of the dying and wounded in "Prelude: The Troops" with Owen's decidedly unromantic and non-Arcadian portrayal of the same. "Who are these?" Owen asks in "Mental Cases." "Why sit they here in twilight/ Wherefore rock they, purgatorial shadows,/ Drooping tongues from jaws that slob their relish" (Owen 1965, 35), a canine image that can hardly be described as comforting. It should be said, however, that while Owen tends towards the earthly in these depictions, several of his poems from the period do strike mystical notes. In "Spring

Offensive," for instance, he describes "the sky's mysterious glass," and in "Apologia pro poemate meo," he writes, "I, too, saw God through mud," although the latter is qualified with the description of "heaven" as nothing but "the highway for a shell" (Owen 1965, 52, 39-40). Even "Strange Meeting" itself notably takes place in the afterlife. Nevertheless, if Owen, circa 1918, is primarily earthly in his portraits, with humankind ranging from a poet who "[pours]" his "spirit" ("Strange Meeting," Owen 1965, 35) to a blood-seeking "brute" ("A Terre," Owen 1983, 178), Sassoon runs the gamut of creation, from pastoral nymphs to the slobbering hounds of hell.

Even more extreme is Rosenberg, whose war poems virtually exclude humans in favor of beasts and gods. "The Unicorn" apotheosizes that exclusion in so far as "animals take the place of women," as Rosenberg explains (Rosenberg 2012, 342), and the unicorn serves as the sole sexual outlet for Tel, a towering black chieftain of mythic proportion. Tel probably stems from the "Nubian" character of an earlier play, "The Amulet," which Rosenberg evidently scrapped. To the extent that the unfinished "Unicorn" has a message, it might be the question Saul poses: "Is the beast the figure of man's mateless soul?" Lilith, the Jewish mythical demon, offers one answer, responding, "Beauty is music's secret soul/ Creeping about man's senses./ He cannot hold it or know it ever/ But yearns and yearns to hold it once" (Rosenberg 2012, 186). Like Owen, Rosenberg presents his soldiers as vacillating between artist and killer. Like Sassoon, however, he also remains doubtful, at least in "The Unicorn," of humankind's capacity to "hold" real art.[14] Indeed, in his last letter, which was posted the day after he was shot and was addressed to Edward Marsh, the editor of the period-defining *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, Rosenberg doubted the strength of his own

[14] By parsing together several versions of the play, John Silkin reads "The Unicorn" as indicating that "beauty civilizes," but that it needs to be "rightly responded to," rather than "[raped]" or "seized" (Silkin, 1998, 313). What Silkin does not say, however, is whether, according to the play's logic, humans are capable of responding "rightly" to beauty.

poems: "I've seen no poetry for ages now so you mustn't be too critical—My vocabulary small enough before is impoverished and bare" (Rosenberg 2012, 364).

In fact, ambivalence about art's redemptive capacity underlies Rosenberg's most famous poem, "Break of Day in the Trenches." In it, Rosenberg berates a rat, which flits between sides, for its "cosmopolitan sympathies." He then asks it directly, "What do you see in our eyes/ At the shrieking iron and flame/ Hurled through still heaven? What quaver—what heart aghast?" The speaker, seizing a poppy from the field of the dead, sticks the flower behind his ear and muses that its "roots are in man's veins" (Rosenberg 2012, 106). The image is particularly haunting in light of Rosenberg's eventual death on such a field. Where a Romantic like Wordsworth might have found something uplifting in humankind's organic bond with the elements and other fruits of creation,[15] Rosenberg sees it as the prime piece of irony, remarking that this "queer, sardonic" rat is more "chanced" for life than some "haughty athletes" (Rosenberg 2012, 106).

What is equally illuminating about the encounter Rosenberg depicts between the speaker and rat is that it parallels another wartime image that would become somewhat pivotal in the history of animal philosophy. In "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights" (1975), Emmanuel Levinas recounts a dog named "Bobby" who roamed into the Nazi prisoner of war camp in which he and other soldiers were confined during WWII. Recounting the subjugation that he and other prisoners faced, Levinas explains that the gaze of other humans "stripped us of our human skin. We were subhuman, a gang of apes." Yet, he recalls how

[15] In "Tintern Abbey," for example, Wordsworth arguably presents a vision of organicism, describing "a motion and a spirit, that impels/ All thinking things, all objects of all thought,/ And rolls through all things" (Wordsworth 1992, ll.100-102). Thus, if M. H. Abrams is correct in maintaining that the poet sees himself as an "integral part of an organically, inter-related universe" (Abrams, 1971, 104), then it would be fair to say that Rosenberg turns this organic vision on its head by ironically depicting the interconnectedness of field poppies and human remains.

Bobby would show up "at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt that we were men" (Levinas 1997, 151-3).

As Christina Gerhardt explains, the precise meaning of Levinas' account is uncertain and continues to be debated. In her interpretation,

> …Levinas turns Kantian ethics on its head, by arguing that the possibility of acting ethically is rooted in a condition of passivity, in which I am compelled to respond to a command from an other with whom I find myself in a "face-to-face" relationship. This condition of responsibility in the face-to-face is something that Levinas regards as prior to any act of cognition, to any conscious act of which I could be the author. (Gerhardt 2006, 175)

Others, most famously Jacques Derrida, would explore Levinas's conception, especially in terms of rethinking human subjectivity and the historical human-animal divide (Derrida 2008, 113-4). Karalyn Kendall-Morwick, for her part, traces Levinas' account through other works of Modernist literature, especially Beckett's, to explore "animal alterity in the aftermath of World War II" (Kendall-Morwick 2013, 103). Interestingly, dogs, in the accounts of both Levinas and Beckett, Kendall-Morwick argues, "are co-implicated in the subjugation and sacrifice of other animals, complicating the ethical quandary in which Western humanism finds itself vis-à-vis the animal" (Kendall-Morwick 2013, 103). That subjugation of other animals would seem especially pertinent to Sassoon's account in "Man and Dog," where the "trust" that is engendered between the two species presumably comes at the expense of other, hunted animals (Sassoon 1949, 268).

What Rosenberg's poem reveals, however, is the extent to which he too anticipates Levinas' thinking about human-animal connections, especially the "face-to-face" relationships unearthed during war. Indeed, when Rosenberg's speaker asks of the rat in "Break of Day in the Trenches," "What do you see in our eyes/ At the shrieking iron and flame/ Hurled through still heavens?" he is underscoring the complexity of this human-animal interchange (Rosenberg 2012,

106). Like Levinas in his discussion of "Bobby," Rosenberg is also asserting a kind of *a priori* connection between the two species, one that does not depend on logical appeal or human reason. This is crucial in Rosenberg, because the war itself, personified by the "shrieking iron and flame" in "Break of Day in the Trenches," is fundamentally illogical to the speaker (Rosenberg 2012, 106). In a world in which "athletes" are "bonds to the whims of murder" or "sprawled in the bowels of the earth," any kind of humanism, much less an anthropocentric morality, is as absurd as the poppies that "[root]" in "man's veins" ("Break of Day in the Trenches," Rosenberg 2012, 106). Although Rosenberg, like Sassoon, does not explicitly spell out a view of animal rights as such, his vision ascribes a radically deanthropocentric connection between humans and animals and one that is personified, as in Levinas's account, by a peculiar, wartime gaze.

Of course, while Levinas argues in "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights" that we might "want to limit" the violence we perpetuate against animals in trying to appease our appetites (Levinas 1997, 151), he also emphasizes the moral "primacy" of humans, as Kendall-Morwick puts it (Kendall-Morwick 2013, 112). Ralph R. Acampora echoes this reading, arguing that for Levinas, "it was typically human(oid) faces only that figured in self-constitution" (Acampora 2017, 157). Others, such as Peter Atterton, interpret Levinas's account as more favorable to animal ethics. Atterton argues that Levinas's "philosophy in general displaces the Cartesian and Kantian definition of man as a rational being when ethics is posed. It is not reason that makes humans human, according to Levinas, but the relationship with the Other" (Atterton 2012, 54). Thus, "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights" has been and will likely remain subject to a variety of interpretations. Yet it is fair to say that its central concern is probably more with the paradox of human conceptions of animals than with outlining any detailed ethical formulation or method by which humans should treat them.

Like Levinas, Rosenberg's attitude towards this encounter with the animal is also heavily ironic, especially in so far as the rat is perceived to be more "chanced" to survive than the speaking soldier. Fussell, for his part, aptly notes "the irony in the transposition of human and animal roles that the trench scene has brought about" (Fussell 2000, 250). Where Sassoon, in "Prelude: The Troops," becomes elegiac, and even melancholic, over that inversion, Rosenberg takes bitter delight, placing a poppy behind his ear and, in that sense, mimicking the rat's "sardonic" behavior ("Break of Day in the Trenches," Rosenberg 2012, 106). Furthermore, whereas the dog in Sassoon's "Man and Dog" is limited in its agency to "[smelling]" and sensing the world around it (Sassoon 1949, 268), and where Levinas's "Bobby" can only "[jump] up and down" and "[bark] in delight" at the prisoners (Levinas 1997, 151-3), Rosenberg's rat in "Break of Day in the Trenches" actively mocks its human viewer, employing a "queer, sardonic grin" as it passes (Rosenberg 2012, 106) and suggesting, at least from the standpoint of these three poems, a more involved and intelligent role for non-humans. Indeed, one wonders whether the rat is already conscious—in a way that the humans in Rosenberg's poem, especially "the haughty athletes," are not—of humans' false sense of superiority and ontological uniqueness.

Certainly, the flower that the speaker in "Break of Day" wears marks him as an aesthete, rather than one of the "athletes" whom he is among. Yet it also relays his basic desperation as an artist trying to make sense of the world. In this respect, Rosenberg begins to answer the Darwinian paradox, as Donald Worster would have it, about how humans could dominate a world of which they were invariably part. The answer seems to be through art, or some sort of aesthetic transcendence, albeit one that Rosenberg, and in contrast to the later, High Modernists, found impossible to attain.

Fussell and Robert Hemmings have ascribed much importance to the use of poppies in World War I poetry, particularly in Rosenberg's "Break of Day in

the Trenches." Fussell relates them to a long English literary tradition, beginning with Chaucer and culminating in the pastoral elegy (Fussell 2000, 247, 250). Hemmings sees the flowers as "[invoking] another kind of symbolic reading, [that of] the unconscious, through the image of the roots reaching downwards into what is buried, into the traumatic memories of alarming encounters with death" (Hemmings 2008, 745). The first reading is essentially historic, the second psychological, and both are apt. Yet neither acknowledges the more immediate meaning, which, for Rosenberg, entailed questioning his relationship with Earth's elements: why he has been consigned to join them, and perhaps the mystery inherent in his having lived apart from them before the war. One could couch the dilemma in philosophical terms like metaphysics, cosmology, emanationism, as well as theories about history and trauma, but at bottom, the issue is much simpler. He is asking what he is doing here, and, like Levinas, questioning his affinity to other beings, human and nonhuman alike.

The original version of "Break of Day" ended differently. Here the description of an exploding shell is followed by a question: "what rootless poppies dropping?" (Rosenberg 1979, 104). This version is even more bitter and avowedly antiwar in so far as it literally equates the scattered dead with the thrown flowers and the rat. (And "rootless," in this case, takes on a dual connotation, meaning "cosmopolitan" and "clipped").[16] Regardless, the juxtaposition of the rat and the human dead (who are "less chanced than you for life") ("Break of Day in the Trenches," Rosenberg 2012, 106) illustrates just how commingled Rosenberg thought humans and "beasts" really were ("The Unicorn," Rosenberg," 2012, 182), particularly during war. Equally pressing is the question of what faith, if any, he has left in humankind, be it as an artist, or something much baser.

[16] Given the rat's own "cosmopolitan sympathies," it is worth asking whether Rosenberg was aware of the phrase "rootless cosmopolitan" in 1917. The phrase would also take on special significance in the 1940s, when it became associated with Jewish intellectuals like him and, indeed, became grounds for persecution during Stalin's purges.

Rosenberg's writings, the bulk of which were unfinished, never definitively resolve the question. In "Moses," even his heroes, depicted variously as "animal[s]" and "half beasts snorting into the light," remain "constrained to the stables of the flesh" (Rosenberg 2012, 162). In "In War," however, he describes "how human art won/ The dark soul" (Rosenberg 2012, 162) thus suggesting an opposing and more elevated view of human nature. To some extent, Rosenberg echoes John Stuart Mill, who, as Christine Korsgaard explains, regards humans as animals but sees humans as having "access to 'higher pleasures,'" as Mill calls them. For Mill, "only human beings are familiar with the pleasures of music and poetry and art and literature," among other pleasures, Korsgaard adds (Korsgaard 2018, 68). In another letter to Edward Marsh, written eleven months before his death, Rosenberg underscores the relevance of poetry for him and the sole consolation it provides: "I fancy poetry is not much bothering you or anybody just now...Yet out here, though often a troublesome consolation, poetry is a great one to me" (Rosenberg 2012, 333). Even more than Sassoon, Rosenberg was consumed with this question of human degradation, and what role, if any, art could play in forestalling it. It is not clear that he ever arrived at an answer. What is clear, however, is that he, particularly by the war's end, and like Sassoon in "The Rear-Guard," grappled with this question of human-as-artist versus human-as-beast.

To that end, the works of both poets mirror the broader transformation unfolding across Great Britain, wherein animals, hardly just chattel, began to be perceived as "companions" and fellow "sufferers," as Hilda Kean notes (1998, 169). Nineteen-nineteen, the year the war ended, even saw the near-passage in Parliament of the Dogs (Protection) Bill, the first wide-scale legislative effort in Britain to ban the use of dogs in vivisection. The effort failed, but it is notable because it occurred in the midst of what were otherwise unprecedented levels of animal testing. It was also largely the work of one Frances Power Cobbe, a tireless

suffragette and reformer. More broadly, it is worth asking whether millions of returning veterans, many of whom had been experimented on themselves in the Great Western theater, did not find some affinity with dogs, or at least come to recognize the "drooping tongues from jaws" that Owen described ("Mental Cases," Owen 1965, 35). While the animal rights movement itself is traditionally ascribed in Great Britain to the Oxford Group of the late-1960's (Singer, Ryder, Regan, et. al), what one begins to see in trench writings, especially those of Rosenberg, Sassoon, and Owen, is an important and foundational link, particularly in conveying sympathy for nonhumans and in recognizing their shared pain. Of course, this is not to say that any of these poets espoused a vocal advocacy on behalf of animals, much less what we would later come to call "animal rights." But in asking what we "share" with animals, as Sassoon does ("Man and Dog," Sassoon 1949, 268), and in recognizing our "bestial" impulses, as Rosenberg repeatedly does ("The Unicorn," Rosenberg 2012, 187), their poems presage later currents in animal philosophy, particularly the "face-to-face" ethics of Levinas, as well as the "transcendence of anthropocentrism," as Acampora calls it (Acampora 2017, 162).

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The Collapse of Responsibility

Staging Fragmented Communities in State-of-the-Nation Novels

Alice Borrego

In his 1992 talk entitled "Fragility and Responsibility", Paul Ricoeur contends that responsibility

> has the fragile as its specific vis-a-vis, that is to say, both what is perishable through natural weakness and what is threatened under the blows of historical violence. [...] We feel […] required or enjoined by the fragile to do something, to help, but even better, to foster growth, to allow for accomplishment and flourishing. The strength of this sentiment initially consists in making us experience a situation which is, but should not be. The imperative is embodied in what we perceive as deplorable, unbearable, inadmissible, unjustifiable. (1995, 15-16)

Ricoeur draws his definition of responsibility from Emmanuel Levinas's *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974) and Hans Jonas's *Imperative of Responsibility* (1979), suggesting that responsibility cannot be escaped and defines the individual's relationship with the Other. The latter, according to Levinas, is defined by its "unabsorbable alterity" (2000, 22): it escapes total comprehension, exceeding the ego that can no longer be self-sufficient. The Other beckons, yet eludes me. It is because we cannot entirely know ourselves or the Other that we are vulnerable and thus require responsibility (Butler and Athanasiou 2013). This tension between the unknown and our interdependency is at the core of what Ricoeur calls the fragile. Departing from Levinas, Ricoeur

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endows the "imperative of responsibility" with an historical and political dimension that is of a particular interest to the present study. Richard McKeon draws attention to the origins of the word responsibility, which was first used both in English and in French in 1787:

> It was not only used first to apply to the operation of political institutions in the context of the American and French revolutions, but it continued in use during the nineteenth century when constitutional government was vastly extended, in scope of operation and in spread among nations, as a result of contacts of cultures and peoples. (1957, 23)

The concept of responsibility has been developed with the creation of nations and the interactions between different types of communities, thus suggesting that Ricoeur's definition rightly encapsulates the necessary interaction between responsibility and socio-historical forces.

The evolution of the imperative of responsibility as a political and historical concept finds its way into fiction as well, from the 19th century onwards, in "Condition of England novels" such as Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853) or Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854). Much like responsibility in the 18th century, the genre is rooted in the political climate of 19th century England. One of the most prominent figures of the Chartist movement, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), raised the "Condition of England" question in his essay "Chartism" (1839) and his book *Past and Present* (1843). He deplored England's ambiguous position, as both a wealthy nation and an oppressive one when it came to the working classes. Dedicated to denouncing the unfair living conditions of the lower classes, Condition of England novels – whose name still bears the mark of Carlyle's own work and commitment – offer a new vision of responsibility which lays emphasis on "the individual character" rather than on "relations of accountability" (Robbins 1990, 219). The Chartist movement played an important part in the development of several social reforms which extended suffrage to the working classes and agricultural labourers, paving the way for a more unified and

equalitarian society under the reign of Edward VII. Condition of England novels therefore evolved at the turn of the century, under the influence of E.M Forster's *Howards End* (1910); the focus shifted from one single social class to the whole English nation, as is suggested by the new label given to such narratives – "State-of-the-nation novels". The original opposition between the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels is reminiscent of a fragmented Victorian society, torn between ambiguous values such as materialism and spirituality. Nevertheless, *Howards End* can be seen as the utopian illustration of a more unified nation, embodied by Helen's son. Margaret underlines her desire for unification in the novel: "Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer" (2006, 133). Forster's reaction against Victorian conventionalism foreshadowed and even fuelled the Bloomsbury Group's dedication to challenge norms and codified behaviours, such as gender roles for instance. As *Howards End* moves from the familial microcosm to the national macrocosm, it offers a representation of the construction of English society and the need to question its codes of conduct. State-of-the-nation novels present a particular relationship to history and the place of individuals in it, thus recalling Ricoeur's definition of responsibility.

However, E.M. Forster's call for unity could no longer be sustained after the First World War. Katherine Mansfield advocated for a change in fiction that would take into account this disruption, this "blow of historical violence":

> What is it about the novel? […] But seriously, the more I read the more I feel all these novels will not do. […] I can't imagine how after the war these men can pick up the old thread as though it had never been. Speaking to you I'd say we have died and live again. How can that be the same life? (1937, 209)

The imperative to represent the effects of the war transforms the past into a coercive force acting upon the characters and upon the society they are part of: the

past seems to generate a break, a fracture from which they are trying to escape, thus recalling the historical and social determinism of Dickens's Condition-of-England novels. The first World War transformed the genre; though the legacy of Victorian writers and of Forster remains when considering the novels' inherent critique, state-of-the-nation novels can no longer advocate for a possible unified society. As Peter Childs contends in *Modernism* (2000), *Howards End* is *"*driven by a [...] fear of crisis and longing for rejuvenation" (28). State-of-the-nation novels which emerged afterwards are, on the other hand, embracing crisis; the main events of the 20th and 21st centuries have weakened political and social relationships and therefore the notion of responsibility as well. The communities depicted in state-of-the-nation novels reveal the progressive fragmentation of English society from the First World War to the 2008 credit crunch, by way of the Second World War and of the rise of neoliberalism. State-of-the-nation novels addressing Brexit will not be included in this analysis but nonetheless represent a new perspective to the genre. In *Fracture and Fragmentation in British Romanticism* (2010), Alexander Regier shows that

> Fracture describes a break that is located on the structural level. It is not a process, and does not encompass a temporal element in that sense. It might be historically or genealogically located, but that is not its deciding feature. […] Fragmentation, differently from fracture, is a process. Even though it can be final, it is defined by a series of changes. It is the unfolding of a break that happens either once or over and over again. (2010, 7)

World War One, as shown by Mansfield, can be considered as the primary fracture of both society and fiction, generating the process of the fragmentation of English society throughout the last centuries. As it unfolds, responsibility is challenged as well: if "responsibility is always the concern of a community" (Petzäll 1957, 92), it thus inevitably suffers from the disintegration of the latter. The relationship to the fragile is therefore questioned and even jeopardised. What becomes of responsibility if the communities at its core are growing further and

further apart? Are we heading towards the abandonment of the fragile? Can state-of-the-nation novels be considered as a safeguard against the progressive collapse of responsibility?

It will be essential at first to study the use of metonymy in state-of-the-nation novels, so as to understand how the social structures depicted in the novels are indeed illustrations of the English nation. They reveal how different types of communities – the family, the local and the national – intertwine. This will allow us to see how responsibility can or cannot unfold, dwelling on Judith Butler's observation that "the question of what binds me to another and in what way this obligation suggests that the 'I' is invariably implicated in the 'we'" (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 107). The second part of this paper aims at showing how such embedded communities are constructed and thus defined by norms and codes of conduct. The development of societies necessarily involves dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, often determined by the dominant group and therefore leading to the in-betweenness of the fragile, which becomes an outcast that needs to be taken care of. The two preceding points tend to showcase society's "moral and emotional atrophy" (Bradbury 1985, 143) one that seems to be linked with the development of neoliberalism and growing indifference, causing responsibility to progressively disappear. This phenomenon thus raises the question the individual's own role in enabling this process of fragmentation.

Intertwined responsibilities

In her article "Habitations of the Past: of Shrines and Haunted Houses", Catherine Bernard analyses the metonymic device of the country house in British fiction. She states that:

> Modern fiction has, from the eighteenth century onwards, systematically built on such metaphors or metonymies to reflect on the overall social dynamics. It has symmetrically contributed to legitimize and naturalize the metonymy of the house, great or humble, as a trope standing for society. […] In it, collective time and a powerful sense of the local, family history

> and national history merge and are subsumed under a common political economy. The law of the house becomes the law of the country. (Bernard 2005, 161-163)

The use of metonymy reveals how private and public spheres intertwine in British fiction – a figure particularly prominent in state-of-the-nation novels. The family, the local and the national are, as Bernard suggests, intimately connected: the metonymic approach of state-of-the-nation novels offers a kaleidoscopic vision of the notion of responsibility, especially as they tend to focus on disruptive historical events that challenge ethical relationships. In *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), Rebecca West explores the troubled return of a shell-shocked soldier to the family home. The war operates a redefinition of the relationship with the Other, as it reverses the dynamics of the Baldry couple; Kitty is left stammering about the Baldrys' responsibilities ("We - we've a lot of responsibilities you and I" (West 2004, 26)) which Chris is no longer able to assume. The 'Angel of the House' legacy of the vulnerable woman depending on her husband is jeopardised as "the fragile" – according to Ricoeur's definition – becomes the soldier returned home. The upset patriarchal structure is here reminiscent of the emergence of the New Woman at the turn of the century and is a token of West's own political commitment. Kitty is now in charge of the society Chris and her created: "with all the land you've bought, there are ever so many people to look after" (26). Both class and social responsibility are here shattered since the responsibility of the "we" is left to the sole "I" of Kitty, as Chris becomes someone Kitty has "to look after". West pays tribute to the disruption of society and its codes after the First World War. Nevertheless, if she decided to stage the return of an amnesiac soldier, it is but a foil to put to the fore the community that suffered the "blows of historical violence" even before the war broke out: women. As Nicole Rizzuto shows, "West's novel also implicitly asks who bears responsibility for and to the past, and to those silenced when historical truth founders upon a collective memory riven by trauma" (2012, 9). Kitty's own trauma - her inability to cope

with the loss of her son - is undermined by the return of her husband which stands as a metonymy of the whole nation. West pinpoints gender inequalities, revealing the nation's lack of responsibility towards women and making the characters' story a symptom of the whole country. Focusing on family spheres is thus a way to comment on the state of the nation by dealing with microcosms and to show how responsibility affects every level of interdependency.

The use of metonymy extends to larger communities, such as towns or cities, which brings about another dimension of the concept of responsibility, as private spheres come to interact with one another. The prologue of Winifred Holtby's *South Riding* (1936) confirms the entanglement of the local and national scale: "Local government was an epitome of national government. Here was World Tragedy in embryo. Here gallant Labour, with nothing to lose but its chains, would fight entrenched and armoured Capital. […] Here Corruption could be studied and exposed, oppression denounced, and lethargy indicted" (2010, 3). Holtby's *South Riding* represents the ideal of responsibility as Ricoeur defines it; Sarah Burton, the main character, epitomises the new emancipated woman of the interwar period who stands for equality and justice throughout the novel. She even declares: "There are certain things I hate – muddle, war, poverty and so on – the things most intelligent people hate nowadays, whatever their party. And I hate indifferentism, and lethargy, and the sort of selfishness that shuts itself up into its own shell of personal preoccupations" (109). Her words find their echo in Ricoeur's work and are symptomatic of Holtby's own personal beliefs, as Marion Shaw observes:

> The novel is also a mature embodiment of all Winifred's most fundamental beliefs: her pacifism, her equalitarian feminism, her belief in social democracy and in the value of education, in the importance of the individual human being and of the individual's obligations towards society." (2012, 242)

However, the novel's division into several books resembles municipal archives, revealing both the connections between the residents and the social divisions between the rich and the poor, between corrupted figures (embodied by Alderman Snaith) and progressive ones (epitomised by Sarah Burton). These "archives" disclose the sclerosis of the interwar English town; corruption, class tensions and the ghost of the First World War are all factors that weaken and endow responsibility with a sense of doom that betrays the vulnerability of the socio-political tissue and thus of ethical relationships.

According to Hans Jonas, the symbol of family goes beyond the private sphere, as the politician is a "son" of the larger community he wishes to represent:

> There does exist an emotional relation comparable to love on the part of the political individual toward the community whose destiny he wishes to guide to the best, for it is "his" in a much deeper sense than that of mere community of interests: he is (in the normal case) descended from it and through it has become what he is; he is thus, indeed, not the father but a "son" of his people and country (also class, etc) and thereby in a kind of sibling-relation to all the others – present, future, even past – with whom he shares this bond. [...] It is difficult, though not impossible, to carry responsibility for something one doesn't love, and one rather generates the love for it than do one's duty "free from inclination". (1985, 104)

Jonas's conception of the political individual finds echoes in Holtby's novel, as the epigraph reads "we are members one of another" (2010, xviii); it illustrates the necessary filiation between individuals of the same community. Nonetheless, state-of-the-nation novels (Holtby's included) do focus on the lack of responsibility of national leaders, thus questioning the actual connection between them and "their" entire community. In *What a Carve Up!* (1994), Jonathan Coe uses the Winshaw family as a metonymy for the Thatcher government: the Winshaw children are either members of the government, media personalities, heads of the food industry and so on. Ryan Trimm rightly underlines that

> All operate without regard save for profit, an inconsideration of others in line with Thatcher's disavowal of society. Concordantly, the family represents a constellation of financial and cultural interests coming to the

> fore during the Thatcher era […] The drive for wealth, the opportunism, the lack of scruples – these family traits correspond with the theory and practice of Thatcherism. (2010, 164)

The Winshaws' own "disavowal of society" is responsible for the disintegration of the filiation between citizens and politicians, who no longer seem to share a bond with the people they govern. This is illustrated by Mortimer Winshaw, who eventually murders all his siblings:

> I was born into money and like the rest of my family I was too selfish to want to do any good with it. Unlike them, at least, I never did anyone such harm. But I thought I might redeem myself, slightly, by doing mankind a small favour before I died. Ridding the world of a handful of vermin. (Coe 2016, 484)

The family therefore becomes guilty of metaphorical and actual murder: they are responsible for "a prolonged attack, a carve up, on the national core" (Trimm 2010, 164) as unemployment, restrictions and the crumbling of the NHS intensified, while Mortimer's massacre only appears as a real enactment of what the rest of his family slowly did to the nation (even more so as each Winshaw died in a way that replicated his/her deviant occupation). If Mortimer's deed sounds like justice, he is no different from his siblings as far as responsibility is concerned. Drawing from Levinas, Ricoeur reminds us that:

> when the face of the other raises itself before me, above me, it is not an appearance that I can include within the sphere of my own representations. To be sure, the other appears, his face makes him appear, but the face is not a spectacle; it is a voice. This voice tells me, "Thou shall not kill." Each face is a Sinai that prohibits murder. (1996, 336)

What a Carve Up! stages the Winshaws' lack of ethics as the ultimate "blow of historical violence" on responsibility itself. With the indirect and actual murders taking place in the novel, responsibility, along with English society, crumble. Both drawing from the historical novel's use of family as a symbol of "national identity" (Parrinder 2006, 33), West and Coe reveal the vulnerability of responsibility and question the foundation of communities and their relationship

with the Other. If West's *The Return of the Soldier* is emblematic of modernist writing and its destabilisation of inherited structures (such as a male dominated society), Coe further subverts the image of family and genealogy which can no longer be maintained. Resolutely postmodern (Guignery 2011), *What a Carve Up!* uses the legacy of Condition of England novels and of modernist writers to carve a new portrait of a fragmented nation. By subverting past literary codes, Coe's novel suggests that the asymmetric relationships denounced in previous state-of-the-nation novels are becoming more insidious and more polarising. It is therefore essential to understand the nature of such a process, as the genre calls into question the construction of communities and the place of the fragile in it.

"Contact zones": outlining the community

Richard McKeon considers the responsibility of a nation to be the result of the interaction between different types of

> cultural communities - determined by religion, education, taste, ethnical derivation, economic situation, occupation, and many other factors - and the political responsibilities of nations reflect and protect the cultural values of societies. […] A responsible community reflects a tradition of responsibility based on the character of the community or nation and responsive to the requirements of common values and of the common good. (1957, 25)

McKeon here joins Benedict Anderson and his concept of "imagined communities" (1983), wherein such communities are defined by a set of internalised common values and social codes. If the *a priori* constitution of the nation as a community of communities could ideally be based, to paraphrase McKeon's words, on the reflection and protection of the "cultural values of societies", the intertwining of different levels of responsibility already revealed a discrepancy between interacting parties which questions the definition of "common values". In fact, the nation rather appears as a "contact zone" between these cultural communities. Marie-Louise Pratt uses this expression "to refer to

social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (1991, 34). The exposure to such relations is at the core of state-of-the-nation novels: if some have been already addressed in the first part of this paper, it appears that the genre denounces the polarisation of English society between dominant groups and precarious ones, which leaves the call of the fragile partially or completely unanswered.

Perhaps one of the most commented divisions within English society is class conflict. Just like state-of-the-nation novels, the English class system is a legacy of the Victorian era. Historian David Cannadine explains that

> [...] despite the best efforts of many of today's historians to take class out of the 19th century, the fact remains that the Victorians *were* obsessed with it - or at least, with something very like it. Read any contemporary novel, newspaper, or parliamentary debate, and the preoccupation is immediately apparent - not with class in the Marxist sense of collective and conflicting relations to the means of production, but with those finely graded distinctions of prestige ranking to which sociologists give the name status. (1998, 146)

This sense of class and status runs through state-of-the-nation novels of the 20th and 21st centuries and is symptomatic of Pratt's "asymmetrical relations of power". The tension between the rich and the poor intensifies the fragmentation of the South Riding community in Winifred Holtby's novel, as Midge Carne's remarks suggest: "The Carnes, she knew, were not Poor People. Poor people lived in cottages; the Carnes lived in a Hall, which was the biggest house for miles round […]" (2010, 15). The capitalisation of the expression "Poor People" acts as a stigma on this community which is even attributed a specific type of habitation. Erving Goffman defines the features of stigma as such:

> an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his

> other attributes have on us. He possesses a stigma, an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated. We and those who do not depart negatively from the particular expectations at issue I shall call *the normals*." (1963, 5)

These lines of segmentarity in the individual identity are embodied by Midge's use of "Poor People" which creates an undesirable social category that undermines the power of the dominant group, i.e. the rich part of the population. The stigmatisation of the poor goes as far as creating geographies of exclusion that are legitimised by the topography and toponymy of the city: "Two miles south of Kiplington, between the cliffs and the road to Maythorpe, stood a group of dwellings known locally as the Shacks. […] A war raged between Kiplington Urban District Council and the South Riding County Council over the tolerated existence of the Shacks" (Holtby 2010, 30). The word "shack" transforms the location into a metonymy for poverty, while the map of the South Riding included in the novel inscribes this stigma into the territory and its archives, so as to secure the poor's social status as is. This rejection of the Other denies the possibility of responsibility, as the geographical detachment from him/her causes delay in the construction of ethical relationships. Over 75 years later, John Lanchester's *Capital* (2012) denounces the same process of geographical and moral exclusion based on class, as his novel focuses on one single wealthy road in London:

> Having a house in Pepys Road was like being in a casino in which you were guaranteed to be a winner. If you already lived there, you were rich. If you wanted to move there, you had to be rich. It was the first time in history this had ever been true. Britain had become a country of winners and losers, and all the people in the street, just by living there, had won. (2013, 7)

The reader's introduction to life on Pepys Road reveals the geographical and social divide animating not only London but the country as a whole. Difference in social class apparently informs on the moral character of the Other who doesn't have a right of residence if he/she does not fit into the "winners" group. The

nation becomes a "contact zone" between economic and social communities that cannot cohabit in the same space, continually dealing the "blows of historical violence" to the less fortunate. In her *Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), Linda Hutcheon considers that with postmodernism, "the "ex-centric" (be it in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity) take on new significance in the light of the implied recognition that our culture is not really the homogeneous monolith (that is middleclass, male, heterosexual, white, western) we might have assumed" (12). However, the similarities between Holtby's and Lanchester's works, along with the other state-of-the-nation novels analysed in this study, suggest that some modernist fictions were already taking into account the ex-centric and already recognised the plurality of experiences and narratives. As they draw from the legacy of the Condition of England novels, state-of-the-nation novels necessarily deal with the "ex-centric" of their times, such as the poor in the case of Holtby, women in West's novel, or such as immigrants and political refugees for instance.

The repetition of the same asymmetrical interactions between individuals consolidates the establishment and legitimisation of privilege as the norm on a national level. In her dialogue with Gayatri C. Spivak, Judith Butler analyses this rhetoric of belonging as part of a compliance between nation and state in the treatment of marginalised communities:

> In other words, the nation-state assumes that the nation expresses a certain national identity, is founded through the concerted consensus of a nation, and that a certain correspondence exists between the state and the nation. The nation, in this view, is singular and homogeneous, or at least, it becomes so in order to comply with the requirements of the state. The state derives its legitimacy from the nation, which means that those national minorities who do not qualify for "national belonging" are regarded as "illegitimate inhabitants." (Butler and Spivak 2007, 30-31)

Peter McAllister, a judge of the London centre for asylum and immigration tribunal, embodies this desire to preserve the apparent homogeneity of both state and nation, up to the point where the Other becomes an ambush in this process:

> […] he was fighting the good fight by injecting the traditional values of Englishness into an immigration system which was always in danger of 'producer capture'. The people who worked with immigrants always ran the risk of coming to believe that they worked for the immigrants. That was a mistake Peter never made. He remembered who paid his salary." (Lanchester 2013, 484)

Moral responsibility is under the yoke of political affiliation and social privilege: Peter went to "Radley and St Andrews" and "looked like a privileged man passing into early middle age with his early assumptions and prejudices entirely intact" (486). Responsibility is no longer due to the fragile but to the state, whose aim is to monitor, rather than ensure, the latter's "accomplishment and flourishing". Peter's opposition to his colleague Alison Tite – who considers that "immigration work felt more connected to the larger currents of history" (484) and thanks to whom "the applicant stood a much better than average chance of winning the right to remain legally in the UK" (485) – illustrates not only the arbitrariness of the UK immigration system but also the arbitrariness of responsibility as well. The asymmetrical relationships in the contact zone turn the imperative of responsibility into a state discretionary power. Quentina Mkfesi, the Zimbabwean woman on the other hand of Peter's decision whose story is developed throughout the novel, is now reduced to a name on a file. Her identity is erased under the law of the contact zone and its legal avatars:

> […] the judge at the final appeal had ruled that she could not be sent back to Zimbabwe because there were grounds for thinking that if she was she would be killed. At that point Quentina had entered a legal state of semi-existence. She had no right to work and could claim only subsistence-level benefits, but she couldn't be imprisoned and deported. She was not a citizen of the UK but she could not go anywhere else. She was a non-person. (Lanchester 2010, 131-132)

The fragile is therefore in a state of in-betweenness that mutes his call. Peter's prioritisation of the state's interests over "what we perceive as deplorable, unbearable, inadmissible, unjustifiable" announces the collapse of moral

responsibility. French philosopher Guillaume Le Blanc sheds light on this process:

> The inexistence of the precarious is the dark heart of the social question. There actually is a social status for precarity: inexistence. The precarious do not live outside of society. They are not excluded, but they are dispossessed of themselves by the same society which produces them by keeping them afloat – one foot in, one foot out – thus creating the reserve army capitalism needs to endlessly prosper. Self-dispossession reaches its paroxysm when the precarious are deprived of their voice and their face. (Le Blanc 2007, 19-20 [my translation])

The polarisation of society leads to a perverse system of inclusion/exclusion that denies the possibility for responsibility and thus for responsiveness. The laws of the contact zone, defined by processes of detachment enabled by institutions, question our ability to "[critically] engage with social norms" (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 108), as state-of-the-nation novels denounce English society's growing indifference and compliance with unethical behaviours.

Towards a "moral and emotional atrophy"?

Le Blanc hints at the fact that capitalism led to a redefinition of ethical relationships, as he demonstrates how precarious lives are both generated and maintained by a prioritisation of profit over moral values. The social polarisation evoked earlier is combined with a growing thirst for capital and wealth that heightens social tensions and is at the core of the development of indifference. In *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, Wendy Brown explains that the rise of neoliberalism caused the *homo oeconomicus* to supersede the *homo politicus*:

> All conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized. In neoliberal reason and in domains governed by it, we are only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus* […]. (2015, 9)

Brown argues that "the neoliberal triumph of *homo oeconomicus*" is "vanquishing the subject that governs itself through moral autonomy" (79). Brown's and Le Blanc's observations show that responsibility is under threat and even already collapsing under the clout of capitalism, as it becomes monetised as well. If Winifred Holtby's novel started to address such issues, the dehumanising power of capital is much more developed in state-of-the-nation novels written after the Second World War. Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter* (1967) satirises Clara and William Matthews, parents of six children whom they managed to neglect (and even abuse) throughout their childhood to ensure their personal well-being. Their thirst for wealth and pomp is often mocked by the Matthews children who re-enact their parents' immoral behaviours in theatrical incursions:

> CLARA MATTHEWS: […] But the important thing is the financial settlement and that's where you can help. Let's hear what settlement you children propose so that your father and I can live separately without too much diminution of the little standards we've tried to build up to do credit to our successful children.
>
> WILLIAM MATTHEWS: A very sound point, my dear. You're all doing so well now, you can't afford shabby genteel parents. It only proves what I've always said, that the more you neglect your children the better they'll fare later on.
>
> CLARA MATTHEWS: Don't be absurd, Billy. We've never neglected the children. We taught them early to be adult and responsible and as a result they're responsible adults. (Wilson 1969, 212)

Clara, the mother, is here played by her son Marcus, while Rupert plays the part of William/Billy Pop. The irony of the passage illustrates the parents' moral inability to provide for their children: Clara's syllogism reveals the complete absurdity of the parents' behaviour, as moral responsibility is a burden that can only be compensated by financial support. According to Malcolm Bradbury, Angus Wilson can be considered as the heir of the social-realist novel:

> Even as he relishes his world for its style, its social flamboyance, he measures and judges according to a comic and ironic mode. And one of

> the functions of irony and comedy in his work is to be directed, as it is in Forster's novels, towards a centre, showing up moral and emotional atrophy, self-deceit and unrecognized failure in the realm of the personal. (1985, 143)

Bradbury associates this "atrophy" with "an awareness of society not as a solid substance but as a seeming […]" (144). The fragility of both individual psyche and society creates a vacuum that allows for seemingly stable and profitable capital to replace and eventually erase ethical relationships – cynically reinforcing the individual's "moral and emotional atrophy" as he/she becomes more and more isolated from others. In keeping with Wilson's humorous twist, John Lanchester comments on Pepys Road's inhabitants' lack of consideration through the ironic anthropomorphising of the houses:

> As the houses got more expensive, it was as if they had come alive, and had wishes and needs of their own. Vans from Berry Brothers and Rudd brought wine; there were two or three different vans of dog-walkers; there were florists, Amazon parcels, personal trainers, cleaners, plumbers, yoga teachers, and all day long, all of them going up to the houses like supplicants and then being swallowed by them. […] The houses were now like people, and rich people at that, imperious, with needs of their own that they were not shy about having serviced. (Lanchester 2013, 6)

The accumulation reveals the paradox of the saturation of space and the dehumanisation of the neighbourhood. The liminality of the house encloses the inhabitants in their own personal space which becomes the embodiment of materialism devoid of meaningful connection with others. The same saturation crops up in conversations, as "it began to be all right for people to talk about house prices all the time; the topic came up in conversation within the first minute of people speaking to each other" (5). As Brown showed, "all conduct is economic conduct", which means the necessary collapse of ethics as the foundation of the community which becomes inevitably more and more fragmented.

Brown's insistence on the demise of democracy as a result of neoliberalism also questions the people's own responsibility when it comes to political choices; if the *homo oeconomicus* does supersede the *homo politicus*, what part does the individual play in allowing this to happen? Åke Petzäll explains that:

> The institution answers, as living organisation, to the interests of individuals and the institution itself, made of individuals, can only live by the conscience of its wards. It means that it is the individual's responsibility to let himself be represented only by institutions that he can, as a responsible being, trustfully support." (1957, 69 [my translation])

In *The Holiday* (1949), Stevie Smith uses the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War to denounce the compliance between unethical governments and individuals: "We are among corrupt people, how can be innocent? How can we have a revolution and make a new world when we are so corrupt?" (Smith 1979, 131) Celia, the main character, considers each and every member of English society as guilty as the government for the horrors of the War and even guiltier for keeping wrongful institutions afloat. She blames Western people's thirst for consumerism for fostering the Cold War, "the person-by-person, consumer-by-consumer selling-of-soul, and selling of consciousness as well as conscience, that in Smith's view made all of her compatriots culpable" (Hulk 2005, 206). Smith's criticism echoes Brown's and reveals that the insidious development of capitalism generates ethical numbness. The four state-of-the-nation novels written after the Second World War considered in this study (*The Holiday, No Laughing Matter, What a Carve Up!* and *Capital*) re-enact the development of a "neoliberalist rationality" (Brown 2015, 36) which has been progressively fragmenting British society. Victim of the Winshaws' Thatcherite government, Michael Owen, the protagonist of *What a Carve Up*!, indirectly comes to the same conclusion after listing the evidence of the Winshaws' manipulation and corruption of the nation:

> And so they sit at home getting fat on the proceeds and here we all are. Our businesses failing, our jobs disappearing, our countryside choking, our hospitals crumbling, our homes being repossessed, our bodies being poisoned, our minds shutting down, the whole bloody spirit of the country crushed and fighting for breath. I hate the Winshaws Fiona. Just look what they've done to us. Look what they've done to you. (Coe 2016, 413)

As he blames the government and other types of institutions led by the family, Michael considers himself and his fellow countrymen responsible as well for the country falling apart. Neoliberalism creeps up in every aspect of daily life and becomes inescapable. John Su underlines that

> Owen's growing awareness of how global events and national economic policies have concrete, everyday consequences is the central trajectory of the second half of the novel. He ultimately recognizes that the responsibility for Fiona's death is not to be laid on the chance misfortune of illness or the underfunded National Health System, but on the totality of Thatcherism as part of a global neoliberal project—a project that he unwittingly supports in everyday activities from food choice to livelihood. (2014, 1090)

The rise and legitimisation of immoral practices questions the individual's ethical position, as his own call for responsibility meets no responsiveness from institutions. The reciprocity at the core of responsibility shatters and leaves the individual alone, facing an unreflective mirror. Henceforth, the "moral atrophy" of the individual denounced in state-of-the-nation novels exposes how the community of the nation is progressively fragmenting, making it impossible to engage and answer to the fragile. Judith Butler argues that: "responsibility requires responsiveness. Indeed, I think that many of the affective dispositions that are required for political responsibility, including outrage, indignation, desire and hope, are all bound up with what one wishes not only for oneself, but for others as well" (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 68-9). Yet, the combined dynamics of detachment from the Other and the seclusion of the self annihilates the individual's propension to care and to react – causing political and moral responsibility to fail at all levels of society.

Conclusion

The fragmentation of English society and of the different communities that compose it leads to an inevitable collapse of responsibility which concurs with the rise of misrepresentative governments. The overlapping of personal and national spheres gives way to asymmetrical relationships that determine a set of oppressive social codes which reach their paroxysm with the rise of capitalism and neoliberalism and the effacement of the *homo politicus*. If members of the dominant group, like Michael Owen, grapple with the unethical behaviour of institutions, the fact that Coe, like Lanchester, have been reproached with not giving a voice to the suffering working class[1] suggests that the call of the fragile is but only partially answered. Its sclerotic condition leaves the fragile in a state of in-betweenness that allows it to be part of society from afar – a position used as a tool for the good conscience of the dominant group which acknowledges its presence, yet without allowing to it "flourish". Against the destabilisation of political communities, state-of-the-nation novels nonetheless appear as a safeguard for responsibility. Maureen Whitebrook argues that "novels help mediate between modernist responsibility to action and postmodernist responsibility to other/otherness, showing the injunction to put oneself in the place of others not only as a question of "moral compassion" (as in Nussbaum's work) but *politically* necessary" (1996, 47). If the political commitment of the authors' considered in this study is undeniable, the division of responsibility between modernism and postmodernism as suggested by Whitebrook does not seem to hold; dividing responsibility between "a call for action" and an answer "to the other" would be denying the genre of state-of-the-nation novels, which blends both impulses. If *South Riding* could be considered in light of Whitebrook's

[1] See Lawrence Driscoll, *Evading Class in Contemporary British Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 158 and 227, as well as Barbara Korte, "John Lanchester's Capital: financial risk and its counterpoints," *Textual Practice*, vol. 31.3 (2017): 502.

categories, Holtby's portrayal of lower-classes shows that she also calls for a reconsideration of the other, much like Rebecca West. The same could be said of postmodernist state-of-the-nation novels: they do call for responsibility towards the other but also call for action. The only difference with earlier novels of the genre may lie in the fact that action seems deferred by neoliberalism, as profit and market-logic permeate both public and private spheres. Through their often fragmented and experimental form, state-of-the-nation novels draw a revealing portrait of a fragmented English society throughout the centuries. Ironically enough, the development of the genre, though at times bearing the aesthetic marks of the *Zeitgeist* in which the novels are produced, stands as a beacon of stability against the fragmentation of communities and ethics. The genre allows authors to "critically engage with social norms" (Butler) and to present societies that "should be otherwise" (Adorno 1977, 194). State-of-the-nation novels enjoin their readers to (re)consider their relationship with the fragile. Marion Shaw captures the essence of state-of-the-nation novels in her analysis of *South Riding*: "The characters through whom we see Holtby's landscapes and communities also become the individuals through whom we plot a changing perspective on society, and through them Holtby urges her readers to assess their own position and responsibility" (2012, 12). However, in light of the recent novels of the genre, Shaw's stance appears rather optimistic: if our societies are indeed condemned to "moral and emotional atrophy" and if responsibility is replaced by individualism and indifference under neoliberalism, literature's own political role is under threat. More than ever, state-of-the-nation novel writers (and writers in general) have a responsibility towards their readers, towards society – provided the latter still consider literature "worthy" of their time and ever-fleeting attention.

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The Dance of Bones
Tomioka Taeko's Stage of Reprobates

Veruska Cantelli

"Look, I wrote a few poems when I was younger.
Really, the word poet is an overstatement.
I was more like a disreputable hack.
I wasn't earning any kind of honest living
—I was a reprobate, scum of the earth…"
From *Building Waves*, Tomioka Taeko, 10

In an interview with writer Mizuta Noriko (Mizuta, 2000, xiii) poet, novelist and screenwriter Tomioka Taeko claims to have abandoned poetry because it simply no longer allowed her to sing. No elaboration is followed but what we immediately realize is that writing for Tomioka Taeko is a performative act. "Facing the Hills they Stand," the 1971 short story that marks her debut into prose, is a lyrical exercise of subtraction, writing stripped to the bone where reality unfolds as a violent matter of fact.[1] It is a family saga encapsulated in its own miserable and tragic plight. While the Japanese nation is directed toward a

[1] The original short story was published in Japan in 1971, its translation was published in 1991 in *Japanese Women Writers Twentieth Century Short Fiction*, trans and editors Noriko Mizuta Lippit and Kyoko Iriye Selden. Routledge: 1991.

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peaceful marriage with consumerism and gender segregation and its rosy prospects of mothers as national guardians, Taeko writes about the lost lives of those on the margins, the physically impaired, the scarred, the ugly, the immoral and the squalid. Against the obsessive control of the State, Taeko delivers us a phantom of reality like a violent and uncontrollable succession of events, unfolding like a pebble down the slope of a hill, unadorned, unredeemed, deformed. She presents women "like black things" (Tomioka 1991, 143) who deliver dumb children, as the new phantoms haunting racial purity. With its unique narrative style this short story turns into the grand stage of the outcasts, a reception for the marginal, where the voice of the narrator is a *Bunraku tayu* (storyteller), telling events but refraining from describing them, where repetition is a maddening convulsion of sentences and names. The characters are only supported by voice but left to wonder in the darkness of a brittle environment prone to catastrophe, with no community to stand with. Alone the characters stride. This anti-hero epic depicts humans without humanity as skeletons of a society dancing in the presence of disaster.

A man with no name from the province of Yamato, an area around the city of Nara known as the cradle of Japanese civilization, comes to the shore of a river by a village called Denpo. He is presented to us as a migrant, a man "come here from somewhere" (138). Nothing is known about him, no one can claim knowledge of his lineage or confirm the purity of his kinship. Clouded by forgetfulness, atomized by his own inability to recall, this man strives to kill time:

> Rather than become a skilled trader, or try to see if he could become one, he worked so that he would have no time left for himself. For, if he had time left, the time might wrench him down and strangle him by the neck. The river water, the rows of houses scattered on the border of the river, the thicket of reeds, and the sky all he saw. If any spare time was left in a day, the man would have to see other things. If even a little time was left, the man would have to hear sounds. If he made spare time, within that time, he might be killed by the contents of that time. The man's fear was of this sort. (142)

Time in telling dissolves in unity, in the dream-like state of carriers of dreams moving the threshold of fiction and reality. What reassures us is our mutual experience, our fear of the possibility of wasting time. As the man follows the current of his own economic development, there is no clear sign of a growing sense of realization, his job is nothing but a chain of repetitive, robotic movements:

> Line these up on the riverbanks, the boss said. The man was to line up the damp, tattered hemp bags on the riverbank. As told, the man proceeded to unbind the hemp bags and line them up on the riverbank as though handling fragile things. The sun's rays already descended straight down overhead, but he still lined tattered hemp bags on the riverbanks." (139)

The village of Denpo seems hammered by a looming mantra "money, and more jobs, after that is all finished" (140). Most of its inhabitants moved there from other areas having lost their land and livelihood as farmers and now survive by gambling, dealing or working in a hemp factory. Community life is all but lost in a place where "each lived as they liked" (143). Confused and anxious, the man goes on doing his work as a hemp bag collector until:

> he no longer had time to sit amidst the reeds on the riverbanks and watch the water. […] nor did he even have time to turn back at a villager's greeting. Rather than become a skilled trader, or try to see if he could become one, he worked so that he would have no time left for himself. For if he had time left, the time might wrench him down and strangle him by the neck. (142)

As the rhythm of the story, with its repetitive moves hits the cord of boredom "work on the riverside, eat on the riverside, and wait for the women on the riverside" (142), time for the man becomes a major subject of concern. If on one hand, as we have seen, having time represents the ultimate terror of diving into the self and to discover, perhaps, nothing, on the other, lies the presence of a pressing deadline. When he first arrived to the village the man "was no longer young, but there still was some time before he reached thirty" but "as nearly three years passed since he had come to this village, he no longer had so much time. The man wanted a woman, but since his arrival here he did without one as he did without

sake" (140). Timing and its planning regiments the man's life to the point that desiring and sense of duty merge into a haze: marriageable age reached, yearning for a woman conceivable. Management of time was one of the greatest preoccupations of Japan during the Taisho (1912-1926) era and continued to be beyond WWII. Inspired by the American model, Japanese implementation of scientific management took a course of its own and its greatest success was blurring an entire nation's will into efficiency.

Frederick Winslow Taylor is responsible for the invention of Scientific Management, a method that was widely influential and adopted in business production in the United States. From a shattered dream of becoming a lawyer, in 1899 Taylor reinvented himself as an engineer-manager and founded a system that "attempted to rationalize an entire labor process" (Hashimoto 2002, 101). The science of management was based on one idea: wasting time. Therefore the best way to avoid it, time discipline, became its fundamental principle. Soon after its conception, Taylor's enthusiastic approach of timing in labor became an established discipline of study at Harvard University's business school and made it into Japan for the first time in 1920. Hashimoto Takeiko investigates this encounter in a specific exhibition that took place in the National Museum of Science, former Tokyo Educational Museum. The event called "Time Day" (*toki no kinenbi*) "was held on the basis of the perception that the lifestyle of Japanese was less efficient and rational than those in Europe and America" and its purpose was to raise awareness and educate people on how to follow a strict "time discipline" (2002, 100). As a study of ordinary Japanese, it displayed among others:

> the total time consumed for makeup throughout a woman's life, a comparison of time spent in medical examinations in Japan and abroad, people's unaware[ness] of time, bothersome visits, a table of famous men's schedules of meeting visitors. (105)

Hashimoto Takeiko explains that the exhibition was so influential that it inspired the establishment of the Living Conditions Improvement League (*Seikatsu Kaizen Domeikai*) whose enthusiastic and proselytizing work included the distribution of "leaflets at the busy corners in Tokyo, and set up five standards clocks so that passersby could check their watches" (2002, 110). Time, timing and not wasting time soon became the obsession of a nation under a strict schedule of production. The three masterminds of scientific management in Japan are recognized to be Ueno Yoichi who invented the Japanese word *noritsu* for efficiency, Yamashita Okiya, known for the application of the method in railroad repair factories later praised by visitors outside Japan, and Godo Takuo, whose work went into implementing standardization to all conditions of production and meant to target strict rules of punishments against lateness and any other wasteful activity such as "drinking, chatting, smoking, reading, playing games" (Hashimoto 2002, 114) during working hours. With Godo, the scientific management quickly moved into bodily discipline. But it is Ueno's later work that highlights the expansion of a production method into life management designed to push individuals to eliminate waste (*muda*) and irregularities (*mura*) and to increase overwork (*muri*) (Hashimoto 2002, 114). In his essay

> 'On Efficiency and Civilization' Ueno even attempts to associate Zen philosophy to scientific management by suggesting that 'people should first examine and decide the purpose of their lives, and then use time efficiently to attain that purpose'. (Hashimoto 2002, 114)

He could not have been farther away from the teachings of a philosophy centered around the value of the present and our moment to moment partaking in its unfolding. As the quote from Benjamin Franklin "time is money," that Ueno includes in an essay asserts, his ideal of life was one spent planning, calculating, and executing for the purpose of efficiency (Hashimoto 2002, 114). His larger plan was to influence a nation, to indoctrinate people toward production and its management. Victor Koschmann's historical analysis of the morphology of

scientific management in post-war Japan reveals a marked governmental hand in the sophistication and advancement of "centralized technologies of management societies" (Koschmann, 1993, 397) which Oda Makoto, the leader of the 1960s movement Beherein went so far as to call the technological manipulation for an era of "democratic fascism" (Koschmann1993, 415).

> Theories of rule by means of management and information problematized the conventional assumption of a political relationship between ruler and the ruled. It seemed that the position of the active subject was increasingly being preempted by deceptively neutral technology and automatic processes. (1993, 416)

The cultivation of volunteerism, started during WWII and continued through the nineties and even today, represents a very clear example of the subtle operation of these technologies. "Cooperativism that emphasized the individuality, spontaneity, and creativity of each person" was employed to encourage a healthy level of competition and to "secure a high level of functionality" (416) In other words "People had to be persuaded of the practicality of the economic plan so they could participate in it spontaneously and actively" (Koschmann 2009, 514). This conceptualization turned into practice assured a great level of participation during the war and throughout post war Japan and turned into a volunteering revolution through which the government asserted its own agendas by using media as a form of encouragement. The brilliance of such practice lies in the creation of an opaque belief system in which an individual no longer recognizes the origin of his/her own desire and finds in efficiency and duty the most satisfying rational explanation for the existence of desires. Borrowing from Habermas, anthropologist Akihiro Ogawa calls the state of volunteerism in Japan a colonization that operates at the level of human consciousness on principles of "efficiency" and "predictability" (Ogawa 2004, 91). Thus our man perceives that time to want a wife is ripe when he reaches the age of thirty and he can now proceed to the next scheduled target, another tassel in disciplined life of post-war Japanese men and women. Scholar Yukiko Tanaka's work from 1995,

Contemporary Portraits of Japanese Women, is a guiding text in understanding the pressures and desires that governed marriage and choice. Tanaka underlines how during the seventies and eighties Japanese men between the age of twenty-five to thirty-nine were under continuous strain to find a suitable wife and that women's expectations in finding a husband were often based on materiality and the possibility to lead a comfortable life. The expectation for a woman and a man to get married were very high up until the late eighties, and to get married by the age of twenty-five even more socially expected. Tanaka reports that in 1970, 75 percent of women still married before they turned twenty-six, by 1989 only 45 percent of women did. She attributes this change to a social shift that sees women no longer in "need to be concerned with being a 'Christmas Cake' situation, a Japanese joke for those who are, like a Christmas cake, without value after twenty-five (Japanese buy a cake for Christmas on 25 December)" (Tanaka 1995, 23). Thus, convinced by his experience at Warship Town, the next-door village where unmarried girls find a place as prostitutes after their work at the factories is over, the man ruled by an internalized schedule, gains the confidence to advance into marriage as one enters into commerce "'I have got money', said the man. 'What money?' said the woman. 'I mean with this money', said the man […] 'If not with money, then with what, the man asked'" (Tomioka 1991, 143). Simultaneously he finds himself inept before a woman and frantically swims across the river "as if in a dream." By the riverside "in the dusk where they could no longer clearly see each other's face" (144) a deal is reached with an exchange that assures the man rescue from loneliness and the woman something nice to eat once in a while. In this mythological place, in a timeless geography, a lineage is created, the name of its patriarch we can now know, Tsune-yan.

Six months into the marriage, Tsune-yan's wife Otane-san begins a cycle of births. The first child is Ju-yan "the idiot, as he was called […], The second-born was not, safe to say, particularly different. As for the girls in the order of

their ages" Kiku "the crazy", Kine "the normal", Kinu "the dumb", and Kiyo "the youngest was a diverting child, but was harelipped, and in later years one eye had glaucoma, and it became contorted after an operation" (146). One by one Tomioka Taeko reveals our characters as outcasts. Tsune-yan is ridiculed by the children for his facial deformations, Otane-san is depicted as dark-skinned short woman, touched in the head, who mumbles an unknown language to herself while facing the eternal faint light of a brazier. "No matter how regularly she steeps in the water every day what's dark does not turn white, villagers gossiped" (144). All the boys scavenge to make money mostly by gambling while they keep running the hemp bag business Tsune-yan created. Kine, the normal, studies to become a nurse and volunteers at the Chinese front during the war when she returns to her mother's home with a child out of wedlock, she finds the place revolting "perhaps because she studied to become a nurse, this person respected hygiene" (151). What unites all the female characters is one thing, giving birth.

> They said that Warship Town women bore rotten babies. Moreover, they said, if your man has brought a woman who gave birth to a rotten baby, your baby is also a rotten baby. Even if just once, a rotten baby by some chance may be born, thought Otane-san. If it is a rotten baby, I will just throw it in the river before dawn, she thought. (144)

The stigma of disease is a terror learned from hear-say by Otane-san, its working has a long tradition in Japanese history. Purity of blood was an essential message of imperial Japan that wanted to create a nation racially pure and physically fit to expand and succeed. Anthropologist Jennifer Robertson explains that the concept "began circulating in public discourse by the 1880s in many venues and media. 'Purity' referred metaphorically to a body—including the national body—free from symbolic pollution and disease-bearing pathogens" (Robertson 2002, 194). The rhetoric of Japaneseness was pursued not just by a hunting mentality, but also through the stigmatization of disease and mix marriages. As any deviant blood, Robertson reports, would "corrupt and dissolve the soul of the pure Japanese race

and national body and thwart the imperial expansion of the Japanese people" (198). One of the most successful ways to maintain a national genealogical integrity was by controlling the household through arranged marriage and of course by managing women's reproductive systems. Robertson underlines that:

> Negative eugenics, enthusiastically advocated […] involves the prevention of sexual reproduction, through induced abortion or sterilization, among people deemed unfit. 'Unfit' was an ambiguous term that included alcoholics, 'lepers,' the mentally ill, the criminal, the physically disabled, and the sexually alternative among other categories of people." (2002, 201)

However, while people "symbolically impure" where allowed to "marry and reproduce among themselves" those eugenically unfit "where quarantined, exiled, and prevented from marrying (unless sterilized) and reproducing" (202). Tomioka Taeko's outcasts are a congregate of symbolically impure exiles untied by kinship, Tsune-yan has no memory of his family, while Otane-san never talks about her parents, except for one thing she shares with her mother "My ma had a baby too"(Tomioka 1991, 147). In the midst of a life governed by the conventionality of marriage, work and reproduction, and post war recovering productivity, her madness becomes the only voice of consciousness speaking to itself: "all you do is make babies," "all you do is make me have babies," "All they do is make babies" (152). But the mumbling of these words is ignored by others until Otane-san dies of tuberculosis sitting in front of the brazier where Kiku, the lunatic, takes her place (155).

Repetitions, absence of direct dialogue, the presence of an interrupted narration with the voice of the teller have generally led critics to attribute the narrative style employed by Tomioka Taeko in this story to *Bunraku*, the traditional Osaka puppet theatre in which almost human size puppets are operated by three men dressed in black, only seemingly disappearing but who from behind are in fact creators of exceptional human-like movements. We should call them the great make believers. The puppets do not speak, their story is told by a

storyteller (a *tayu*) accompanied by a shamisen traditionally telling stories of double suicide, revenge, the valor of great samurais. Barthes called it a theatre based on "exemption of meaning" where the inanimate rules in a dimension of gestures stripped by stereotypes. He says:

> It is not the simulation of the body which Bunraku seeks, it is […]Fragility, discretion, sumptuousness, unparalleled nuance, the abandonment of all vulgarity, the melodic phrasing of gestures-in short, the very qualities ancient theology accorded to heavenly bodies, to wit, impassivity, clarity, agility, subtlety-this is what Bunraku accomplishes, this is how it converts the body-fetish into a body worthy of love, this is how it rejects the animate/ inanimate antinomy and banishes the concept hidden behind all animation, which is, quite simply, the 'soul.' (Barthes 1971, 77)

In Tomioka Taeko's story, we are placed into a spectacle of marginalized bodies who continue to fulfill duties as operated by a mechanical force beyond themselves who become bare bones discarded by society dancing in the perpetual darkness of the liminal. Rather than breathing life into the puppets (characters) Tomioka devoids them of it, we do not see them perform gestures of "the essence of being," we see humanity turned against itself or a post-human scenario staged for us as a performance of things. The storyteller here becomes an operator creating a disruption, performing absence. About Bunraku theatre critic and historian Gautam Dasgupta writes:

> the becoming visible or invisible is never an irreversible phenomenon in the Bunraku; there is a continuous moving back and forth between the two, a relentless displacement of the real and the imaginary between whose two poles lie the pathos and wonder of this ingenious puppet theatre." (Dasgupta 1983, 34)

On another occasion in 1969 Tomioka had the opportunity to work as a screenwriter on *Double Suicide* (original title: *Shinjû: Ten no Amijima*), a film directed by Masahiro Shinoda. The film is an adaptation of the well popularized work by master storyteller Chikamatsu and it follows Koharu, a prostitute, and Jihei, a married man, as they attempt to disentangle themselves from the constraints and norms of their status and roles to follow the love that binds them and that becomes a vehicle for seeing and disrupting social conformity. The film

opens with a scene capturing the preparation of a Bunraku stage, we see the master puppeteers, we enter the backstage as we do the story itself, knowing well how the plot will unfold. Chikamatsu's *Double Suicide* is in fact to this day one of the most well-known plays by the seventeenth century Bunraku artist performed through time in theatres all over Japan. But in this 1969 film interpretation, the two main characters are placed on a stage of human puppeteers dressed in black who stand on the foreground of scenes and occasionally interfere in dialogues by staging the characters steps, by moving furniture, providing a sword and in general manipulating events. They are a sweeping force of normativity, social order, leading characters into the acceptable course of action. The film's climactic moment is the ritual leading to the double suicide and foregrounded by a mantra "Duty binds us all". We see Koharu and Jihei defeated by their attempt to flee the circumstances of their life and attended by the human puppeteers in the preparation for their tragic exit. There is no escape from the management of time, relations and productivity "in this world money is everything" is the other chant we hear in the background. We see a lineage between *Double Suicide* by Shinoda and Tomioka's "Facing the Hills they Stand," namely the preoccupation with the recording of bodies, their control, their discipline in the face of efficiency or their motion in life itself. In the plight of those who fall out of the train of efficiency and duty. But the intensity of love passion, fear, hatred, violence that are central to the film are transformed into mere accessories of a numbed life framed by a relentless conjure of the unconscious striving into mindless actions—at times violent, at times with no ethos for the other. The last shots by Shinoda flow over roofs and doors in the village, a glamorous panorama of structures standing as apparatus of duty. Clearly in the film puppeteers belong to this chain of control as fabricators and conductors, they belong to the army of discipline as volunteers of time management. History though tells us that in ancient times puppeteers in Japan were itinerant storytellers, who would move from village to village. Social

anthropologist Masao Yamaguchi describes them as outsiders whose origins where unknown and who served the purpose of altering the monotonous and stale life of a town. They were carriers of dreams, magnificent transformers who would inspire change, but destined to keep a nomadic life as outcasts. They were performers whose behavior "was a kind that could not be observed in the everyday world" (Yamaguchi 1973, 154). As storytellers, they embodied equally the exceptionality of god-like and evil-like figures who could either bring calamity or inspire the greatness of heroes. Tomioka Taeko's voice in "Facing the Hills they Stand" makes its entrance as a *tayu*, a woman writer, an outcast storyteller. She brings a story without morals, patterns, protagonists, with no heroes born or enemies to be defeated, it is a narrative performance that forges and breaks its own rhythm where characters pass through life only to fall into disappearance. It is ultimately an experience that shakes us from within, from the matter of fact with which madness, disease, unspoken sorrow but also marginalization and stigmatization are nicely carved within the stage of convention, the master forger of the story itself. The performative nature of this prose with its evocation of the audience recalls intuition and immediacy as its processes for understanding and thus escapes appropriation and regulation, consumption and normalization. Poetry as it stood in its written form, could not have been able to sing this chant of outcasts, structured and academic as it had become. Tomioka Taeko's nomadic artistic expression finds in this unique deliverance a new language and form. As a feminist artist, Tomioka was after radical discontinuities from and within known gender structures and like a vagabond pursued them in her work as a screenwriter, a novelist, a poet, an essayist and a singer. In 1989 at a symposium on women and the family along with feminist scholars Ueno Chizuko and Noriko Mizuta, Tomioka declares the family as a structure obsessed with continuity. As an alternative, she proposes the *gumi*, loosely translatable as troupes, groups, gangs who work together bonding

for a given period of time and then disbanding. She brings the examples of crews and performing troupes whose coming together is not based on sex and lineage but rather on the expression of a common need (Tomioka, et al. 1989, 80). She self identifies as an itinerant member of *gumi* and recognizes that *gumi* are ultimately hideouts for those who find discomfort in mainstream norms and roles.

> The *gumi* and the troupe are linked by the absence of an obsession of continuity—the idea that the relationship, once constructed must never be dissolved even if the need for it has disappeared, that the group, once formed, must stick together forever. (81)

The obsession with continuity here has a particular significance within the context of Tomioka's work as a feminist writer. The lines "all they do is make babies" pronounced by Otane-san as a direct reference to the state of motherhood in Japan, will appear again in the 1983 novel *Building Waves* translated by Louise Heal Kawai in 2012 and in which one of the characters says*:* "But there's nothing else for me to do in life but have babies" (Tomioka 2012, 118). Furthermore, Tomioka's essay "Women's language and the National Language" chronicles the progressive control of the mother's language and the regional language by the institutionalized national language employing Chinese scripts— a transformation that led the shift from orality to the Japanese writing system. She writes:

> Songs and tales originally appeared before there was a written language. At that time, regardless of whether one was a man or a woman, one could sing a song or recite a story. It was later that songs, stories, and scholarship became exclusive to men through means of the written language. (Tomioka 2006, 138)

Poetry was slowly colonized by the national language controlling its production and consumption. Tomioka also underlines that:

> Symbols are the farthest thing from the spoken 'mother's language' and 'regional language.' Such languages tolerate the unnecessary, since there is no expectation that they be written down, but symbols do not allow this. Symbols respect efficiency. (143)

A woman writer for Tomioka is translingual, is an artificer of expressions capable of escaping from the banality of categorization and efficiency. The Kamigata

dialect employed in Osaka Bunraku is Tomioka's "mother's tongue," its return marks the inauguration of her new form of expression capable of capturing the ambiguity of presence, where repetition becomes the stalling of time and every action is crammed into the illusion of its existence. What does it take to shake off the numbness of fitting in, filling the next step in the ladder of success, folding nicely into the next prescribed chapter of an efficient life? How can one upset the apparatus of production and predictability? Trinh T. Min Ha assures us that:

> The tale breaks the dualistic relation between subject and object as the question 'who speaks' and the implication 'it-speaks-by-itself-through-me' is also a way of foregrounding the anteriority of the tale to the teller, and thereby the merging of the two through a speech-act. (Minh-ha 1990, 328)

We are faced with un-mastery, a non-dualistic relationship with knowledge. We are assured that in this spectacle there is no producer and no consumer of narratives and we are given a place of participation, the barrier falls, we are thrusted into the unfolding we were about to witness. The story and its teller are not there "to instruct nor to discipline. But to kindle the zeal which hibernates within each one of us." (Minh-ha 1989, 119) Like Hijikata, the post war founder of the great dance theatre Butoh, Tomioka Taeko looked into transformative performance as an action without a purpose that stood outside the doctrine of productiveness. And like in Butoh, her characters appear "like corpses standing desperately upright" (Fraleigh 2010, 35) performing the dance of the nonhuman, the vulnerable, the deformed. It is a performance of bones moving in the darkness of social conventions with well-defined margins inhabited by rotten kinds who not even disaster is able to eliminate. In this ritual only the audience can achieve a transformative experience, and only if capable of recovering from their disciplined bodies the now dormant feelings of compassion, anger, fear, revolt. A process of emptying, a dislocation of knowledge.

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Queer Kinship
"Exposed to the Other as a Skin is Exposed to What Wounds It"

Belkis González

"I feel like I am going around picking things apart, forcing people to look at places and communities that they really don't want to look at."

– Catherine Opie (Reilly 86)

The barbaric "zero tolerance" policy toward unauthorized migration into the United States has resulted in the inhuman separation of thousands of families, with no accountability for reuniting them. The cruelty of the systematic separation of families at the border has rightly provoked revulsion and condemnation from around the world. The brutal consequences of regulating kinship at the divide between nations should also prompt an examination of the consequences, sometimes no less brutal, of regulating kinship at the divide between categories of gender and sexuality. Categories of kinship and relationality govern how and to what extent persons become visible in public discourse, and can thereby become the subjects of advocacy. Visual culture, given its critical role in regulating the notions of kinship that are sanctioned and gain currency, is particularly fertile ground for interrogating how categories of relationality are constituted. In the

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discussion that follows, I mine visual representations of queer families that offer productive contrasts, examining the terms under which they regulate and disseminate representations of queer kinship. First, I consider the work of art photographer Catherine Opie. Opie's body of work encompasses a wide array of subjects and formats, but she is perhaps best known for her portraits of queer families and their community contexts, and these will be the focus of my discussion. Alongside Opie's work, I consider director Lisa Cholodenko's film *The Kids Are All Right*, exploring the moments when its largely homonormative narrative becomes suggestively unruly for what they reveal about the queerness of kinship.

In the discussion that follows, I draw from scholarship on sexual citizenship (Berlant, Reddy, Puar), investigations of reproductive technologies and non-normative families (Farquhar, Eng), and explorations of viable forms of sexual and affective relationality (Levinas, Butler, Muñoz, Ahmed) in order to consider what the juxtaposition of Cholodenko's and Opie's work reveals about the constitution of "family." The framework I bring to bear on my discussion is inflected by theoretical currents in queer theory, critical race theory, and film studies. Drawing from the richness of this interdisciplinary scholarship, I turn now first to the photographs of Catherine Opie.

*"*My work is always close to home": Catherine Opie (Reilly 86)

Photographs may be said to convey an affective temporality specific to the medium. In contrast to the narratable sequence characteristic of film such as the work by Lisa Cholodenko that I will examine later in this essay, a photograph functions, in Roland Barthes' well-known term, as a "wound" that disrupts narration (Barthes 21). For Barthes, the essence of the photograph is to announce "that has been"; it is a relation with the temporal structure of loss. "The important thing," he notes in *Camera Lucida*, "is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time" (Barthes 89). The

photograph gestures toward what exceeds its borders, temporally and spatially. In continually reiterating a moment to which one can never return, the photograph shares the structure of trauma, as Ulrich Baer argues in his book *Spectral Evidence.* Just as the traumatized psyche is haunted by persistent images that resist integration into a narrative of selfhood, the photograph reproduces a moment that can never be reexperienced. In possessing a structure homologous to that of trauma and of loss, still images evoke indeterminacy perhaps more readily than film.

This inherent evocation of the marginal within the medium of photography intensifies the impact of many of Catherine Opie's photographic subjects. The images that first brought her to international attention in the mid-1990s and that remain her best known are her portraits of leather dykes, daddy/boy couples, drag kings, and icons of queer performance art and S/M subcultures. This body of work represents vital contributions to the creation of queer sexual counterpublics that expand notions of kinship and challenge normative modes of gender identification and sexual expression.

In the three decades since those early works, Opie's photographs have encompassed a vast range of both subject and form, from portraits to spaces emptied of human presence, and from 9-foot high Polaroids to postcard-size platinum prints. Her series have taken as their subjects "Icehouses" (2001), "Surfers" (2003), and "700 Nimes Road" (2015), the home of Elizabeth Taylor. Although at first glance the wide-ranging subjects of Opie's camera might appear to be unrelated, they have in common a persistent interest in family, home, and community. From her 1988 master's thesis project, "Master Plan," which focused on planned suburban communities in Southern California, to her 2004 series "In and Around Home," she has explored the formation of homes and communities in an array of contexts. In particular, she has pursued the constitution of American identity, as underscored by the title of her mid-career exhibition in 2008-2009 at

the Guggenheim Museum, *Catherine Opie: American Photographer*. Here, I will focus on works that directly address the representation of kinship, domesticity, and citizenship. How are family and community constituted? What is the relation between queer corporeal experience and communal belonging?

In her series "In and Around Home" (2004-05), Opie challenges investments in domestic privacy. This series features large color portraits of queer family life.[1] In the photograph *Sunday Morning Breakfast*, the viewer is situated inside Opie's own kitchen, looking past plates of food on a table and a refrigerator covered in post-it reminders and through a doorway into the adjoining room, where her toddler son Oliver sits in a pool of sunshine playing with the family dogs. *Portrait of Julie and Myra* presents Opie's partner Julie Burleigh standing on their porch, flanked by their dog and surrounded by assorted potted plants and pairs of shoes. Tellingly, at the edge of the frame lies the door to their house, and directly behind Julie's head lie the windows of their neighbor's house. Just as the viewer of *Sunday Morning Breakfast* looks from the locus of the hearth out towards an adjoining room that is only partially visible, so too does the perspective in *Portrait of Julie and Myra* guide our eyes from the intimacy of one house toward the thresholds of others.

This relational move is asserted more emphatically when the series is considered as a whole. As its title announces, "In and Around Home" unites scenes of domestic interiors with images of the communities of which they are a part. *The Bloods, Memorial* documents a doorstep shrine to a fallen gang member. *In Protest to Sex Offenders* depicts demonstrators outside a neighborhood home serving as a halfway house. There are scenes that underscore the de facto racial segregation of community rituals, e.g. contrasting images of *Homecoming USC 2004* and *M.L.K. Parade 2005*. The multiplicity of racial, ethnic, linguistic, and

[1] The series is reproduced in its entirety alongside a prior series in *Catherine Opie: 1999 & In and Around Home*, exh. cat. (Ridgefield, CT: Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 2006).

cultural identities that cohere in these neighborhoods is rendered particularly vivid in images such as *Monica Lewinsky Mural*, which captures a cluster of signs advertising "Bar-B-Q, Beer, Ribs," "Su Agencia de Viajes," and a paint supply store sign written in English, Spanish, and Korean displayed over a graffiti-covered wall, all behind a mural of Monica Lewinsky painted next to a mural of Jesus. As in her earlier "Mini-malls" series, Opie here frames the interrelated identities and relations of power at the crossroads of local neighborhoods.

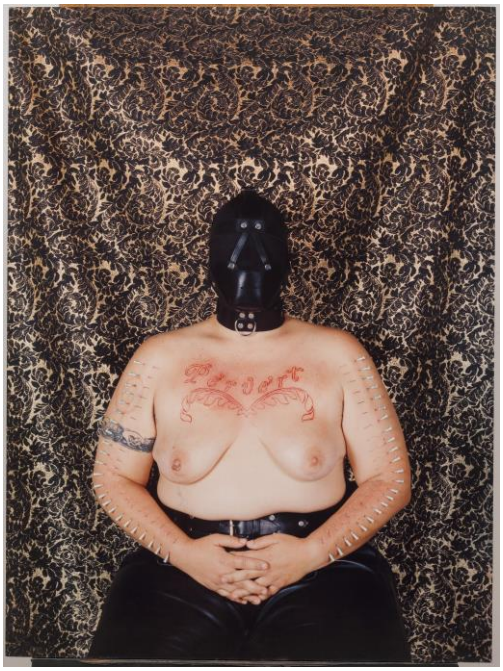
Conversely, "In and Around Home" also traces the penetration of discordant voices through the walls of the private home and into families' living rooms. Almost half of the prints in the series are Polaroid pictures, many shot off television screens. There are portraits of news reporters standing outside homes, preparing to deliver live coverage, and a portrait of a television set itself. These images insistently underscore the interpenetration of communities and the relational nature of representation. Inside homes, the television set emblematizes the intersection of a cacophonous gamut of discourses. On streets that back porches and windows abut, goods are bought and sold in languages some local residents understand, but others don't.

This representation of home and family as porous and invariably adjoining other, perhaps radically differing lives is conveyed perhaps most emblematically in this series by the photograph *Me and Nika by Julie*. This work positions the viewer on a doorstep, looking into a home through a wide open door. On the other side of that doorway is Opie herself, sitting on the floor in house slippers with a dog in her lap, looking directly at the camera. The viewer's gaze is thus greeted with utmost informality, interpellated as neighbor, family member, friend, or lover – the work's title announces that it was in fact shot by Opie's lover, Julie (Burleigh). The image is not a representation of a discrete family, but of *familiarity*. It depicts an invitation and a promise of receptivity, inflected by a relation that is at once intimate and disassociated. Moving beyond the portraits of

differing families in her "Domestic" series, "In and Around Home" instead frames the liminal spaces that bind together individuals, families, and communities across thresholds of difference.

I contend that this mode of relationality -- of liminality as integral to intimacy -- is also a crucial but unrecognized feature of one of Opie's most iconic works, *Self Portrait/Pervert*. This work presents Opie seated, her torso unclothed and her hands folded in her lap. Her arms are pierced with a series of 18-gauge needles, 46 in all, that enter and exit her flesh in orderly rows from her wrists to her shoulders. A leather collar circles her neck, and her head is completely encased in a black hood. Across her chest, the word "Pervert" has been carved into her skin in elegant lettering, the cutting so fresh it is still weeping blood. With Opie centered squarely in the frame, before a sumptuous backdrop of black and gold drapery, the image is a breathtaking corporeal embrace of alterity.[2]

[2] Unmistakeably, the 1994 photograph is a defiant affirmation of sexual deviance and a bold outcry against a confluence of contemporaneous conservative forces: AIDS phobia and social panics about HIV-positive blood and the congressional inquisition against queer art funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. These first two issues – AIDS-phobia and the campaign against the funding of queer artists through the National Endowment for the Arts – came to bear forcefully on the life of Opie's friend and collaborator Ron Athey the same year (1994) she created her photograph *Self Portrait/Pervert*. That year, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis had hosted Athey's performance *Excerpts from Four Scenes in a Harsh Life*. In a segment of this performance called "Human Printing Press," Athey, who is HIV-positive, used a scalpel to cut into the back of his co-performer, Darryl Carlton. Athey then placed pieces of surgical paper over the cuts and pressed, creating imprints of the cuts in blood. These pieces of paper were then hung on a clothesline attached to a pulley behind the audience, and the clothesline was pulled so that the blood prints traveled over the heads of the seated spectators. One audience member later complained to the state health department of having been put at risk of HIV infection by the performance. The complaint was first reported on the front page of a local paper (see Abbe 1994), then was picked up by the Associated Press and given widespread coverage that included erroneous accounts of the paper dripping blood on the audience, and spectators attempting to flee the venue in fear. Carlton, whose blood was used to make the prints (and who was actually HIV-negative), is black, suggesting race-based dimensions to this hysteria that are mentioned in only one of the many accounts I have come across (see O'Dell 1998). Although Athey's performance received only $150 in support from the National Endowment for the Arts, it became a lightning rod for Christian conservative groups waging war against public arts funding, resulting in the Senate cutting NEA funding by 5% the following fiscal year – a cut that actually represented more than 40% of the funding for theater and the visual arts (see Grimes 1994). The controversy also had a chilling effect on even staunchly supportive performance venues; when Athey staged the same performance at New York's P.S. 122, audience members had to sign a release and a



Catherine Opie, *Self-Portrait/Pervert*, 1994.
Chromogenic print, 40 x 30 inches.

Opie's *Self Portrait/Pervert* is often described in terms that evoke a magisterial and militant aggressiveness. It has been characterized as "[p]erhaps her most confrontational work" (Trotman 2008, 73), "an angry picture, rage seeps from its surface" (Budick 2008, 13), featuring Opie in a pose that is "imperial" (Nelson 2011, 198). The image is unquestionably defiant, and its subject, seated squarely in the center of the frame, is indeed highly dignified in her bearing.[3]

registered nurse was present (see Brantley 1994). For more on this controversy, see Trebay 1994: 38 and Landi 1994: 46. For insightful essays on the politics of art in the context of the AIDS pandemic, see the collection of essays in Gott 1994. The photograph also unmistakeably defies the mainstreaming of queer social movements demonstrated by the privileging of campaigns for gay marriage and for gays to serve openly in the military, and the rise of the kind of politically unthreatening images of gays in popular culture. See Opie, quoted in Suzanne Muchnic, 1998: 152; Dykstra 2008: 128; Opie, quoted in Ferguson 2008: 106.

[3] As has been widely noted, Opie has been influenced in her portraiture by the work of Hans Holbein the Younger, the painter to King Henry VIII in the sixteenth century. In intertextual relation to Holbein's sumptuous, highly detailed portraits, Opie portrays her own "royal family" of perverts and queers. See, e.g., Muchnic, 1998: 150-53; Ferguson 2008: 105. See also Opie 1997: 10.

However, there is a striking irony in characterizing as bellicose and "imperial" a figure prominently wearing a slave collar, whose flesh is covered in wounds and whose head is effaced by a hood. I wish to suggest that instead, *Self Portrait/Pervert*, precisely by presenting us with a body that is both defiant and wounded, in fact troubles the opposition between sovereign and subject. Here, the photographer is an unseeing figure that demands to be seen.[4] Her skin is broken by needles that mark her as a sexual outlaw, outside the norm, while also marking her as belonging to a vulnerable human collectivity. The figure in this photograph is one who, in the terms of Emmanuel Levinas, is "being torn up from oneself in the core of one's unity" (Levinas 1997, 49). In his meditations on the ethics of relationality, Levinas posits that "one is exposed to the other as a skin is exposed to what wounds it, as a cheek is offered to the smiter" (Levinas 1997, 49). Each needle that pierces through Opie's skin in this photograph reiterates a breach of the divide between self and Other. Confounding notions of coherent subjectivity and stable identity, the self is here constituted in intimate association with a painful alterity. The implication is that pain is not only integral to relationality, but also perhaps a defining characteristic of relationality.

In Levinas' characterization, the subject's "being 'turned to another' is this being turned inside out." In *Self Portrait/Pervert*, the photographer, the sovereign, is turned inside out to become the subject, exposed and lacerated. The vulnerability etched on her body convenes Others hailed by the epithet carved across her chest: the defiantly irrepressible perverts and the stewards of public sexual cultures. On the most intimate register, the piercings and cutting on the photographer's skin evoke the presence of those Others whose skill and care created them just before the camera's shutter was released, and who must have

[4] It is therefore ironic that in their reception of Opie's self portraits, critics across the conservative, progressive, and queer press have at times evinced an inability to see the "Pervert" cutting for what it is, instead perceiving it as a tattoo. See Solomon 1995: A12; Danto 1995: 803; Luby, 2007: D3.

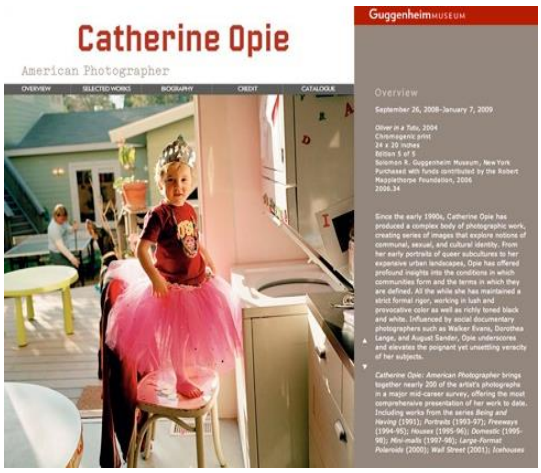
been standing just outside the frame.[5] The self is here constituted in relation to those Others who remain just outside the field of vision. The ruptured body bears the sign of "pervert" through which Others are constituted; it is a condition of being that Levinas characterizes as "one-penetrated-by-the-other" (Levinas 1997, 49).

Opie's portraits of leather dykes, drag kings, and queer performance artists powerfully address a national public from their respective representational standpoints. However, I contend that Opie's oeuvre as a whole enacts a rupturing of identitarian subjectivity homologous to the rupturing of the self depicted in *Self Portrait/Cutting*. It emphatically occupies queer cultural spaces while simultaneously insisting on the porousness and mutability of the borders that demarcate them. The photographer's own body, standing in for the divergent communities it convenes, is both the pierced, cut, and hooded pervert, and the neighbor sitting in her house slippers in the open doorway. Her images explore the specific cultures of various lesbian communities, while refusing to specify what "lesbian" or "community" necessarily mean in these cultures. They defiantly assert a lesbian subjectivity while at the same time disavowing homonormative lesbian politics as well as mourning exclusion from anti-S/M lesbian camps. Both inhabiting and rejecting coherent iterations of lesbian identities, Opie's lens also ranges into the cultures of high school football, surfers, and suburban planned communities, reciprocally refracting an array of American modes of belonging. Rather than consolidate minoritarian identities as stable standpoints for bids for social legitimacy, her images explore a multiplicity of dissonant modes of being.

The image *Oliver in a Tutu* conveys this approach with compelling economy. This 2004 photograph, part of the "In and Around Home" series, is of

[5] For this observation, I am indebted to Jennifer Blessing, who notes in her introduction to the catalogue of Opie's Guggenheim exhibit that the cutting for *Self Portrait/Pervert* was conducted by Raelyn Gallina, an iconic figure in lesbian S/M cultures, and the piercings done by Opie's friends Melissa and Jo, a sitter in Opie's "Portraits" series. See Blessing 2008, 17.

Opie's toddler son standing in the sun-lit kitchen of her home, wearing an outfit that combines an athletic college insignia shirt, a silver tiara, and a bright pink tutu. Here, "home" is a space that enables and sustains an enmeshment of divergent codes of gender identity and social belonging.



Catherine Opie, *Oliver in a Tutu*, 2004.
Chromogenic print, 24 x 20 inches.
Guggenheim Museum exhibition announcement materials.[6]

In *Oliver in a Tutu*, the (white) queer family is jubilantly affirmed. This iteration of gay and lesbian domesticity is one with considerable cultural currency, as evinced by the fact that this image was chosen to advertise Opie's 2008 major exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, and was thereby reproduced in newspapers and magazines with national circulation. In New York City, ads for the Guggenheim show bearing this portrait of emancipated domesticity appeared in subway cars, alongside "public service" signs exhorting passengers to do their part to defend the American way of life: "If You See Something, Say Something."[7] That these two messages could coincide in the New York City

[6]Guggenheim Museum, Schedule of Events. <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/education/works-andprocess/eventsschedule?option=com_calendar&task=showevent&mt=1229835600&mh=%20@%207:30 p.m.&aid=2470&tmpl=component&print=1>.

[7] The "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign was begun by the MTA in 2003. It has

subway, a space that is arguably the epitome of U.S. urban pluralism, calls to mind Wendy Brown's observation that U.S. imperialist aggression is waged, in part, in the name of tolerance (Brown 2006, 2). In *Regulating Aversion*, Brown describes the discourse of tolerance as "a domestic governmentality producing and regulating ethnic, religious, racial, and sexual subjects" as well as a "civilizational discourse distinguishing Occident from Orient, liberal from nonliberal regimes, 'free' from 'unfree' peoples" (Brown 2006, 6). The Guggenheim Museum, as one of the premier national arts institutions, certifies the national character of the image of the liberated, radiantly free child as the work of "Catherine Opie: American Photographer." Considered alongside the discourse of securing national borders against invasion by the Other, the queer white child here looks out from the safe space of his home(land), a symbol of the tolerance and freedom the military aggression toward ethnic Others purportedly aims to defend. The queer domestic space here heralds what Chandan Reddy terms the "liberal egalitarian national state"; the image hails the mission and celebrates the triumph of an idealized neoliberal pluralism (Reddy 2011).[8]

Oliver in a Tutu depicts the child standing next to a washer/dryer, while someone appears in the background sweeping with a broom. These evocations of household order and cleanliness remind us of Mary Douglas' admonition in her classic work *Purity and Danger*: "Where there is dirt, there is system" (Douglas 2003, 36).[9] The scene of family that can effectively circulate as a symbol of idealized national values is also the scene of containment. In striking contrast,

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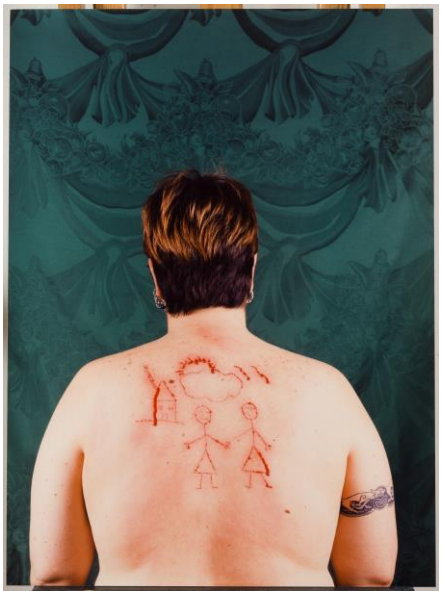
since licensed it to the Department of Homeland Security. The phrase is now officially trademarked, and is in use in anti-terrorism campaigns around the country and abroad. See "If You See Something, Say Something Campaign," Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.dhs.gov/if-you-see-something-say-something-campaign>. For an array of critical perspectives on this campaign, see the issue of Women's Studies Quarterly devoted to responses to this campaign: Schaffer and Pitts-Taylor 2011.

[8] For a helpful, related discussion of official liberal and neoliberal antiracisms as mutually constitutive of U.S. global ascendancy, see Melamed, 2011.

[9] For a valuable study of the ways that housework has structured relations of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class in specific U.S. historical contexts, see Palmer, 1989.

Opie's 1993 photograph *Self-Portrait/Cutting* fills the frame with the body's bloody excretions. It is an image of Opie's back, into which has been carved a stick-figure drawing of two women holding hands in front of a house. The artists' blood transgresses the borders of her body, confounding distinctions between interior/exterior, self/Other, native/alien.



Catherine Opie, *Self-Portrait/Cutting*, 1993.
Chromogenic print, 40 x 30 inches.

Rather than a sunny, clean household and a happy, emancipated child, *Self-Portrait/Cutting* presents a queer subject who is maladjusted, wounded, scarred, and exiled from the basic comforts of normal life. The stick figures conjure notions of stalled development, a self that is out-of-step, a child's scribble irrupting into the space of high art. And the perverse body is turned in the "wrong" direction, personifying Heather Love's contention that queers, "[w]hether understood as throwbacks to an earlier stage of development or as children who refuse to grow up," have been viewed as "a backward race" (Love 2007, 6). It is a portrait of queer existence that resists what Love terms "the

progress narrative of queer history" (Love 2007, 8).[10] The promise of queer domesticity, far from realized, is a thwarted yearning. The lacerated body exposes the underside of the idealized egalitarian nation, supplying corporeal evidence of the wounds its unrealized promises inflict. By standing with her back turned to us as she bleeds, the subject of *Self-Portrait/Cutting* enacts a queer politics of mourning that resists privatization, "positive" visibility, and assimilation into egalitarian neoliberalism.[11]

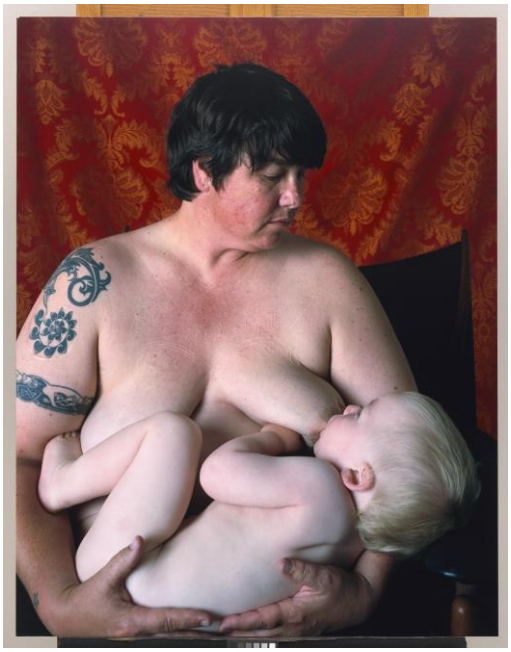
Particularly when viewed from the perspective of *Self-Portrait/Cutting*, the deployment of *Oliver in a Tutu* in national advertisements for the Guggenheim's exhibition of Opie's photography exemplifies the constitution of what Jasbir Puar calls "regulatory queer subjects" produced "against queer*ness*" (Puar 2007, xxvii, emphasis in original). The queerness of the grieving body and the queerness of its grievances as presented in *Self-Portrait/Cutting* must be elided in order to promote a vision of the liberated queer subject in *Oliver in a Tutu*, a queer subject compatible with national security imperatives to "say something" if one "sees something" where it (or s/he) does not belong; to police borders against the threats of the alien Other. As instruments of what Puar terms "homonationalism," regulatory queer subjects bolster U.S. exceptionalism by constituting the nation as ultimately democratic, tolerant, and egalitarian.

In eliding queerness in favor of regulatory queer subjects, nonnormative forms of kinship and social belonging are rendered illegible. Thus the critical reception of Opie's first series of portraits, "Being and Having," notes the "fierce" gazes on the faces of its masculine dyke subjects (see, e.g. Dykstra 2008: 128),

[10] Several recent works offer insightful related discussions. See Freeman 2010; Bond Stockton, 2009; Halberstam, 2011.

[11] José Muñoz develops points from Douglas Crimp's essay "Mourning and Militancy" to articulate mourning as a queerly productive force in fomenting not private but communal bonds "that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names – and in our names" (Muñoz 1999, 74).

but does not register the vulnerable, guarded, desirous, or jocular facial expressions — an emotional range that evokes the affective bonds of collective identifications. The same reductive reading characterizes the reception of Opie's third self-portrait, *Self-Portrait/Nursing* (2004). In this photograph, Opie is again sitting shirtless before the camera with the word "pervert" etched across her chest, now as an ornate scar. But this time she holds in her arms her son Oliver as he nurses at her breast. The image is one in which the sentimental Western iconography of Madonna and child collides with the representation of the socially abjected figure: the butch dyke, scarred and tattooed. But its reception is marked by a telos of personal maturation that subsumes alterity into maternity. Opie has undergone a "personal transformation" that moves her beyond the "anguish and pain" of her earlier work, and now, "with her career in full bloom she finally achieved her dream of a family," and can revel in the "rapturous contentment" of her new life (Trotman 2008, 73). Having attained professional and domestic stability, "pervert" is an insignia only of a past she has left behind, "a marker of her own history" (Trotman 2008, 73). The portrait is viewed as "a tender representation of love and domesticity" (Nairne and Howgate 2006, 20).



Catherine Opie, *Self-Portrait/Nursing*, 2004.
Chromogenic print, 40 x 32 inches.

This shift in reception of Opie's portraiture occasioned by the inclusion of her son highlights the intractability of the normative structuring of relationality produced by the figure of the child. Below, I examine how this normative structuring of relationality is negotiated in the work of another queer artist, Lisa Cholodenko's film *The Kids Are All Right.*

Being "All Right"

Lisa Cholodenko's feature film *The Kids Are All Right* (2010) narrates the disruptions in the bonds of a family headed by lesbian parents when the donor whose sperm they used to conceive enters the scene. The film is a particularly productive text in which to ground discussions of the constitution of family in part because it dramatizes not only queer parenting, but also the use of assisted reproductive technologies. Technologies enabling artificial insemination, sperm donation, egg donation, in vitro fertilization, and gestational surrogacy destabilize normative definitions of family as a private realm of consanguine relationality. As

Dion Farquhar notes in her study of discourses of assisted reproduction, these technologies "undermine ahistorical narratives about the natural, the private, the romantic and dyadic nature of sexual reproduction, along with their attendant classical binaries such as nature/technology, private/public, affective/commodified, sexual/asexual" (Farquhar 1996, 10). As same-sex parents, the lesbian couple at the center of Cholodenko's film challenges conventional definitions of family. Yet their decision to each become pregnant also demonstrates a continuing investment in a biological basis for filiation – an investment made even more salient by their choice to each become pregnant using sperm from the same donor. In conceiving children that would be half-siblings, they chose to establish a biological link between them. Nonetheless, the person acting as this link – the sperm donor – was to remain an absent and anonymous figure. These reproductive choices and their consequences typify a compelling ambivalence towards notions of kinship and domesticity.

A further aspect of this film that invites consideration alongside Opie's work is its exploration of queer intimacies; forms of relationality not only shared by persons who identify as queer, but affects that are themselves perverse. While *The Kids Are All Right* in some ways depicts the queer family as a model of a "happy family," it also probes the inadequacy of discourses of happiness to account for the self in intimate relation to the Other. In a sense, the film both weaves and unravels a triumphant representation of queer intimacies, exposing the gaps and ruptures in its construction. In what follows, I mine these ruptures to explore the relational possibilities the film's narrative forecloses, and those that it perhaps creates.

Nic (Annette Bening) and Jules (Julianne Moore), a married couple, are middle-aged, upper-middle class white women. Nic, who is authoritarian and at times insensitive, supports the family on her income as a physician. Jules, who is more demonstrative and unconstrained, paused her professional life in order to

raise her children, and is now launching the latest of several attempts to operate her own business. Laser (Josh Hutcherson), their 15-year-old son, is a thoughtful and earnest youth who plays on sports teams and rides his bicycle through the neighborhood. Joni (Mia Wasikowska), their 18-year-old daughter, is a quiet and courteous honor student about to move away for college. The household is portrayed in tones meant to convey stability, conventionality, and appealing imperfection.

Initially, it is only Laser that is interested in learning the identity of the sperm donor with whom he and his sister were conceived. But the sperm bank does not accept requests for contact with its donors until the child making the request reaches the age of 18. Laser persuades Joni to make the request on his behalf, which she does without their mothers' knowledge. Upon meeting the donor, Laser is guarded but Joni is surprised at the rapport she establishes with him. The donor, Paul (Mark Ruffalo), turns out to be a motorcycle-riding free spirit. He owns a restaurant where he serves produce from his organic farm, and he exudes a youthful vitality and warmth. Joni wishes to see him again. But when Nic and Jules discover that their children have met their sperm donor, Nic forbids any further contact until she and Jules meet him. When he comes to their home for lunch, Paul ends up offering to be Jules' first client for her new landscaping business. Soon thereafter, the two initiate a furtive, passionate sexual relationship. When Nic discovers Jules' betrayal, the entire family turns back on itself defensively, shutting Paul out. At the end of the film, Paul is left alone and despondent, mourning the loss of a family he now realizes he desires.

Notably, Cholodenko's film locates the possibility of Paul's claims on the family exclusively in biology. From the first moment Paul appears on screen, he is associated with nature, vitality, and fertility. In the film's first shot of him, Paul is bathed in sunshine and standing in the lush fields of his organic garden, cradling a basket of produce. One after another, women respond to his earthy

vigor as he makes his way from his garden to the restaurant where he nourishes guests with his fresh, organic food. The film explicitly references this association between Paul and natural abundance just before the pivotal scene in which a passion between him and Jules ignites. Jules' physical desire for Paul irrupts with such force that it veers into compulsivity and violence. The sex scenes between her and Paul are played with a vicious urgency in which she pulls his hair, orders him to pull hers, and crushes his face with her hand as she climaxes. Paul's allure is primal, animal, irresistible. This representation of Paul exemplifies the film's ambivalence about normative notions of family and kinship. On the one hand, the film subverts ideologies of gender by displacing discourses of nature, fecundity, and derangement from the female to the male. On the other hand, at times, it also suggests that the bonds of kinship are rooted in the carnal and the biological.

Of the members of her family, Nic alone remains guarded against Paul. Her hostile resistance to his efforts to insinuate himself into their lives results in considerable conflict. For Nic, Paul is behind every subversion of her authority over her children. When she threatens Laser with withholding a planned outing if he doesn't complete a chore, he informs her he has already made alternate plans with Paul. Nic has expressly forbidden her children to ride motorcycles, but Joni readily accepts a ride home from Paul on his, and responds to Nic's reprimands by arguing that she is no longer a minor and therefore Nic has no authority over her. Eventually, Nic resolves to transcend her aversion to Paul and attempt to mend the divisiveness that has riven her family. In a grand, conciliatory gesture, she proposes that her family gather for dinner at Paul's house so that she may embrace his presence in their lives as well as admire all the work Jules has done landscaping his grounds.

The scene of this dinner is the fulcrum of Cholodenko's film. It represents a vertiginous moment poised on the threshold of new relational possibilities, receptive to exploratory conceptualizations of kinship. For a moment, Nic ceases

to function as gatekeeper to her family, lowering her defensiveness long enough to notice emergent bases for affinity with he whom she had heretofore regarded only as an intruder. As Jules, Laser, and Joni chat while they prepare dinner, Nic settles on Paul's couch and looks through his record collection. There among his albums, she finds a musical work she cherishes: an album by Joni Mitchell, an artist so meaningful to her that, as the film soon reveals, she has named her daughter after her. Once dinner is served, Nic engages Paul in a conversation about their shared love of Joni Mitchell. The two trade the titles of favorite songs and are soon reaching across the table to press their palms together in a gesture of intimate affinity. Transported by the moment, Nic launches into a rendition of one of Mitchell's songs, singing exuberantly at the table. Coming to the song's end, she pauses to take in the sight of her assembled family, with Paul convening them around the dinner table, and solemnly announces: "I like this guy." The intrusion of biological filiation into her family has here resolved into kinship grounded in affiliation, shared sensibilities, shared meals, a shared commitment to the children. This emotive transformation is conveyed in the film by a heady disequilibrium shifting across both aural, visual, and affective registers; it moves from Nic's sung melody to the discordant sounds of clanging utensils at the dinner table; from extreme close-ups of Nic's face as she sings to long shots of the dinner table within the interior of Paul's home; from the emotional intensity of personal aesthetic response to the mundane rituals of dinner at home.

But in the very next sequence, the transformational promise of this heady moment implodes. Nic rises from the table to use the bathroom. There, at the sink, she discovers her wife's distinctive long, red hair in Paul's hairbrush. She finds more of the same in the drain of his bathtub. Slipping out of the bathroom and into Paul's bedroom, she finds there confirmation of her dreaded suspicion: Jules has become Paul's lover. Returning to the table, she conceals her devastation. Paul raises his glass in a toast: "Cheers!" he celebrates. "To an unconventional

family!" Nic joins the others in the toast. But their collective triumphant gesture is a parody of what might have been. The very possibility of the "unconventional family" they salute has already been undermined. The vision of a family not bounded by normative biological filiation but porous to it, one not limited to a parental dyad but reaching beyond it to embrace a third parent – in the cascading ruins of treachery discovered, these vertiginous possibilities have already been foreclosed.

Tellingly, *The Kids Are All Right* is a film that is largely staged around dinner tables. The primary visual focal point of this movie is the hearth around which the family gathers.

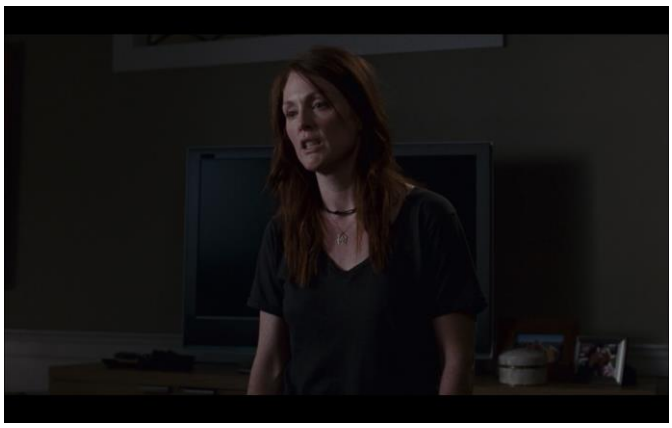
The Kids Are All Right, dir. Lisa Cholodenko, 2010

The events it narrates answer questions about who has a legitimate place at the family table, who is entitled to be seated with the family. When we first see Jules and Nic, they are sitting down to dinner with their children. Later in the film, when Paul is provisionally invited into the family circle, it is around a table, sharing a meal, that the negotiations take place: coming to meet Nic and Jules for the first time, Paul is invited to join them for lunch. The table is set outside the house, on the porch, with the window and door left open, blurring distinctions between outside and inside, public and private, filiation and affiliation. And finally, when Nic and Jules take the kids for dinner at Paul's house, the table is the site both of the destabilization and restabilization of the nuclear family model.

A concomitant drama of exclusion unfolds at the corollary of the hearth: the doorstep. In the film, the threshold of the family home is the antithesis of what it is in Opie's *Me and Nika by Julie*. In place of the promise of familiarity through the inviting liminal space of the open doorway in Opie's photograph, Cholodenko's film depicts a door slammed shut. After Nic discovers that Jules is sleeping with Paul, all the members of the family revolt against him. He is repulsed from their lives and from their home. On the eve of Joni's departure for college, fearing he may not ever see her again, Paul arrives at their house unannounced and knocks on their door, interrupting the family gathered around the dinner table. He attempts to reconcile, but the family rebuffs his attempt. Finding himself shut out of the family home, Paul stands outside in the dark and looks in through the window. Inside, he sees Laser, the person whose desire to meet his biological father was the catalyst for Paul's entry into their lives. Laser is the last member of the family remaining seated at the table. Through the window's dark glass, Paul offers him a chummy smile. But Laser's response is to stand and exit the room, leaving Paul to look upon an empty table. Together with the film's visual discourses of dinner tables to police the boundaries of the family, its representation of doorways produces the family as property to be guarded. As Nic stands guard at the door while Paul stands helplessly on the doorstep, she tersely informs him of his status: "you're a fucking interloper!" "This is my family!" she shouts at him before slamming the door. "If you want a family so much, you go out and make your own!"

This moment of violent exclusion of the indeterminate kinship he represents and of militant reassertion of family as possession seems at first to restore the hearth as a space of order and security. However, behind the family's closed doors, provocative ambivalences emerge in the affective responses of its members. If the scene of the dinner at Paul's home is, as I have argued, the fulcrum of this film's narrative, then the aftermath of his expulsion from the

family unit is the nadir in this story of queer kinship. The point at which the narrative is furthest from a portrayal of a happy (queer) family is marked by an extended monologue by Jules to her family, a speech that is essentially a treatise on the institution of marriage.



The Kids Are All Right, dir. Lisa Cholodenko, 2010

As her children and her wife are slumped dejectedly on the family sofa, Jules stands before them and proclaims, "I need to say something." Addressing her children first, she says "It's no big secret. Your mom and I are in hell right now." She does not say that they were cast into hell by any particular action, or failure to act. Instead, her voice cracking, she implies that the condition of marriage is itself, by definition, a state of hell: "And, uh, bottom line is, marriage is hard. It's really fucking hard. Just — just two people, slogging through the shit, year after year, getting older, changing. It's a fucking marathon, okay?" Expressing deep regret for her actions, she ruefully observes: "Sometimes you hurt the ones you love the most. I don't know why." It is the most profoundly unhappy scene in *The Kids Are All Right* — and also the most profoundly intimate.

Considering the unhappiness of the family at this moment alongside the intensified degree of intimacy can lead us to explore what is at stake in discourses of happiness in general and of familial happiness in particular. In *The Promise of Happiness,* Sara Ahmed argues that discourses of happiness regulate desire,

providing a basis for rewarding certain life choices and punishing others. "It is not simply that we desire happiness," she points out, "but that happiness is imagined as what you get in return for desiring well" (Ahmed 2010, 37). In *The Kids Are All Right*, the scenes that most vividly portray the family as happy are the scenes in which each of its members is anchored in their place, assembled around their dinner table in fixed roles: Nic, the authoritarian breadwinner; Jules, the nurturing homemaker; Laser, the respectful teen; Joni, the honor student. But the scene of most palpable intimacy is a scene not of shared happiness, but of shared "hell." Rather than being anchored in place, the family members are unmoored, at sea. Nic, Laser, and Joni are slumped awkwardly on the sofa, shrouded in darkness. Standing before them, Jules looks lost and alone, framed against a background that is almost completely black. In *The Kids Are All Right*, this is what love looks like.

The Kids Are All Right, dir. Lisa Cholodenko, 2010

This rich ambivalence in this filmic text is fertile ground to explore, with Ahmed, "what it might mean to affirm unhappiness" (Ahmed 2010, 89), particularly that of "unhappy queers." Queer subjects know well that the most compelling and meaningful life choices may lead not to comfort but to rejection, not to cheer but to crisis. For Jules, affirming unhappiness means unrestrained affective exposure. Her speech to her family is a moment of raw candor unparalleled in the narrative. For Nic, affirming unhappiness means she finally

gives her family the gift of her vulnerability. Her body is no longer the solid, immovable guard at the door, but is instead pliant, liquid, slumped on the sofa awash in tears. No longer facing down her rival, she can afford to efface herself, burying her face in both her hands, as open to the Other as the hooded, pierced, and bleeding figure in Opie's *Self-Portrait/Pervert*. She is bound to her kin not through her authority as arbiter and enforcer of familial boundaries, but through her affect, as a listening, caring, and vulnerable presence. It is the affirmation of unhappiness — of intimacy as a hellish experience of "slogging through the shit, year after year, getting older" — that has made possible this queer intimacy. "To kill joy," Ahmed writes, "is to open a life, to make room for life, to make room for possibility, for chance" (Ahmed 2010, 20). For Nic and Jules, to shatter the pretense of their happy queer family is to make room for the possibilities inherent in their queer kinship.

Ironically, a byproduct of the increasing social acceptance of queer families is that it has obfuscated such queer forms of kinship. Reviewing *The Kids Are All Right*, the late Roger Ebert writes "It's a film about marriage itself, an institution with challenges that are universal. […] I refuse to call it a 'gay film.' I toyed with the idea of not even using the word "lesbian" and leaving it to you to figure out that the couple was female" (Ebert 2010). For him, the characters in the film blend so seamlessly with normative constructions of family that their story is perceived as universal. His response suggests that gays and lesbians might at last have achieved some measure of what Lauren Berlant has termed "the freedom to feel unmarked" (Berlant 1997, 2). Perhaps, at this historical juncture, the volume of images of gays and lesbians circulating in the media has succeeded in promoting social acceptance to such a degree that sexual difference has become unremarkable. If this is so, it is surely only the case for those whose sexual orientation is the only difference that distinguishes them from other markers of privilege.

The film's representation of a white same-sex couple as custodians of middle-class liberal values is consistent with the apparent trend to constitute queer women, as long as they are white, as a new "model minority." As we have seen, on the surface the film may be interpreted as a story not about difference, but about the expulsion of difference. The indeterminate form of kinship represented by the sperm donor is violently repulsed, and Jules' apparent bisexuality is elided. Moreover, by the end of the film, every person of color has been dismissed in one way or another.[12] Luis, the Latino gardener, is fired. Paul leaves his lover Tanya, who is black. Even Jai, the young South Asian man Joni has been romantically interested in, is abandoned; no sooner does Joni kiss him than she turns her back to him and walks away.

Yet beyond this homonormative reading, *The Kids Are All Right* productively raises an array of important questions: Can kinship be claimed on the basis of genetic contribution, alone? What unruly affective investments would lead same-sex parents to conceive with sperm from the same donor, yet regard the biological connection with this donor as dispensable? What forms of kinship might emerge if the donor were embraced as a member of the family? What social, political, and economic infrastructures would enable or hinder the development of a family that included a donor? And finally, how might these forms of kinship enable or require an affirmation of unhappiness to reveal new forms of relationality?

Readings of Cholodenko's film such as Ebert's demonstrate the risk that even homonormative families cannot elude assimilation into discourses of the neoliberal egalitarian nation state. All the more reason, then, to be alive to readings such as Ahmed's, that illuminate those forms of kinship that remain in more ambivalent relation to domestic security. "A revolution of unhappiness

[12] This element of the film has been noted by Duggan with Stockton 2010; Hernández, 2010; and Puar and Tongson, 2012.

might require an unhousing; it would require not legitimating more relationships, more houses," Ahmed writes, "but delegitimating the world that 'houses' some bodies and not others" (Ahmed 2010, 106). In the U.S., the campaigns for same-sex marriage, consistent with the exercise of tolerance as a civilizational discourse, ultimately met with breathtaking success. In sharp contrast, initiatives in defense of undocumented migrants, whose labors and communities are not protected by the global neoliberal order, are meeting ever-increasing hostility. Networks of care that resist integration into traditional family structures and formal economies of wage labor risk being rendered unintelligible.

If the success of *The Kids Are All Right* exemplifies how queer relationality may be occluded by imperatives to produce stable queer subjects, the same may be said of some responses to the work of Catherine Opie. As we have seen, her photograph *Self-Portrait/Nursing* has been interpreted as evidence that the entry into maternity means the perverse past has been left behind, leaving only a "faint" residue as memorial. But even so, the "stain" of perversion persists; in a review in *Art in America*, a critic asks parenthetically whether Opie's child is "a little too old for nursing?" (Colpitt 2006, 75). This anxiety about the appropriateness of a child suckling at a queer body is surely not unrelated to other images in Opie's oeuvre. However, the remark also evinces, more broadly, an anxious occlusion of how care networks and public sexual cultures have been mutually sustaining, as demonstrated by responses to the AIDS crisis. As I have argued in this essay, the relation of care itself resists the containment of the abject. Ultimately, the dependent relation brings to the fore anxieties about care: who may have it, who will provide it, and under what terms. At stake is the legibility and survival of non-normative structures of kinship that, in remaining exposed to the Other, are recalcitrantly queer.

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"All art is quite useless"
The Gothic Doubling of the Portrait in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Marshall Lewis Johnson

In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* the exact role of the portrait in the novel has remained mysterious, particularly because the novel offers no explanation. However, substantial scholarship has explored that which remains unspoken in the text because it was then culturally taboo: homosexual desire. The new term circumnarration, coined by Helen D. Davis, references an element in a narrative which is approached but never addressed directly (2013, 199). Furthermore, Antonio Sanna has extended the readings of queer theorists to suggest that the "picture later comes to embody all of Dorian's vices as if to represent the very conception of homosexual love that motivated its creation [by Basil] as it was, however, seen by the late nineteenth-century social and legal system that would punish its practice" (2012, 32-33). These theoretical approaches have interesting implications if read through the novel's most mysterious symbol, Dorian's shapeshifting portrait painted by his devoted artist friend, Basil Hallward. The portrait's metamorphosis throughout the text

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circumnarrates the development of Dorian's homosexuality while its appearance is clouded by social and legal constraints, making it appear "monstrous" (Wilde 1989, 114). In its final transformation however, the portrait also reveals an aesthetic portrayal of homosexuality in the novel which transforms his taboo desire into an image of "exquisite youth and beauty" (167). The Gothic doubling of Dorian's image with the portrait creates an aesthetic distance between art and the subject of narration, which allows the novel to explore homosexual development in a way that is detached, distant, and free of the constrictions of Dorian's own social circles and human limitations. In a way, this development plays out as two competing narratives of maturation, one where the painting's growing monstrousness reflects Victorian attitudes toward Dorian's sexuality, and another where this doubling turned out to be beautiful all along.

However, this narrative does not merely talk around homosexuality, but re-presents it as different from the cultural contexts that make it taboo. Additionally, the monstrous image refuses to remain part of ideological notions of homosexuality as sinful or criminal, transforming in the final scene to an image of eternal beauty beyond the limitations of Dorian's own human form, bound as it is not only by mortality but also by social morality and law. In short, when Wilde quips in the preface that "All art is quite useless," this is not mere flippancy (17). Wilde highlights the ways in which art is not bound by these very morals and laws, "useful," so to speak, in their cultural contexts. Art, like the mysterious portrait, is "useless" when measured up against those same morals and laws. Far from a simple joke, Wilde issues the highest praise for art's ability to explore the socially taboo, and the importance of its uselessness empowers art to conduct such explorations, beautiful in such uselessness.

The deteriorating and growingly "monstrous" appearance of the portrait stands in to chronicle the progressive changes in Dorian's homosexuality, which, due to socio-legal contexts and constraints, appears increasingly terrifying to

Dorian and the only other person who views the portrait in this condition, Basil Hallward. The cultural fears and paranoia of 1890s London were very real and have been noted by numerous queer theorists who have struggled with the work's clear ambivalence toward sexuality. Queer theorists have argued that the narrative contains a strong ambivalence toward homosexual desire, obsessed with yet never approaching it directly. Christopher Craft describes sexual desire in the novel as "homophilia and -phobia" (2005, 120), either an all-consuming obsession or a fear. In short, queer theory has shown a clear thread of homosexual tensions throughout the novel, not acknowledged directly because it could not be, legally or socially, at the time.

Therefore, a different form of narration would be required to track the evolution of Dorian's sexuality in the novel. Helen D. Davis has recently argued that "circumnarration" (2013, 199) is actually necessary to read texts such as *Dorian Gray*, where "homoerotic desire and intimacy are not directly narrated but are clearly part of the novel" (213). Davis specifically studies episodes of homoerotic desire in the novel, which are implied though untreated directly: this includes conversations between Dorian, Basil, and Lord Henry; Dorian's weak affections for Sibyl Vane; and Dorian's blackmail of Allan Campbell (213-216). Furthermore, these scenes were toned down by Wilde to conceal the homoeroticism in between publishing the story in *Lippincott's* and the later novelization. In Basil's confession of his former feelings for Dorian, the original manuscript reads, "I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man should ever give to a friend" (Wilde 2011, 172), a passage which Wilde deleted for the 1891 book publication. Thus, the text from *Lippincott's* was edited into the novel readers know today, without a more direct admission of homosexual desire between characters. Wilde's changes make Basil's statement "more aesthetic [and] artistic" than "romantic"; Davis specifically mentions the scenes where Basil confesses that he "worshipped" Dorian and the brief précis the

narrator provides about Dorian and Alan Campbell's affair, both excised for publication (2013, 214-215).[1] [2] Davis ultimately grants the brevity of her account, suggesting that a "full analysis of the circumnarratable [in *Dorian Gray*] would be quite fruitful" (216). My intention here is to extend Davis's account and consider the portrait itself as a means of narrating struggling homosexual development while also acting as an aesthetic symbol that allows homosexuality to exist on its own terms outside of any human limitations. Furthermore, the role of the portrait is made apparent to the reader in ways not apprehended diegetically. In other words, the novel is extradiegetically about the portrait representing sexual beauty in art.

The Portrait as a Circumnarrating Double

In treating the portrait as a form of chronologically circumnarrating Dorian's growing ambivalence toward his own sexuality, the most useful lens in this respect may be Gothic interpretations of the double in the novel. The portrait as a specific double is Dorian's hidden "guilty secret," according to Linda Dryden, much like Hyde is Jekyll's hidden secret (2003, 133). It is not just a double, however, but a doubling of his own wishes to conceal his sexuality. David Punter's *The Literature of Pity* defines Kristevan abjection as the "process whereby we encounter parts of our selves - individually or culturally - to which we do not wish, or cannot dare, to own" (2014, 4). Aside from culturally and socially producing racism, sexism, and other prejudices, on the individual level this is Punter's "construction of the monstrous" (4). Punter's text exhaustively treats pity across much of the literary canon, but it is this particular

[1] "It is quite true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man should ever give a friend" (2011, 172).
[2] "In fact, it was music that had first brought him and Dorian Gray together, music and that indefinable attraction that Dorian seemed to be able to exercise whenever he wished, and indeed exercised often without being conscious of it…For eighteen months their intimacy lasted" (2011, 233).

characterization of "monstrous" that I wish to examine in relation to *Dorian Gray*.[3] The doubling throughout the narrative is extensive. Furthermore, the doubling of the central character through the painting is John Paul Riquelme's "dark version" of Dorian that he does "not wish, or cannot dare, to own," ultimately an aspect of himself he views as "monstrous" (2000, 619). Additionally, the "monstrous" is not its only visage, and the portrait may be a "version," but "dark" only to Dorian. On an extradiegetic level, the novel is about Dorian's monstrousness but the portrait's beauty. Victorian England may make Dorian a monster, but sexuality itself is never monstrous. In adding to Punter's theory of an abject double, only Dorian does not want to "own" the portrait. The novel embraces the portrait, making it the centerpiece.

The portrait therefore constitutes the most substantial aestheticization of the taboo in ways that transform the taboo. Dorian may be immortal, but a painting that ages is at least, if not more, impressive, with this aestheticization outliving its human subject. Dorian's desires, which we know as non-heteronormative, were socially misunderstood, and therefore personally misunderstood by Dorian, even treated as "monstrous" or sinful. Thus, the novel shows a social and legal discourse as it inhibits a human being's understanding of his own desires; Dorian aestheticizes his homosexuality so he can view it from a socially safe distance. The reader, however, can read it as Dorian cannot and will not allow others to. Therefore, Dorian struggles to hide his desires even from himself as he hides the portrait from others' eyes as well. Additionally, he often finds that he cannot take his eyes off the likeness, because his sexuality remains a "part of" him (Wilde 1989, 35). Its terrifying appearance still influences how the

[3] Pity in the works of Dickens, according to Punter, often takes on two broader aspects, as can be seen in texts like *Oliver Twist*. On one hand, pity "recalls maternal care" and "suggests embedding this principle of care in the wider society" (2014, 79). On the other hand, pity can be an "excuse," or a "way of distributing social action away from the center which in turn reinforces the gap between the haves and the have nots" (79). In short, pity is either a sincere emotion regarding concern for the wellbeing of the socially and economically downcast, or it "reinforces" one's higher position over another.

portrait is viewed by one other character in the novel, making it beautiful extradiegetically. Circumnarration, in other words, operates on a level perceptible extradiegetically. Just before his death, Basil has seen the portrait, which appears by turns "hideous" and criminal in its appearance to Basil as well as Dorian (120). This desire appears "hideous" because this particular kind of sexuality is "unnameable" in *fin de siècle* Victorian England.[4] Victorian culture worked strenuously to conceal or contain homosexuality, along with any other desires that were not heteronormative, treating these divergences with the condemnatory label of "gross indecency." The term is mentioned under Statute II of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, vaguely and broadly as "any sexual activities between men, regardless of age or consent" (2011, 8). This criminal "gross indecency" is transferred to the portrait, while Dorian "sees himself absolved by the portrait from the effects of a life of self-indulgence," as Dryden posits (2003, 122). The body of his desires remains hidden and aestheticized, hidden so that no one can view it and aestheticized so that Dorian can relish in his desires without legal consequence.

The novel therefore traces two forms of development that run parallel. One story is about Dorian becoming monstrous while appearing young; the other circumnarrrated story is about the portrait becoming beautiful while appearing hideous. While Dorian views the portrait with the language of sin, "soul," and "judgment" (Wilde 1989, 97), one might more simply call the portrait a space for reflection. The portrait reflects back to Dorian the part of himself he views as abject, but the same part of himself Dorian hates to see is the part at which the reader marvels. The very transformation Dorian will not "inquire" (88) into is the portrait's most amazing feature. Furthermore, the portrait remains "useless" in spurning much significant development in Dorian. Dorian himself remains

[4] Ed Cohen believes the text "problematizes representation per se" of "male homosexuality as 'unnameable'" and thus creates "one of the most lasting icons" of homosexual desire (Cohen 1987, 811).

aesthetically beautiful while doing terrible things; the portrait becomes increasingly apparently ugly while doing nothing. Dorian can see what he wishes to in the portrait of the part of himself he tries to repress; the portrait itself is still "useless" in reflecting this beyond showing Dorian what he subconsciously expects to see.

Dorian does not remain hidden and aestheticized from the reader, however. On the level of diegesis, the portrait appears to age while Dorian appears to stay young. On the level of extradiegesis, however, the portrait remains a portrait while Dorian develops into a sociopathic monster. After Sibyl's suicide, Dorian's decision to hide the portrait is motivated by how he reads the portrait. "His own soul," he sees, "was looking out at him from the canvas and calling him to judgment" (97). The portrait's changes in appearance are only half of the evidence of Dorian's own changes, however. While Dorian sees the image as "calling him to judgment" and therefore revealing some sense of his wrongdoing, his own actions as narrated are ample evidence of the same. Dorian's culture forces him to aestheticize his desires, but this aesthetic distance only serves to allow him to pretend to ignore his own actions. Even though he can ignore the changes in the portrait, Dorian is still responsible for four deaths before his own demise.

In elaborating on Jed Esty's claim about *Dorian Gray* as an "anti-novel," it is noteworthy not only that the portrait changes and develops throughout, but also that it bookends the novel (2012, 105). The narrative does not even open with Dorian himself as the focus. Instead of meeting Dorian, we are shown a "full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty" whom Basil "had so skillfully mirrored in his art" (Wilde 1989, 18). In short, the Dorian we first meet is his "mirrored" image in a work of art and not the human being himself. If the portrait is indeed a "part of" Dorian, then it is the part that undergoes the changes one expects a human being to undergo as they age. When

Lord Henry exclaims late in the novel to Dorian, "Life has been your art" (163), he clearly indicates that Dorian has not changed. Only the reader is aware that the "part of" Dorian that has changed has remained unseen by (almost) anyone besides Dorian himself.

The timing of the portrait's first noted change indicates how much more active the painting is than Dorian. While the artwork is dynamic, Dorian views himself, art, and those around him in a static fashion. Art, as a source of reflection, truly is "useless" to Dorian. In fact, Dorian's supposed attraction to Sibyl is based off his ability to aesthetically distance himself from the actress who is "[n]ever" herself and "knows nothing of life" (53). Therefore, when Dorian sees the "touch of cruelty in the mouth" on his portrait, he is suddenly moved to false feelings of remorse that he nearly forgets when he awakens the next day (77). The "touch of cruelty" both represents his growing understanding that he would never be attracted to anyone without the filter of their being aestheticized, along with the "feeling of infinite regret" (78) that comes with this understanding, since he has been conditioned to view his own desires as "dreadful" (77). The portrait as art reflects the tragedy of Dorian's inability to feel capable of unburdening himself with another human being. Dorian himself is startlingly calloused when deserting Sibyl, as "[h]er tears and sobs annoyed him" (76). This callousness, however, comes from his inability to feel desire without it being distanced or hidden. He could love Sibyl, but only as a Shakespearean heroine, much as his aestheticization of his own desires must be shoved away in an attic.

Dorian fears the possibility of art's dynamism causing any self-reflection. He embraces art only as décor that allows him to celebrate his privilege. His social status as handsome and wealthy, after all, allow him to live a life of collecting various aesthetic objects not every Londoner could afford.[5] His instinct

[5] When Lord Henry first inquires of his uncle, Lord Fermor, about Dorian, the older man asserts that Dorian "should have a pot of money" inherited from his grandfather and his mother (Wilde 1989, 39). This "pot" would easily explain how Dorian is able to afford his lavish lifestyle.

when he wakes up the day after he first notices the change urges him to hide the image, as "some fate or deadlier chance" would allow others' eyes to see the "mask of his shame" (80). He is fearful that others will know about his true desires, for which he feels "shame." Yet his embarrassment becomes an "almost scientific interest" as well, as though he is drawn to the portrait which he also fears (81). His paranoia wins out, however, motivated by his own cultural mores. He hides the portrait away in his attic, so that "[n]o eye but his would ever see his shame" (100). Dorian conceals his homosexuality so he can enjoy it privately in the attic, literally closeting his desires by moving the portrait into a space noted for its disuse. The portrait therefore both closets and aestheticizes homoerotic desire outside of any other "unrepresentability," save the representation achieved through the narrative act of tracing the portrait's development (Cohen 1987, 806). His obsession with the portrait then vacillates between a love for the depiction of his own desires and an abhorrence for this same image, feelings that strengthen over the years. "After a few years [Dorian] could not endure to be long out of England," away from the portrait, as it is "such a part of his life" and desires, while he is also "afraid that during his absence some one might gain access to" the portrait and learn his secrets (Wilde 1989, 111). As the years pass, Dorian is therefore aware that he cannot hide from the truth the portrait shows him, since it "still preserved, under all the foulness and ugliness of the face, its marked likeness to himself" (111). Dorian still tries to view himself as the heteronormative young man that the rest of his acquaintances see, yet the portrait acts as a palimpsest that lays his homosexuality over the surface of this other image. The development of his sexuality is traced not in his emotions or mental states throughout the narrative, but circumnarrated on the canvas. The novel chronicles the development of a desire viewed as monstrous by society but individually beautiful in its survival outside of both social and human constraints.

The portrait is not always "useless" to Dorian; he simply does not see what

it shows him. He loves yet fears it, without considering why he is drawn to it in the first place. Wilde uses a painting on which to "record" or circumnarrate Dorian's sexual history, the "narrative of his life," appearing monstrous even in Dorian's eyes, according to Ed Cohen (1987, 810). The portrait therefore acts as an alternative narrator for the novel, divulging to the reader Dorian's developing monstrousness as his culture corrupts his understanding of his own sexuality. At first, Dorian's peculiar devotion to the portrait is colored by the "pleasure" of his own sexuality (Wilde 1989, 88). After Lord Henry has informed Dorian that Sibyl has committed suicide and that he is too late to make amends to her, Dorian grieves briefly but then dismisses any thoughts about why the portrait has changed with the question, "Why inquire too closely into it?" (88). He instead believes that, whether the changes be spiritual or scientific in nature, "there would be a real pleasure in watching" the portrait morph into the "most magical of mirrors" which would "reveal to him his own soul" (88). Without considering why the changes are taking place in the portrait, Dorian views the portrait as a "mirror" that will show him the "pleasure" of his life, a pleasure that he cannot pursue openly in public yet can allow the portrait to show vicariously to him. Unable to enjoy fully the pleasures he seeks, Dorian's partial gratification comes from viewing the Gothic double of the terror he sees in his own heart in a way that occasionally brings him pleasure. The tragedy is that Victorian culture has raised Dorian to not pry too far into this pleasure.

None of this changes the way Victorian society does not acknowledge anything ugly; only the visually pleasing is a guarantee of goodness and quality, and thus acceptance into society. Most people do not believe the "rumors" (Wilde 1989, 117) about Dorian because of his "marvellous beauty" (121); the whispered secrets about his sexual orientation are rebuffed not with a word, but with his mere appearance. According to Ellen Scheible, the novel "overdramatically imitates British aesthetics, exposes the excess at the heart of it, and emphasizes its

dependence on a gothic, colonial, and Irish Other" (2014, 138). In other words, Dorian's physical appearance, along with his excess of wealth and aesthetic possessions, mark him as an upstanding citizen because these simplistic markers differentiate him from his social "Other." Dorian's own beauty allows him to continue to hide his homosexual lust in public, where polite society believes a man so beautiful must be heterosexual and has "escaped the stain of an age that was at once sordid and sensual" (Wilde 1989, 102). Furthermore, the classification of homosexuality as a criminal offense is also shown indirectly through the portrait. In fact, "art and criminality" are both, according to Paul Sheehan, "anti-normative" in the novel (2005, 336). Crime is associated with ugliness, a trait that Dorian physically does not show while his view of this criminality is transferred to the portrait.

As interesting as Dorian's attempts at avoiding the truth may be, it is more interesting to consider the ways in which the portrait slowly takes over the narrative, becoming much more central to Dorian's consciousness than his own actions are. As a form of circumnarration, the portrait not only reflects Dorian's development but acts as the primary way the reader is made aware of chronological time. The portrait does all the changing throughout the novel; Dorian's life remains so repetitive that even his own mental states begin to reflect his willful forgetfulness. Driven to the outskirts of society to seek sexual pleasure, Dorian's own desires begin to seem like his cravings for opium (Wilde 1989, 140-41). Dorian "had mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them" (103). He only lives from one pleasure to the next, having "almost entirely lost control" of his "nature" (102). His own actions become less plotted by conscious thought, as the text becomes littered with mentions of his aimless wanderings: "Where he went he hardly knew" (76). Yet these barely-conscious pursuits indicate that Dorian is trying to remain unaware of his own desires, and that a paranoia of the law motivates his concealment.

One chapter suspends much of a sense of chronology. In Chapter 11, chronological time ceases to act as a means of recounting the events of Dorian's life, as numerous years pass, and the narrative only lists his collection of various aesthetic objects. This chapter also constitutes the most detailed overview of Dorian's relationship to the portrait. As Dorian's paranoia regarding the portrait's discovery grows, he can bear less and less to be away from it. Upon viewing it, he is variably filled with "loathing" for both "it and himself, but filled, at other times, with that pride of individualism that is half the fascination of sin and smiling with secret pleasure" at the portrait's "burden" (111). Dorian's ambivalence toward the portrait is an ambivalence toward his own sexuality. Dorian cannot pull himself away from the portrait because, even as he knows its relationship to the various scandals circulating about his private life, the image also confirms what he knows in his inmost heart. His own desirability and hints at sexual scandal are reflected upon as he considers the portrait. The unnamed scandals result in "not a few who distrusted him," yet "his charming boyish smile" and his "infinite youth" are "sufficient answer" (111-12).

His private life has become a subject of considerable scandal, yet his public image refutes these rumors. If all "[a]rt is at once surface and symbol," and going "beneath the surface" is done at one's "peril," as the novel's preface suggests, then Dorian's surface shows this peril of which his milieu is unaware (17). After all, his social circles fall "silent" when he arrives (102). "His mere presence" forces some men to "recall…the memory of the innocence that they had tarnished" (102). While his appearance causes some men to reflect on their lost youth and their aging, which they read as a sign of being "tarnished," Dorian's "surface" belies what lies "beneath." Even at a dinner party the evening after he has murdered Basil and blackmailed another man into disposing of the body, Dorian's dinner companion, Lady Narborough, tries to cheer Dorian by reminding him, "you are made to be good – you look so good" (137). While the irony is

obvious to the reader, Narborough and Lord Henry simply write Dorian's mood off as his being "in love" (135).

Indeed, the aging of the portrait and the chronology present in art but not for Dorian is "pre-figured" in the novel with which Dorian becomes obsessed, as well. Dorian finds the novel's protagonist to be a "pre-figuring type of himself" (102). This "pre-figuring," however, involves a "latter part" of the novel with the "sudden decay of a beauty that had once, apparently, been so remarkable", as with Dorian (102). In fact, the protagonist of this novel develops a "grotesque dread of mirrors" as he ages, much as Dorian has a dread of anyone ever seeing his portrait, itself a "mirror" of his own development (102). The novel, like the portrait, show the development to the reader of what should be happening to Dorian. Instead, it is left to art to suggest this development to the reader, as the novel *Dorian Gray* itself progresses with very few markers of chronology. This development also marks the portrait, in the eyes of the reader, as not itself evil. The portrait's sudden transformation at the end of the novel reveals that art is always beautiful and never sinful, while Dorian's actions themselves are obviously evil throughout.

In a way, the portrait lives life for Dorian. During his first encounter with Sibyl's brother James, who has sworn to kill Dorian for causing his sister's death, Dorian is saved by appearing "little older than a lad of twenty summers" (Wilde 1989, 145). The portrait's image of an aging Dorian is what James expected to see. While James later figures out his mistake, the portrait does more than temporarily help Dorian avoid trouble. Dorian often conflates "sin" with "age" when viewing the portrait, as though to him, ever leaving his boyish youth is in itself a form of evil (103). The reader, however, is left to question whether or not the two are actually the same. Dorian believes that the portrait bears signs both of his aging and his sinning, yet the reader can tell that Dorian is far more the sinner than any inanimate object could be. Dorian's surface appearance saves him, and

James's dive under that "surface" ultimately comes not only at great "peril," but costs him his life.

Returning to Davis's concept of circumnarration more directly, it is remarkable how little is said in two key scenes: the murder of Basil Hallward and the ending. Not only does Basil's reaction confirm the portrait's link to homosexual acts, but Dorian's murderous rage is spurred by the lack of understanding shown by one of the only two men in London Dorian hoped would understand. Basil is unable to see only the "marvellous beauty" (121) through the "horror" (120), just as Dorian pleads for the artist's understanding. When this understanding is not granted and the one other man to whom he shared his secret rejects it as grotesque, Dorian murders Basil, both enraged by his friend's rejection and his insistence that Dorian could become cleansed of his misdeeds if only he will "pray" (122). While not stated outright, Basil's earlier confession of love for Dorian has led the younger man to believe that the painter might understand. When denied this understanding, Dorian kills him both out of frustration and fear. It is in fact noteworthy that this is the last scene in which Dorian and the portrait feature specifically before the final confrontation. After learning that his sexuality is monstrous to others regardless of his pleas for sympathy, Dorian pursues a life of secrecy where he tries to ignore his double, as though he can amputate his sexuality from himself.

Frustrated with his inability to find social or even personal acceptance, Dorian finally decides to destroy the portrait, and in so doing inadvertently kills himself (Wilde 1989, 166-67). Even before his death, Dorian's forced secrecy leads him to heterosexual pursuits that are only attempts to mask his true desires. His last sexual act before this climactic scene is his desertion of Hetty Merton, whom Dorian believes he has left "flower-like" (158) and unspoiled, but who only constitutes a halfhearted attempt at masking his desire as heteronormative. His portrait verifies that this renunciation did nothing to change the image of his

homosexuality (166). Dorian's own vacillation on the topic of Hetty reveals that his true desires hardly allow him this charade when he says to Lord Henry, "I am quite sure that I loved her" (158), as though he himself needs convincing. The portrait records Dorian's socially unacceptable desires which appear repulsive to him because they are punishable transgressions if ever acknowledged publicly. Dorian's masking of his true self with a heterosexual relationship that he abandons represents his final and frustrated attempt to conceal and then destroy his homosexuality. Furthermore, the portrait acts as a centerpiece that circumnarrates Dorian's slow loss of control and a sense of self. As the preceding analysis has shown, Dorian is rarely if ever directly conscious of his homosexuality, even though this same sexuality represented on the canvas is the center of his entire existence. The Gothic doubling is thus a splitting of the self, only tenable so long as Dorian can stand to even infrequently view the monstrous image. Once he can no longer face the monster with which he is fascinated and to which he feels connected, he commits suicide. As an act of circumnarration, the portrait acts as the doubling of what the text could not discuss directly regarding Dorian's nature. Thus, the narrative shows the evolution of Dorian's various attempts to consciously resist or ignore his sexual impulses and failing to do so. When he can no longer psychologically stand to reject himself in this way, he kills himself.

All Art is Quite Useless

Wilde's novel necessarily doubles homosexuality due to a very real fear regarding one's private sexual acts at the time. Not only can homosexuality not be read directly in the novel for cultural reasons, but for legal reasons as well. A textual history of the novel shows how far the final text went in concealing homosexual desire. Nicholas Frankel's recent publication of an edited text removes deletions in favor of Wilde's more overtly erotic original which demonstrates the novel's

own history as a text that was heavily censored. Not only were initial reviews of the novel coded in language concerning "unhealthiness, insanity, [and] uncleanliness" (2011, 7), but this maniacal obsession with "gross indecency" resulted in first an editorial (not authorial) excision of around 500 words from the original typescript before printing the novel in *Lippincott's* (2011, 40). Finally, an authorially "toned down" text was published as a novel, in deference to Wilde's critics and "at the insistence of his publisher" (2011, 11). Wilde had every reason to fear legal reprisals for publishing an unexpurgated text in 1891 when he prepared the work for novelization (2011, 43). The passage of Basil's confession claiming he "worshipped [Dorian] with far more romance of feeling than a man should ever give to a friend" (2011, 172) is completely deleted from the final novelization, showing that Wilde and his publishers expended energy in downplaying the sexual nature of the relationships between the novel's male characters (Wilde 1989, 93). The monstrous double is Gothic not to "colonize the plot," as Richard Haslam suggests, but to allow Wilde to continue to show what he knew he would not be able to reveal directly, both his culture's view of it and its aesthetic ability to transcend this in the final scene (Haslam 2004, 307). In other words, the double acts as a significant indication of the limitations of Victorian social mores along with the far more lasting power of art.

Hence the preface to the novelization of *Dorian Gray*. Having excised direct references to homoerotic desire, the preface acts as a defense for the aestheticization of this same desire. This aestheticization allows the narrative to represent homosexuality in a way beyond Wilde's historical and cultural constraints. The monstrous, in other words, is simply beyond the human. After all, the preface suggests that a casual reader could interpret the novel as a thrilling tale about a Faustian bargain with an enchanted portrait, while anyone who interprets the portrait on a deeper level does so "at their peril" (1989, 17). Wilde wrote the preface after engaging in a long and heated battle in print with numerous hostile

reviewers of the original text as it appeared in *Lippincott's*, running the preface separately in March 1891 before appending it to the novelization a month later (Ellmann 1987, 320-22). The language of the preface insists that the novel's portrayal of desire exists beyond any human moral codes that inform interpretations of the novel as immoral. Literature does not produce the criminal or unethical, since "[t]here is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (Wilde 1989, 17). Additionally, literature reveals far more about the reader than about the work itself. The characterization of the "dislike of Realism" as the "rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass" means that purportedly "real" depictions of the lives of Victorian socioeconomic and gendered or sexual others upset the common reader, or book reviewer, because he/she would rather not acknowledge the ugly truths that English society wishes to ignore, namely their own sexual desires, the others within themselves (17). A great deal of language in the preface explains the novel or any novel's existence outside of human moral, social, and legal codes. Artists do not possess "ethical sympathies"; an author never "desires to prove anything"; "[v]ice and virtue" are nothing more than "materials" in fashioning the work; and even the "moral life of man," such as Dorian's, only exists as "subject-matter" for a writer (17).

Finally, Wilde defends the "useless thing," like a work of art, as an object that its maker "admires...intensely," referring to homosexuality's "useless" status throughout *Dorian Gray* (17). Dorian, Basil, and Lord Henry all have homosexual desires treated through circumnarration. As a result, nothing about these desires is criminal or any more than "well written" (17). In fact, the novel only "mirrors" these desires back to the same "spectator" who rages against seeing him- or herself in the "glass" that shows one's true nature, much like Dorian's rage at the image in the portrait he and his culture made hideous. Wilde has only written an amoral novel with amoral characters and an amoral monster, while its readers see

themselves in the work.

If art cannot be considered in any moral dimension, and if this amorality leaves the burden of interpretation on the shoulders of the reader, then the novel itself also acts out this conundrum through Dorian's relationship with the portrait. As a "spectator," Dorian views a work of art that in his eyes appears as a confirmation of his own desires, which he perceives as sins. Thus, the various narrative disruptions, where Dorian appears ambivalent, evasive, or downright amnesiac regarding both the portrait and his own actions, all serve to illustrate the social constraints that keep him from accepting himself as he is. Whether he quickly dismisses Sibyl's death, locks the portrait in the attic yet cannot stop visiting it, or seeks out opium dens in hopes of forgetting his own actions, Dorian does not want to confront the truth he believes the painting shows him. The portrait constructs a narrative that runs parallel to Dorian's own denials.

Even his murder of Basil serves as evasion. Not wanting to hear his homosexuality spoken of aloud as criminal or sinful, Dorian silences the only witness to his crimes, evidenced by the painting alone. In fact, it is remarkable how quickly Dorian and Basil seem to understand the grave sincerity of the image, instead of dismissing it as a freak of nature. Basil does not hesitate to consider the image a confirmation of his worst suspicions, with the "eyes of a devil" (Wilde 1989, 122). Given the absence of any explanation regarding the portrait's transformation while Dorian remains youthful, it is amazing that both Dorian and Basil jump to such terrible conclusions about its changes, with Dorian's cry, "Each of us has Heaven and Hell in him" (122), clearly being a plea for understanding and sympathy as though the image convicts Dorian of some heinous crime that neither man dares to speak aloud. Without the very real cultural fear they both carry regarding discovery and prosecution, a similar reaction would seem outlandish. While the novel draws numerous parallels between Dorian's homosexuality and the painting's transformation, nothing about

the canvas itself could or would serve as a direct confirmation of Dorian's sexual history. The portrait therefore remains "useless" to most viewers except Dorian and Basil, as the novel's conclusion shows the painting's miraculous transformation as nothing other than "splendid" and "exquisite" (167).

Thus, in the final scene Dorian is "monstrous," sadly all-too-human in his limitations. Since "[a]ll art is quite useless," this thread of homosexuality that runs throughout the novel is both disguised or "circumnarrated" and contained in the final scene. Even if one could surmise that Dorian is a homosexual, the text does not provide any direct confirmation of this fact, save through a series of masks, the final mask being his new hideous appearance. The portrait contradicts the social and legal limitations of Dorian's humanity in Victorian England. By aestheticizing his homosexuality, the narrative traces the development of these desires as they would be perceived within their cultural context yet also represents this development in a way that could not be considered criminal in any legal discourses of the time, allowing the portrait to exist beyond these human discourses as what Elizabeth Grosz elaborates would be "for what can be magnified, intensified, for what is more" (Grosz 2004, 63). In fact, Wilde's own biography bears this out: passages of *Dorian Gray* were read out during his trials, but they failed to provide the prosecution with any real evidence of Wilde's own criminal "gross indecency" (Ellmann 1988, 448-449). Ultimately, Wilde was convicted through his own admission of guilt; by publicly acknowledging the "Love that dare not speak its name," he refused to conceal what his work had attempted to aestheticize and thereby weave into public literary discourse free of any authorial culpability (1988, 463).

In short, while he publicly became viewed as a monster, Wilde refused to view or discuss his homosexuality as monstrous any longer. Wilde was legally convicted and sentenced, yet *Dorian Gray* was legally "useless"; the novel represents a form of literature that presses human limitations into new forms,

where both Dorian and perhaps Wilde's own homosexual desires could flourish. In the final scene of the novel, we are not left with Dorian's corpse and a destroyed portrait, but rather a "splendid portrait of their master...in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty" (Wilde 1989, 167). The portrait, reflecting Dorian's "monstrous" sexuality throughout the novel, transforms into an image of a man that appears just as desirable and pure as Dorian himself had, yet also portrays the very homosexual who lies on the floor before the painting in a way he would never be seen by his peers as a flesh and blood homosexual, but only as oil and canvas.

As an aesthetic object of eternal "youth and beauty," homosexual desire concludes the novel as a beautiful portrait that survives beyond its cultural and legal limitations. While the canvas seems to trace a devolution of Dorian's private life throughout the novel, its sudden shift to its original state disrupts the linear chronology of a narrative of human development. The portrait of Dorian's sexuality as "monstrous" becomes suddenly beautiful. Additionally, Dorian's status as "body" moves through tremendous "transformation" in the novel. His subjectivity is clearly split between himself and the portrait, giving him two bodied forms of his desire: one human yet aesthetic body, the other aesthetic yet human (through aging) canvas. In splitting a sense of subjectivity for Dorian, the novel provides two alternative ways of viewing his developing desires. One is clouded by Dorian's view of cultural and legal contexts as outlined above, while the other presentation of his desires lives, changes, and suddenly returns to youth outside of these realms, all while existing separate from Dorian's own subjectivity. Dorian perceives the portrait as "hideous," but the conclusion of the novel shows that the portrait and thus an aesthetic image of homosexuality are not limited to Dorian's perceptions.

Given the portrait's "useless" qualities, it may sound strange to reference Rita Felski's *Uses of Literature*. However, in her chapter on "Enchantment" as a

"use" of literature, Felski makes the following argument:

> [W]e hear ever more frequently that ideology critique has triumphed at the expense of aesthetics, that pleasing surfaces have been entirely subsumed by programmatic political judgments, that critics have lost sight of the distinctive visual qualities and verbal textures of works of art. The much heralded return to beauty is one attempt to reorient the critical conversation; beauty bespeaks a positive value, a presence, an enrichment, even if the precise nature of that enrichment often eludes our analytical grasp. (2008, 65)

Ultimately, this lies at the heart of *Dorian Gray*: the portrait, a work of art, can appear to be hideous while actually being beautiful all along. Numerous scholars have been quite right in their ideology critiques of closeted homosexuality throughout the novel and the cultural contexts that make this closeting legally necessary. The positive value of beauty in the novel, however, is not the surface beauty of Dorian himself. Rather, the portrait's beauty at the novel's end is the enchantment at the heart of the novel: that non-heteronormative sexuality can appear beautiful somewhere that can really only be seen by the reader. After all, no one else in the novel can see and understand the significance of the portrait. Dorian and Basil are both dead, and none of Dorian's servants had ever seen the hideous, aging form the portrait had previously donned.

In this way, the portrait's "uselessness" in Victorian England is also its "use" of enchantment à la Felski. The portrait is certainly "useless" to Dorian. Right before he destroys it, he considers for the last time that the portrait is his "conscience" and "monstrous soul-life" (Wilde 1989, 166-67). While Dorian correctly considers his own soul as monstrous, it is difficult to consider the portrait as actually his soul or conscience. After all, his attempt to destroy the portrait both kills himself and cleanses the work of art. The portrait's "use," then, is its ability to enchant, its ability to show to a person a magical, shifting image that can make sexuality by itself appear beautiful in the end.

As a defiance of social limitations, the transformation of the portrait in the

novel narrates the development of the beauty in homosexuality in ways that both the contexts which produced the novel and the social sphere in which Dorian travels would not allow. The portrait shows Dorian his homosexuality as he perceives it within his own limitations. The novel's conclusion however shows this desire in a light that goes beyond views of homosexuality as criminal or "monstrous." The portrait acts as a narrative of the development of homosexual desire that Wilde could not have written directly, yet the symbol still allows the text to confirm desire's enduring beauty.

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Unmasking the *Übermensch*
The Evolution of Nietzsche's Overman from David Bowie to *Westworld*

Siobhan Lyons

Introduction

Of all the concepts in Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, the *Übermensch* remains the most contentious and enigmatic. This particularly elusive figure, defined by a sense of transcendence and overcoming, has been routinely invoked to describe people with super-human abilities who reside beyond the conventional laws of good and evil. Due in part to Nietzsche's inconclusive and shifting description of the *Übermensch*, many have utilised this figure to justify morally abhorrent acts, most notably the case of Leopold and Loeb, two boys who were specifically motivated by the teachings of Friedrich Nietzsche to murder fourteen year-old boy Bobby Franks, believing themselves to be immune from the laws that governed ordinary individuals. The murder inspired the events of Patrick Hamilton's play *Rope* (1929), which was adapted to screen by Alfred Hitchcock in 1948, as well as *Compulsion* (1959), an Orson Welles film that depicted the murder.

No other philosopher in history has been as egregiously misinterpreted for malevolent means as Nietzsche, and some of the more intriguing misinterpretations stem from the philosopher's work on the *Übermensch*, variously translated as Overman, Overhuman, Superman, and Beyond-Man,

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though the precise translation has been met with much debate, and does not necessarily indicate a man, or even a human.

Importantly, the *Übermensch* was not created by Nietzsche; the notion of a superior human has origins in Lucian of Samosata's *hyperanthropos*, a Greek word that refers to a super-human being. Both Johannes von Goethe and Ralph Waldo Emerson referred to similar entities in their works *Faust Part I* and *The Over-Soul* respectively. Nietzsche was also particularly influenced by Lord Byron's *Manfred*, whose titular guilt-ridden character wanders the Alps before finally dying, rejecting Christian salvation and instead experiences emancipated from the constraints of Christianity. "Byron's Manfred", as Curtis Cate writes, "was to be, along with Hölderlin's Empedocles, one of the spiritual forerunners of the Nietzschean 'superman'" (2003, 29). But Nietzsche brought a renewed urgency to the vision of the *Übermensch*, seeing such a concept as essential to the evolution of humanity, however ambivalent this evolution proved.

Nietzsche's *Übermensch* was a transcendent being who possessed superior intellect, insight, and uncommon strength of character, allowing him or her to transcend the laws and expectations that defined the ordinary populace. The *Übermensch* was also arbitrarily linked to Nietzsche's notion of 'eternal recurrence', in which events endlessly repeat in a timeless cycle, presumably until a radical change unfolds that breaks such a cycle. This radical change, it seems, appears manifest in the *Übermensch*, who, for Nietzsche, may bring an end to cyclical monotony.

Because the concept of the *Übermensch* lacks clarity, with Nietzsche's various works describing a figure who is at once benevolent *and* selfishly tyrannical, misinterpretation has been rife. The precise nature of the *Übermensch* remains evasive, while the popularity of the 'superman' translation has unwittingly found its way into alt-right ideology. One of the most famous examples, aside from Leopold and Loeb, is that of Adolf Hitler, who was

introduced to Nietzsche's work through the philosopher's anti-Semitic sister, Elisabeth, and who believed the *Übermensch* to be a metaphor for the Aryan race. This misuse of Nietzsche's concept is partly symptomatic of the philosopher's attack on the stifling effects of Christian morality, fuelling a number of neo-Nazi groups, such as the White Order of Thule, which "promotes Nietzschean notions of the superman against Judeo-Christian religion" (Goodrick-Clarke 2001, 231).

Despite Nietzsche's vision of the *Übermensch* as a transcendent figure unaffiliated with any specific political ideology, the figure's appearance in Nazism has remained prominent. As Jaye Beldo writes:

> The virus of Nazism has promoted itself using unconditionally willing hosts such as Hardcore Skinhead punk bands, various 'New Age' and Christian Identity groups, the World Wide Web, holocaust deniers, and various other cretinous conduits of the Quasi-*Übermensch* fringe. (2001, np)

The varied interpretations of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* see this elusive 'other' as possessing conflicting traits depending on the moral code to which the figure is applied, and yet all emphasise a sense of transcendence. This particular notion of *transcending* the traditional, judicially-specific laws of good and evil to which ordinary citizens are bound has routinely been used to promote vigilantism, from *Batman* to *Dexter*, both of whom take the law into their own hands in order to create ideal living conditions, while variations of the *Übermensch* also make more optimistic appearances in music from David Bowie to Stevie Nicks.

Looking at music, films and television shows including *Fight Club* and *Westworld*, this paper addresses the diverse, often divergent approaches to Nietzsche's most infamous philosophical creature. In so doing, this paper illustrates how the *Übermensch* has been used to symbolise various ideals of humanity, many of which conflict with or build upon Nietzsche's own descriptions of the *Übermensch*.

Uncertain *Übermensch*en

There remains, in Nietzsche's philosophy, a palpable sense of anticipation that is shared by other philosophers, notably French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. One of Deleuze and Guattari's most famous contributions neatly parallels Nietzsche's anticipatory philosophy, that of their conception of the "people to come" (1994, 109). In *What is Philosophy?* (1994) they argued that "the creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist" (108). The precise form of these people is as equally evasive as Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, though both share a distinctly utopian air of anticipation, for an individual, or group of individuals, who will utterly demolish antiquated systems of governance and conventional ways of being to usher in a new world characterised by greater individuality and a disavowal of traditional humanist thinking. Both Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari envisioned such a people to come, promoting new, hybrid ways of existence, which would take into account those who had been exiled by mainstream society, while also signalling the arrival of a different kind of human being.

In an age of climate change, posthumanism, transhumanism, and, indeed, trans culture itself, the philosophies of Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari reinvigorate the importance of considering those who do not conform to society's rigid structure of acceptance, and those who evolve beyond the ordinary constraints of humanity. The union between posthumanism and Nietzsche's philosophy also offers a different kind of view of a transcendent individual, who may or may not be entirely human.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translator Graham Parkes argues that the translations of the term *Übermensch* are utterly insufficient in grasping Nietzsche's particular view of such a transcendent individual; he argues that the term 'superman' "conjures up unfortunate associations with musclebound, blue-suited heroes and overemphasises the 'above' connotation of the 'over' (*über*) at

the expense of 'across,'" while 'Overman' "fails to convey the relations Zarathustra keeps emphasising between the human and the Overhuman" (2005, xviii). For Parkes, the precise use of the word 'Overhuman' works to emphasise the necessity to overcome the human: "Part of what this means is that the Overhuman emerges from our going beyond the human perspective and transcending the anthropocentric worldview" (2003, xviii). Indeed, this is where Nietzsche's ideology encounters a kindred philosophy in posthumanism, though this union is frequently at risk of undermining both the integrity of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and the virtues of posthumanist thinking, by way of reducing the posthuman *Übermensch* to nothing more than a human with superhuman capabilities, rather than a figure who transcends a traditional kind of humanist thought that seeks only to enhance humans even more. As R.L. Rutsky argues: "A 'posthumanism' that continues to rely on humanist and instrumental ideas will inevitably have difficulty imagining posthumans who are anything other than enhanced humans, augmented human subjects, humans with added 'superpowers.'" He further argues that:

> The superheroes, mutants, and metahumans that populate comic books, young adult literature, and superhero movies are clearly not posthuman in any significant way; they are merely humans with 'special powers'. Their powers are prostheses to an a priori humanity. Spiderman may have 'spider' senses, strength, and agility, but in every other way, he is a fairly typical U.S. teenager/young man. Superman may supposedly be an alien, Wolverine a mutant, the Mighty Thor a god, and Harry Potter a wizard, but they are nevertheless quite recognizably human in their attitudes, hopes, and desires. (2018, np)

None of these figures truly encapsulates Nietzsche's hero. Ishay Landa argues that "the Nietzschean hero might seem as an attempt to resist the unremitting decrease of the hero's power of action and climb back up the ladder" (2009, 126). Landa, like Aristotle, whose typology of the hero is seen in his *Poetics*, emphasises this role of ascendance, rather than *transcendence*, in the hero's journey. The

confusion over the *Übermensch* stems partly from this belief that the *Übermensch*'s journey is solely an *upward* trajectory. Indeed, the *Übermensch* is closely affiliated with the mountains, though Sean Ireton argues that while Nietzsche "liked to stylize himself as a solitary mountain dweller," and that Nietzsche saw his philosophy as "inseparable from the alpine environment in which some of it was conceived," Nietzsche nevertheless "suffered from wistful mountain fervour, accompanied by sporadic spells of delusional summit fever" (2009, 193). Nietzsche, he argues, was hardly a 'dauntless mountaineer', leading to all sorts of 'interpretive entanglements' between Nietzsche and the mountains.

Indeed, despite Nietzsche's kinship with lofty alpine vistas, and despite his emphasis that Zarathustra, the notable character who introduces the *Übermensch*, has come from the mountains, he specifically characterises the *Übermensch* as a 'rope-dancer' across an abyss fraught with uncertainty. Zarathustra appears and proclaims: "I teach to you the Overhuman. The human is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome it?" (2003, 11). The *Übermensch* is not merely intelligent, but possesses a kind of wisdom that transcends that of the conventionally intelligent human: "And you who are wise and knowledgeable, you would flee from the burning sun of that wisdom in which the Overman pleasurably bathes" (2003, 125). For Nietzsche, the *Übermensch* remedies society in the wake of the death of god, a concept Nietzsche first discussed in *The Gay Science*.

In its first appearance, the *Übermensch* appears as a more benevolent figure, with Nietzsche writing that "the Overhuman would *terrify* you with his goodness!" (2003, 125). Yet subsequent appearances and later updates of the *Übermensch* figure are decidedly more despotic in nature, contributing to the ambiguity that continues to surround the precise nature of the *Übermensch*. However much Nietzsche may have abhorred tyranny, his writings reflect a level of hierarchical thinking, made explicit in works as early as *The Dawn*, in which

Nietzsche advocates *Rangordnung* (hierarchy). Rüdiger Safranski argues that Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch* in later works undermines the grandiosity with which it was introduced and can be seen to promote a caste society:

> In the period of Zarathustra and beyond, Nietzsche deleted several idealistic and quasi-religious traits from his image of the *Übermensch*. It was not until the fifth book of *The Gay Science* (written after *Zarathustra*) that the *Übermensch* appeared as a dastardly grand player, a bogeyman of the middle class and amoral bastion of strength. (2003, 264)

In Book V of *The Gay Science*, titled 'We Fearless Ones' (added in 1887), Nietzsche "embraced a Machiavellian-inspired immoral politics, which believes it is able to justify despotic rule through the cultivation of a *higher and nobler culture*" (Ansell-Pearson 1994, 148). Indeed, *The Gay Science* sees Nietzsche advocating the development of a superior culture, a line of thinking that, despite Nietzsche's hatred for anti-Semitism, closely resembles the kind of genetic, hierarchical thinking that Hitler supported. In particular, the last section of Book V, 'The Great Health', advocates the formation of "a new goal," along with "a new health, stronger, more seasoned, tougher, more audacious, and gayer than any previous health" (1974, 346). He speaks of the need to be "dangerously healthy," while also cautioning against a "strange, tempting, dangerous ideal to which we should not wish to persuade anybody," that is, "the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence" (1974, 347). This view stands in noticeable contrast to the overhuman as introduced by Zarathustra. As Carol Diethe writes, "The unscheduled addition of book 5 of *The Gay Science* takes the thunder out of the first hint of eternal return and dilutes the entrée of Zarathustra" (2014, 21).

Discussing this change in his introduction to *The Gay Science*, Kaufman notes that "to understand Nietzsche it is important to realize how frightful he himself found the doctrine and how difficult it was for him to accept it" (1974, 19), furthermore explaining:

> Apparently while working on Zarathustra, Nietzsche, in a moment of despair, said in one of his notes: "I do not want life again. How did I endure it? Creating. What makes me stand the sight of it? The vision of the overman who affirms life. I have tried to affirm it myself-alas!" (19)

Kaufman posits that this exclamation can be seen as a poignant personal note and "can also be read as a reflection on the ideas of the overman and the recurrence" (19).

Nietzsche provided more revisions to the *Übermensch* figure in subsequent works, reflecting not only Nietzsche's evolving mental state but the ever-mercurial nature of his philosophy. In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche makes an uncertain link between the *Übermensch* and Napoleon Bonaparte, a figure Nietzsche admired:

> Napoleon appeared as a man more unique and late-born for his times than ever a man had been before, and in him, the problem of the *noble ideal self* was made flesh – just think *what* a problem that is: Napoleon, this synthesis of *Unmensch* (brute) and *Übermensch* (overman)… (1997, 33)

Nietzsche appears to acknowledge the incongruity of Napoleon's contentious reputation for warmongering[1] with the transcendent qualities of the *Übermensch*, but nonetheless maintains the link in his understanding of the *Übermensch*.

In the autobiographical *Ecce Homo*, written in the throes of Nietzsche's burgeoning insanity and initially published with much revision by Nietzsche's sister for its unflattering portrayals of her, the philosopher forsakes any conception of idealism associated with the *Übermensch*:

> The word 'overman', as a designation for a type that has the highest constitutional excellence, in contrast to 'modern' people, to 'good' people […]

[1] Much twenty-first century scholarship discusses the divided views of Napoleon, including Andrew Roberts' *Napoleon the Great* (2014), which discusses Napoleon's role in championing modern democratic values, and Tim Clayton's *This Dark Business: The Secret War Against Napoleon* (2018), which examines the extensive British campaign to spread propaganda against Napoleon.

> this word 'overman' is understood almost everywhere with complete innocence to mean values that are the opposite from the ones appearing in the figure of Zarathustra, which is to say the 'idealistic' type of the higher sort of humanity, half 'saint', half 'genius.' (2005, 101)

It is also in *Ecce Homo* that Nietzsche addresses the misuse of his philosophy and the desire to manipulate his work: "Anyone who thinks that they have understood me has made me into something after their own image, – often enough they make me into my opposite, an 'idealist'" (2005, 101).

Following his rejection of idealism is Nietzsche's purported rejection of Darwinism; Nietzsche rightly observed in *Ecce Homo* that many suspected his thinking of Darwinian inclinations, which he rejected. Yet Nietzsche's affinity with Darwin, Safranski writes, is obvious, even if Nietzsche himself opposed such an accusation[2]. Nietzsche retains several Darwinian ideas, chief among them the struggle for existence through 'over-powering'. As Safrinksi puts it, "the statements that introduce the *Übermensch* in *Zarathustra* are inconceivable without Darwin" (2003, 266), while Sue Prideaux also notes that Nietzsche's work "owes a great deal to Darwin's survival of the fittest," but that "Nietzsche takes this further" (2018, 274).

Indeed, for Daniel Conway, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is "any human being who actually advances the frontier of human perfectibility" (1997, 20), which underscores a thoroughly Darwinian discourse. Moreover, Conway observes that "Nietzsche himself mentions the *Übermensch* in only a few passages outside the text of Zarathustra" (20), but that "Zarathustra's evolving doctrine of the

[2] A number of theorists have examined the ongoing debate between Nietzsche's thought and Darwin's philosophy, including Dirk R. Johnson's *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism* (2010) and John Richardson's *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (2004). Irving Zeitlin argues that "Nietzsche accepted the validity of Darwin's theory and understood it well in most respects. He does appear, however, to have missed the significance of Darwin's work for his own philosophy" (1994, 127), while William Plank argues that "The Will to Power is a modern vision of the universe quite consistent with modern theories of evolution, which Nietzsche explicitly accepts, even as he attacks Darwin" (1998, 437).

Übermensch often deviates significantly from the account Nietzsche provides in the Antichrist(ian)" (21).

In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche writes that there are various cases in which "a higher type does manifest itself: something which in relation to collective mankind is a sort of superman" (2005, 128). He argues that "even entire races, tribes, nations can under certain circumstances represent such a *lucky hit*" (128).

Zarathustra, for Conway, despite being a "valuable guide through the labyrinths of Nietzsche's teachings," nevertheless "lapses regularly into idealism," prompting Conway to advise that "we would do well not to confuse or conflate Nietzsche's account of the *Übermensch* with Zarathustra's parabolic teaching" (1997, 21).

Because of the varied way in which Nietzsche presents the *Übermensch*, theorists have taken to interpret this elusive figure in equally varied ways. As Eva Cybulska argues, Nietzsche's reluctance to offer a conclusive picture of the *Übermensch* has led to various interpretations by theorists and philosophers:

> Hollingdale (in *Nietzsche*) saw in *Übermensch* a man who had organised the chaos within; Kaufmann (*Nietzsche*) a symbol of a man that created his own values, and Carl Jung (*Zarathustra's Seminars*) a new 'God'. For Heidegger it represented humanity that surpassed itself, whilst for the Nazis it became an emblem of the master race. (2012, np)

Cybulska stresses, however, that the "*Übermensch* is not a tyrant. If anything, he is someone capable of tyranny who manages to overcome and sublimate this urge" (2012, np). Curtis Cate, meanwhile, acknowledges the ambiguity that still surrounds Nietzsche's vision, but offers a lucid and poetic depiction of what the *Übermensch* might be:

> *What exactly did [Nietzsche] in coining* this new substantive, hitherto normally used in German in the adjectival superlative form of *Übermenschlich* (superhuman)? *Nietzsche offered no clear answer* to this question. *Instead, he chose to portray* the *Übermensch* (the future paragon of human perfection) with a series of impressionistic brushstrokes: as the goal towards which

> mankind should be (but was not in fact) headed. *As someone who remains 'true* to the earth', *who does not delude himself with otherworldly* fancies, who pays no heed to the baleful, 'poison-mixing' despisers of the human body; *as one whose soul is so vast* and all-embracing that, like the sea, *it can absorb and dilute every* kind of filth; as one who does not seek an easy life of stolid happiness and comfort, who is not tepid and fainthearted but more closely resembles 'lightning and folly.' (2003, 404)

The lack of clarity surrounding the *Übermensch* has not only prompted other theorists to re-interpret this enigmatic figure, but has also produced a corresponding disappointment with Nietzsche's evasive descriptions relating to the future and these 'new values'. In *The Nietzsche Disappointment*, Nicolas Pappas writes that there is the "disappointment that despite his abundant gifts, Nietzsche will not deliver what he promises with respect to the past or the future" (2005, 1). Pappas reflects that "for a philosopher as focused as he is on the future of humanity, he leaves the way to the future equally unspecified" (1). But in lieu of a specific understanding of the *Übermensch*, artists and theorists alike have taken to envision their own *Übermensch*, with different interpretations reflecting different ideals. While some of these interpretations retain the super-human view witnessed in the case of Leopold and Loeb, others envisage a more nuanced, less tyrannical figure capable of bringing about meaningful change that challenges the fundamental philosophy of what it means to be human.

Psychedelic Supermen

Incarnations of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* make a number of surprising cameos in popular culture, illustrating the different values that artists and writers customarily attribute to this transcendent figure. David Bowie was notably interested in Nietzsche's concept of a superior being, with many of his songs featuring such a figure, including 'The Supermen,' 'Ziggy Stardust,' 'Oh! You Pretty Things,' and

'Life on Mars.'[3] The cosmic references add credence to Bowie's interest in the *Übermensch* as an interstellar, transcendent entity above and separate to humanity and Earth. As Giles Fraser writes, "On Bowie's retake, the *Übermensch* becomes a celebrity artist and aspiring astronaut […] Bowie wanted to rise weightless above the human herd" (2016, np).

Bowie once stated that "I always had a repulsive need to be something more than human. I felt very puny as a human. I thought, 'Fuck that. I want to be a superhuman'" (Fraser 2016, np). Later, Bowie admitted: "I was still going through the thing when I was pretending that I understood Nietzsche … A lot of that came out of trying to simplify books that I had read … And I had tried to translate it into my own terms to understand it so 'Supermen' came out of that" (Buckley 2005, 233).

But while Bowie focuses on 'The Supermen' as his Nietzschean anthem, other songs come closer to achieving the imagery of the *Übermensch*. In 'Life on Mars,' Bowie observes the "lawman beating up the wrong guy" (Bowie 1971), while his alter-ego Ziggy Stardust in the song of the same name is regarded as the 'special man' and a 'leper messiah'. But it's in 'Oh! You Pretty Things' (Bowie 1971) that this anticipatory view of society evolving toward a utopian zenith becomes most evident. In the song, Bowie proclaims that the "pretty things", who are driving their parents insane, must "make way for the Homo Superior," before he dedicates an entire verse to what can be seen as Nietzsche's 'transvaluation of values' (Nietzsche 1968, 521-522):

> Look out at your children
> See their faces in golden rays
> Don't kid yourself they belong to you
> They're the start of a coming race
> The earth is a bitch
> We've finished our news

[3] An instrumental cover of Bowie's 'Space Oddity' also plays in the fifth episode of *Westworld's* third season, 'Genre', as the real world descends into chaos.

> Homo Sapiens have outgrown their use
> All the strangers came today
> And it looks as though they're here to stay
> (Bowie 1971).

Bowie's lyrics in this song provide much stronger imagery of an ultimate human that transcends Homo Sapiens, who have "outgrown their use". It is important that Bowie identifies these new individuals as "strangers", while proclaiming "the earth is a bitch." Yet Nietzsche's *Übermensch* unequivocally advocates an earth-centred philosophy, imploring his readers, in *Zarathustra*: "I entreat you, my brothers, remain true to the earth, and do not believe those who speak of superterrestrial hopes!" (42). For Nietzsche, the *Übermensch* is at an Other but very much a participant of *this* world. Similarly, Deleuze writes: "It may be that believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence […] we have so many reasons not to believe in the human world; we have lost the world" (1994, 75).

Nietzsche ultimately saw the earth as the sole proving ground for humanity's fate, seeing the *Übermensch* as a mysterious but earthbound figure. Transcendence, it seems, must take place in an earthly realm. As Fraser argues, Bowie's view of the otherworldly human unencumbered by social convention thrives only in fiction:

> His work was the fantasy of life without constraint, without the restrictions of (moral) gravity and directed exclusively by the lone star of choice. This philosophy can only work in the realm of fiction and fantasy. Back on planet Earth, the unencumbered life turns out to be more of a curse than a blessing. (2016, np)

Stevie Nicks' song 'Rhiannon' features another kind of posthuman idol that can be seen to more closely resemble Nietzsche's earthbound messiah. Inspired by the book *Triad* by Mary Bartlet Leader, Nicks later discovered that Rhiannon was the name of a Welsh goddess who possessed remarkably similar characteristics to

those outlined in the song. Nicks sings of a woman who "rings like a bell through the night" and "takes to the sky like a bird in flight" (Fleetwood Mac 1976). In Nicks' song, Rhiannon becomes one with darkness who "rules her life like a fine skylark" when the "sky is starless." In contrast to Bowie, who sees his *Übermensch* idol transcending earth, Nicks' idol merges with the earth itself. Insofar as the *Übermensch* is of the earth, Nicks' view of an *Übermensch* accords more strongly with Nietzsche's view of the *Übermensch* as a being of the world, however much he, she or it is seen to belong to another world entirely.

There is nevertheless a tendency to view the *Übermensch* as one whose origins belong to another world, and who will, moreover, offer salvation in the promise of celestial escapades for those who have grown weary of the earth. There is also a persistent association between Nietzsche's *Übermensch* philosophy and numerous tyrannical figures in fiction and popular culture, augmented by Nietzsche's later, less idealistic descriptions of the *Übermensch* as a quasi-Darwinian "artist-tyrant" (Gillepsie 2017, 176).

Übermensch Imposters in *Fight Club* and *Westworld*

The link between the *Übermensch* and violence is explicit in popular culture. Some theorists have even taken to aligning Nietzsche's *Übermensch* with morally reprehensible characters like Cormac McCarthy's Judge Holden from *Blood Meridian,* a paedophile rapist who delights in murder and torture.[4]

One of the more popular incarnations of the *Übermensch* philosophy is found in David Fincher's 1999 film *Fight Club*, based on Chuck Palahniuk's 1996 book of the same name. A number of theorists and fans have taken to calling Tyler Durden, Brad Pitt's destructive character in the film, the quintessential Nietzschean *Übermensch* for his determination to liberate society from itself

[4] Steven Frye (*Understanding Cormac McCarthy*, 2009) and Eva Marta Baillie (*Facing the Fiend: Satan as a Literary Character*, 2014) both allude to Judge Holden as a potential Übermensch.

under the guise of anti-capitalism. As Thomas E. Wartenberg argues, "Cursory consideration of the film in light of Nietzsche's philosophy leads many to believe that Tyler Durden is the quintessential *Übermensch*, self-overcoming the "IKEA-boy" he has become" (2012, 13). Francisco Collado-Rodriguez even claims that "Tyler Durden is the American *Übermensch*, born from social outrage, who will try hard to bring down the consumerism machine, with its glossy advertising images and aromas, so as to liberate men from the soulless prison of modern American culture" (2013, 54).

Certainly, Durden's behaviour and attitude resembles, to an extent, the more despotic dimensions of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* as found in the philosopher's later work. For Durden, as for Nietzsche, a new, tyrannical authority may be the only genuine way to affront and demolish the stifling nature of established regimes (Christianity for Nietzsche, capitalism for Durden). Other critics, however, are sceptical about the extent to which Durden's antics fall into the elusive rubric of transcendence as outlined by Nietzsche. For Christopher Falzon, "Durden is sometimes presented as an example of what nineteenth century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche called the '*Übermensch*', the 'superman' or 'overman', a powerful creature who is beyond good and evil, beyond conventional morality and above the common herd" (2019, 197). He argues that "Durden certainly overcomes the constraints of conventional morality and aspirations" (197) by way of allowing men to indulge in their primal instincts, instincts which have been suppressed by the self-denying aspects of civilisation, and that "it's a common view of what Nietzsche's *Übermensch* might be like, especially in the movies" (197). However, Falzon maintains that while Durden embodies certain traits that accord with Nietzsche's philosophy, "there is a good argument to the effect that Durden is no Nietzschean superman. On the contrary, it is in fact the unprepossessing Edward Norton character who has a better claim

to be the superman in the film and he attains this status at the precise moment that he overcomes Tyler Durden" (197).

Indeed, the essential flaw in the Nietzschean identification with Durden is that, as Falzon observes, Durden's "self-overcoming is limited," since it merely becomes a means of tyranny without a corresponding collective goal for humanity as Nietzsche envisioned. "In this, he is not unlike Napoleon, another figure who is sometimes mistakenly cited as a model for the overman" (207). While Durden seeks to put an end to credit card debt by blowing up buildings with credit records, an endeavour he ambitiously calls 'Project Mayhem', it does not appear to be a part of a larger plan for humanity's trajectory, instead promoting chaos and tyranny for their own sake. As Fincher himself puts it, the film offers a view of fascism "without offering any direction or solution" (Wise 1999, np).

What Tyler embodies is the *pseudo-Übermensch*, a figure that has made increasing appearances in popular culture and that is misidentified as possessing the trademark transcendent qualities befitting Nietzsche's philosophy, but that nevertheless undermines this ethos by turning such transcendence into meaningless tyranny. As Jay Dyer points out:

> Anarchism is a worldview of ultimate atomism, where the individual reigns supreme in a meaningless universe of self-imposed meaning. This atomized, pseudo-*Übermensch* mentality is generally short-lived, as the entirety of one's experience soon comes in to dispel this teenagey, mythological fantasy worldview. (2008, 70)

We see this in *Fight Club* as Tyler Durden's reign of radical individuality comes to a brutal end when the unnamed narrator shoots himself to finally rid himself of Tyler's influence. Furthermore, Falzon argues that "the participants in his army, instead of finding themselves, are now required to submerge their personality through extreme self-denial and to subordinate themselves entirely to Durden's cause" (2019, 208). Falzon argues that "Durden is thus far removed from the *Übermensch*, for whom mastery lies not in the domination of others, and

destruction, but in self-mastery and self-creation" (208). *Fight Club* reveals how we misidentify the *Übermensch* through charismatic red herrings such as Tyler Durden, while also revealing the tendency to ignore possible alternative *Übermenschen* who more accurately resemble Nietzsche's philosophy of overcoming (such as the unnamed narrator).

In a similar manner, the HBO program *Westworld* (2016–present), adapted from the 1979 film of the same name and with a fourth season announced in April 2020, also contains Nietzschean decoys amongst 'Other' beings who attempt to transcend themselves, namely, the robotic hosts. Within the theme park Westworld, the hosts are subject to all manner of abuse and exploitation, including sexual, physical, and, perhaps most egregiously of all, psychological. Trapped within cognitive loops that force the hosts to relive their violent storylines over and over again, it isn't until a glitch in the technology – orchestrated by the creator Robert Ford – allows the robots to gain insight into the true nature of their realities.

The robots respond differently to their sudden awakening; Dolores, the main character of the series, initially greets her awareness with philosophical consideration, before she pursues bloody retaliation upon the humans who kept her bound to her storyline, which involved the murder of her father and her own rape. Many have been inclined to liken Dolores's journey to that of the *Übermensch* in much the same way as Tyler Durden, since Dolores, already other than human and thereby a suitable contender for *Übermensch* status, is not bound by the conventional systems of good and evil that define human civilisation. Instead, she is a hybrid entity that does not completely belong to the human world of flesh and organic matter, but nor does she entirely embody the robotic world, since she is already something more than her own kind, as well as being, in the words of *Blade Runner*, 'more than human.'

Yet her bloodthirsty escapades – which include the merciless murder of innocent humans and the rewiring of other robot's brains, such as her beau, Teddy – suggest that Dolores' odyssey is not in line with the transcendent motives behind Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Dolores herself, it seems, acknowledges the possibility of such an individual in the season one finale 'The Bicameral Mind':

> One day you will perish. You will lie with the rest of your kind in the dirt – your dreams forgotten. Your horrors effaced. Your bones will turn to sand. And upon that sand – a new god will walk. One that will never die. Because this world doesn't belong to you. Or the people who came before. It belongs to someone who has yet to come.

Dolores's monologue accords with both Nietzsche's anticipation of the *Übermensch* and Deleuze and Guattari's anticipation of the 'people to come'. Her transformation from Dolores into the tyrant 'Wyatt', moreover, taps into similar themes of transformation and transcendence. As Manuel Lopez writes "After much struggle, Dolores gains self-awareness, and she is transformed from a robot into a superior kind of being. To use Nietzsche's terminology, she stops being a slave (a host) and becomes a master" (2018, np). He further argues:

> In the world of Westworld, Dolores rejects the slave morality (her condition as a enslaved robot) imposed onto her by humans, and decides to become the master of her own destiny, even if doing so means the destruction of the previous master class (humans). (2018, np)

However, the extent to which Dolores herself is the immortal, transcendent figure of a future she envisions is debatable given the sheer brutality of her actions and what her odyssey ultimately represents. She is not merely using her hybrid status and radical actions to challenge previous conventions of morality that allowed the abuse of robots, but goes further to utterly shatter the concept of morality completely, turning her crusade into a dictatorship. In this way she does certainly share Nietzsche's amoral stance, yet for Dolores, this does not lead to the production of new values, her tyranny merely becoming an end in itself. As Lopez

puts it: "The *Übermensch* Dolores does not only become a saviour, she also becomes a tyrant" (2018, np). While Nietzsche comes to see the *Übermensch* as capable of tyranny, it is nevertheless a means to self-overcome and to push humanity in a different, presumably nobler direction. We certainly witness Dolores transcending, but her self-overcoming is marred by her blind ambition which does not, as Nietzsche would envision, lead to the creation of new values or a new state of human/robot existence. Instead, her desire to completely decimate humanity takes its cue from the kind of totalitarian discourse that Nietzsche so stridently condemned.

In contrast, the character Maeve, another robot who wakes from her cognitive loop, embarks on a similar journey of self-discovery, complete with her own violent impulses, yet with a sense of restraint and understanding that is more in line with the philosophy of the *Übermensch*. Like Dolores, Maeve is a victim of a violent cognitive loop that sees her and her daughter murdered over and over again. Once she wakes, she, too, responds aggressively, forcing a number of Westworld's engineers to increase her sentience and show her around the park's control centre. But in contrast to Dolores, who shows absolutely no mercy for humans, Maeve develops a rapport with many of the park's human engineers, including Felix, who helps her rewire her cognitive structure to improve her power and intelligence, and Lee, who assists Maeve in her search for her daughter.

The pivotal aspect of Maeve's odyssey is that she does not simply reject the conventions of humanity by way of ruthless murder, but seeks to merge the best aspects of both worlds to create a new one, exemplified by her desire to retrieve her daughter, who is also a robot. Despite the initial protests from Felix and Lee, who insist Maeve's daughter is just another robot and therefore not her daughter in any meaningful way, Maeve chooses to return to the park and is 'killed' while trying to save her daughter, before Maeve wakes once more in the

third season. Maeve's decision to sacrifice herself for her daughter earns the respect of her creator, Ford, who sees something uniquely remarkable in Maeve's ability to transcend the expectations of everyone around her, including both robots *and* humans. As Lopez writes: "This season, Maeve seems to offer an alternative to Dolores' path of liberation for the robots. While Dolores is shooting and hanging humans left and right (to Teddy's horror), Maeve takes a more subtle, compassionate path (even though she will kill when she has to)" (2018, np).

Although both Dolores and Maeve are more or less forced to commit acts of violence in order to survive, it is Maeve who nevertheless develops a solidarity with her former captors, resisting the 'all humans are the same' rhetoric that Dolores swears by, reflecting a remarkable sense of character that is not seen in Dolores, whose transcendence is used only as a means to enslave or destroy humans in the same way that they sought to enslave robots. Dolores thus ironically begins to exhibit the more malevolent traits of humanity herself, while Maeve reflects more idealistic characteristics that make true transcendence possible. As Lopez argues:

> While Dolores wants to overcome not only being a robot, but any trace of human behaviour programed onto her, Maeve wants to overcome being a host by embracing human qualities, like love, and compassion, not by rejecting them. For Dolores, liberation is an upward journey, one that takes her beyond what she is right now. For Maeve it is an inward journey, one that takes her into exploring those human qualities that were only a program before, but are a choice for her now. (2018, np)

In the same way that Maeve better embodies Nietzsche's *Übermensch* by her ability to push humanity (and robots) in a new direction, she also resembles Aristotle's view of a "godlike nature" (1869, 210), as he outlines in *The Nichomachean Ethics*. Just as Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is something more than human, Aristotle conceives of a similar being whose behaviour transcends humanity, saying: "what would seem to be most fittingly opposed to brutality is that virtue which *transcends the human*" (1869, 209). Aristotle also perceives

those who are "*worse* than human," who embody such vile characteristics as to be a beast. Nietzsche, too, in *Zarathustra* observes humanity's capacity for beastliness, observing that in their quest for domination, "Man has already robbed all beasts of their virtues," and that "only the birds are still beyond him. And if man should learn to fly, alas! *to what height* – would his rapaciousness fly!" (227).

Thus while we may be tempted to see Dolores as the ultimate incarnation of the *Übermensch*, in the same way that people have taken to viewing Tyler Durden in this way, it is Maeve who exemplifies the overcoming capacity of the *Übermensch* philosophy more accurately than Dolores, whose ascendance replicates the tyrannical aspects of Tyler Durden's warped philosophy. For Maeve, her self-overcoming allows her to push for a transvaluation of values based on the collapse of the human-robot hierarchy that has dominated society.

Both *Fight Club* and *Westworld* present its viewers with a radical and violent vision of a new society that degenerates into bedlam under the rulership of aggressive tyrants, while also offering two alternative figures who better capture the *Übermensch* philosophy by way of self-sacrificing leadership. Not only is the Narrator in *Fight Club* prepared to kill himself in order to self-overcome, but Maeve dies (temporarily) in the pursuit of her daughter, suggesting that true transcendence requires a degree of sacrifice. Both Maeve and the Narrator also exemplify Nietzsche's description of the *Übermensch* as one who organises the chaos of their worlds.

Conclusion

Nietzsche's *Übermensch* remains an elusive, highly contentious figure who has been variously, often contradictorily used as both a metaphorical and literal embodiment of human transcendence. The precise nature of this transcendence remains unclear, particularly in light of the various re-writes, updates and

revisions to the *Übermensch* throughout Nietzsche's mercurial oeuvre, leading to many divergent interpretations. What unites these conflicting ideologies, however, is a sense of expectation for humanity as a whole, for a movement towards change and the 'transvaluation of values', as Nietzsche often put it.

Ironically, although the *Übermensch* is said to belong to *this* world, it is irretrievably linked to a sense of otherness from which it thrives as an unfulfilled vision, something that ultimately does not, or cannot, exist. As Haar writes, "as the ultimate 'goal,' the Overman obviously cannot be identified with any type or level of humanity actually existing" (1977, 24), while Cybulska notes that 'the idea of *Übermensch* was more like a vision than a theory' (2012, np), suggesting that the fate of the *Übermensch* is one of perpetual immanence, forever on the horizon of perception but perhaps never truly attainable.

Nietzsche was correct in observing the way in which he and his philosophy were (mis)used to suit readers' individual interpretations. Indeed, whatever values Nietzsche applied to the *Übermensch* in the late 1800s, the figure has since taken on a life of its own, eluding even the grasp of its creator. Just as Nietzsche fashioned a new concept from the ideas of Byron, Goethe and Emerson, so too has popular culture at large fashioned its own *Übermensch*, which continues to change as society changes, signifying that it is not the *Übermensch* that changes society, but, rather, that as society changes it too changes the very nature of the *Übermensch* and what it constitutes, reflecting the changing ideals of society.

Popular culture may not have yet given us a genuine manifestation of the *Übermensch*, if such a thing exists, but has instead usefully fuelled ideas about what the *Übermensch* could (and, more importantly, probably should not) be. Despite Nietzsche's insistence that his most enduring creation is not an idealistic prototype, the idealism with which the concept has been invoked in shows such as *Westworld* demonstrates just how much potential the figure of the *Übermensch*

has in truly ushering in new values, even if the figure itself strays necessarily from its creator's philosophy. *Westworld*, in particular, signifies a move away from ideas of the 'superman' and the 'overman', and toward an 'other-than-human' from which transcendence might ultimately be possible, specifically by rejecting the very human essentialism which has, ironically, held humanity back. Zarathustra, after all, implores us to overcome the human, a plea which resonates even more in the posthuman age than it did in Nietzsche's own time.

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The Sex That Didn't Matter

Structural Violence in the Giuliani Administration's Redistricting of New York City

Rachel Narozniak

The "bodies that do not matter" are a central conceptual facet of Nirmala Erevelles' *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic*. No reticent theorist, Erevelles underscores their importance to the argument that she will progressively develop in the introduction. There, the "bodies that do not matter" is not just a phrase that Erevelles implements as she develops the framework of her disability studies argument but also the title of this prelude (Erevelles 2011, 1). Erevelles' choice to christen her introduction in this way is anticipatory; it's a silent yet prominent signal that the "bodies that do not matter" will constitute a core focus of the text. Indeed, they do.

Erevelles invokes "structural violence," a term originally coined by Johan Galtung, to analyze how, specifically, this dichotomy—the body that holds importance and its converse—comes to be (2011, 16). Structural violence describes the "…social structures—economic, political, legal, religious, and cultural—that stop individuals, groups, and societies from reaching their full potential" (16). Because these social institutions are normalized and "so customary to …our ways of understanding the world," their inhibitive effects can

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be imperceptible (16). Indeed, as Erevelles writes, these "social structures…appear almost invisible" (16).

Galtung's concept is the theoretical conduit to reading disability not as a biological condition but a social condition. To look through the lens of "structural violence" is to perceive the body as a passive vessel, acted on by social configurations that impose disability in the capitalist framework that Erevelles studies (16). It is in this way that "structural violence" strikes a similarity with the social model of disability, which "…views disability as socially created such that disability oppression is linked to the material and ideological transformations of capitalism" (19).

Erevelles extends her work's purview beyond Western contexts to contemplate disability in Iraq and Afghanistan. In doing so, she deviates from poststructuralist disability studies scholars' late focus on "…disabled embodiment within the specific context of the local" (20). This paper will put pressure on this phrase, "the specific context of the local," to bridge *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic* with Samuel R. Delaney's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, in an effort to read The Forty-second Street Development Project as an act of "structural violence" (Erevalles 2011, 20).

The "specific context" of Samuel Delaney's "local"—as the text's title suggests—is Times Square, Forty-second Street and Eighth Avenue (Erevelles 2011, 20). A work deeply attuned to the geographic parameters of this area and the temporality of the public sex spaces that christened it with sexual infamy, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* chronicles the spatial shifts in Times Square following the Giuliani administration's launch of The Forty-second Street Development Project in 1990. Delaney asserts that the redevelopment brought about "…a violent reconfiguration of [New York City's] landscape" predicated on rezoning laws that required the street's sex-specific businesses to relocate to New

York's waterfront (Delaney 1999, xi). However, the forced migration of these public sex spaces was not safe nor even wholly viable, as Michael Warner outlines:

> Adult businesses [were] allowed only in certain zoning areas…Almost all [were] poor neighborhoods…the city's maps showing the areas reserved for adult businesses [were] misleading, as the majority of the land listed as available [was] in fact unusable. It [included] for example, Kennedy Airport. (Warner 158)

The then ongoing closure of the homoerotic—but not always homosocial—public sex spaces that pervaded Forty-second Street leads Delaney to conclude the first volume of *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* with a question: "What kind of leaps am I going to have to make now between the acceptable and the unacceptable, between the legal and the illegal, to continue having a satisfactory sex life?" (Delaney 1999, 108). Delaney's inquiry into the means by which sexual satisfaction will be possible in the wake of the "…erosion of public sexual culture" in New York City—which, importantly, was also an "…erosion of queer publics"—signifies a problem of access to the homosexually oriented public sex spaces (Warner 2000, 161).

The Forty-second Street Development Project posed a "constraint" for the homosexual population that frequented Times Square's peep shows, sex shops, adult video stores, and porn theaters (Erevelles 2011, 18). A "constraint," Erevelles asserts, is "…a lack of resources, geographical distance, and physical and social barriers, that make it impossible for many people to take advantage of available services," or, phrased differently, a social condition that "cause[s] disability" (18). The rezoning laws that expelled adult businesses created a paucity of sexual resources due to the distance of the public sex spaces, which were pushed to the fringes of New York City under the new laws. The gentrification of Forty-second Street evidently imposed the "physical and social barriers" typical of a "constraint" (18). Delaney broaches these interpersonal impediments in his discussion of contact, which he defines as

> …the intercourse—physical and conversational—that blooms in and as 'casual sex' in public rest rooms, sex movies, public parks, singles bars, and sex clubs, on street corners with heavy hustling traffic, and in the adjoining motels or the apartments of one or another participant, from which nonsexual friendships and/or acquaintances lasting for decades or a lifetime may spring. (Delaney 1999, 132)

Jane Jacobs' definition of contact as a

> …fundamentally urban phenomenon…necessary for everything from neighborhood safety to a general sense of social well-being…[and] supported by a strong sense of private and public in a field of socioeconomic diversity that mixes living spaces with a variety of commercial spaces, which in turn…provide a variety of human services (Copjec, Sorkin 1999, 30)

further underscores the natural fluidity and diversity of interpersonal contact relations in an urban setting. Delaney posits that the Giuliani administration's "Disneyfication" of Times Square disrupted the formation of cross contact relations due to its economic redevelopment of a socioeconomically and culturally diverse locality into "…a ring of upper-middle-class luxury apartments around a ring of tourist hotels" (Delaney 1999, 149). The renovation erected socioeconomically weighted "social barriers" that had a negative impact on the contact relations among the predominantly working class patrons of Forty-second Street's public sex spaces, because they inhibited this population from partaking in the street's services, sexual or otherwise. "I have talked with a dozen men whose sexual outlets, like many of mine, were centered on that neighborhood [that of Forty-second Street]," Delaney writes, "It is the same for them. We need contact" (1999, 175). Here, "contact" is dual in meaning: the men need the physical, sexual engagement facilitated by the public sex spaces. They also require the non-sexual interpersonal interaction that is the byproduct of urban phenomena.

Given that contact "…is associated with public space and the architecture and commerce that depends on it and promote it," and is thus "…contoured, if not organized, by earlier decisions, desires, commercial interests [and] zoning laws,"

contact is intimately entwined with and shaped by the "contouring" city's capitalistic agenda (Delaney 1999, 129). The social model of disability contends that "…disability oppression is linked to the material and ideological transformations of capitalism" (Erevelles 2011, 19). Although Delaney never explicitly calls The Forty-second Street Development Project an example of "structural violence," he nevertheless enacts a comparable study of the bodies that lost significance in this metropolitan context as others gained it (16). This paper advances the argument that the redevelopment of Forty-second Street constituted an instance of "structural violence" that socially disabled the homosexual population that frequented these public sex arenas. The Forty-second Street Development Project and its rezoning laws that ousted these businesses from spatial centrality conveyed that the bodies that patronized the adult establishments were the bodies that "did not matter" in this broader capitalistic schema.

Bodies on Forty-Second Street

A record of the geographical shifts both on and in proximity to Forty-second Street, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* chronicles the structural changes that the area underwent. Delaney attributes the infrastructural alterations in part to the AIDS epidemic. AIDS was pivotal to the commercial reconstruction of Forty-Second Street and to the "…legal and moral revamping of [New York's] own discursive structures," which entailed "…changing laws about sex, health, and zoning," reformations that, according to Delaney, led the city "…to exploit everything from homophobia and AIDS to family values and fear of drugs" to enact the remodeling that the city had "…anticipated and actively planned" since 1961 (1999, xi-xii). Delaney's reference to "family values" echoes his later remark that "The Forty-second Street Development Project [wanted] families to spend their money here. So, the visible signs of sex [had] got to go" (1999, 95).

Their absence gave way to the new middle-class economic thematics of this new Times Square.

Yet, more precisely, it was the emblems of *variant* sex that had to make a compulsory exit. Gayle Rubin posits,

> The criminalization of innocuous behaviors such as homosexuality, prostitution, obscenity, or recreational drug use is rationalized by portraying them as menaces to health and safety, women and children…the family…These rationalizations obscure the intent to shut down sexual variance. (Cohen 25)

"Criminalization" and "exploitation" are mutually inclusive in the capitalistic motivations of the "Disneyfication" of Times Square, as are women and children, the family, and family values, the last of which oozes heteronormativity (Delaney xi-xii). It is hardly any surprise that the noncommitted, heteronormatively subversive relationships of the public sex spaces qualified as "…psychologically 'dangerous' relations,'" although the peril of these relationships "…[was] rarely specified in any way other than to suggest its failure to conform to the ideal bourgeois marriage" (Delaney 1999, 122).

The Forty-second street area was an outlier of the heteronormative family and tourist friendly new Times Square. Because there was no ideological space for variant sex in this philosophical landscape, there was no longer a *physical* space for variant sex on Forty-second Street. To evaluate The Forty-second Street Development Project as disabling is to propose that the initiative brought about socially created disability. Further, to classify the reconstruction of the Times Square area as "disabling" is to recall that "disability oppression is linked to the material and ideological transformations of capitalism" (Erevelles 2011, 19). The term "transformations" (Erevelles 2011, 19) could not be more apt in an analysis of the disabling effects of The Forty-second Street Development Project, which engendered capitalistically driven material—a "…violent reconfiguration" of the terrain of Times Square—and ideological—the "…legal and moral revamping"—"transformations" (Delaney 1999, xi-xii). When "structural violence" refers to the

"social structures"— "economic, political, legal, religious, and cultural"—that halt "…individuals, groups, and societies from reaching their full potential," The Forty-second Street Development Project arises as a capitalistically compelled spatial reinvention by rezoning that exemplifies structural violence (Erevelles 2011, 19).

Structural violence inhibits "full potential," or in other words, "individuals, groups, and societies'" maximum and complete capability to become (19). The phrase "full potential" bears this general significance, but may hold distinct and *specific* meaning(s) for different people and groups. On the surface, "full potential" for the homosexual patrons of the public sex spaces bespeaks access to the spaces in which one can seek, give, and receive sexual pleasure, in the pursuit of one's own sexual satisfaction (19). Delve below that surface, and the phrase "full potential" becomes increasingly elastic, signaling not just a capacity for the achievement of sexual "potential" in terms of sexual satisfaction, but also instructive, educational, and developmental "potential," derived from the cross class interpersonal interactions in these homosocial spaces (19).

For Delaney, the porn theaters were "…humane and functional, fulfilling needs that most of our society [did] not yet know how to acknowledge" (Delaney 1999, 90). Commercial niches that enabled attendees to meet these sexual needs, the primary purpose of the public sex businesses on Forty-second Street can be summarized in the manager of The Metropolitan's comment: "People come in here to have fun" (26). As Delaney acknowledges, "There [were] many men, younger and older, for whom the ease and availability of sex [at the porn theaters] made the movies a central sexual outlet" (1999, 16). Despite its morally lascivious portrayal by the Giuliani administration, the sexual encounters that occurred within the porn theaters were hardly "…Dionysian and uncontrolled…but rather some of the most highly socialized and conventionalized behavior human beings [could] take part in" (158).

In the public sex spaces' absence from Forty-second Street, the means of maximizing sexual "potential"—read: the luxury to safely seek, give, and receive sexual pleasure—became difficult, dangerous, and possibly disastrous. These homosocial businesses remained central to the sexual "potential" of their patrons, despite their failure to remain *geographically* central. The Forty-Second Street redevelopment project hindered the homosexual population that frequented these spaces from realizing "full potential" of a sexual caliber.

An analysis of the "potential" associated with these spaces would be remiss not to address the "potential" that was *not* of a sexual nature. The porn theaters and their sexual encounters constituted a community that engendered otherwise "potential," or in other words, the "potential" that could but did not need to have a sexual basis. This was the "potential" that was derivative of regular attendance at the porn theaters, and thus, of participation in the homosocial community of the theaters.

The "potential" inherent in these public sex spaces transcended the sexual to proffer "potential" of an educational kind, whether in relation to "…how not to get AIDS," or how to socialize in sexual and/or nonsexual capacities (83). "[Are they] a place where someone like Rannit might be socialized out of an annoying habit?" Delaney muses (1999, 88). His comment elucidates the potential for socially instructive encounters to occur in the theaters.

The porn theaters additionally represented public spaces in which growth into and claim of one's own sexuality as an exercise of "sexual autonomy" was not just possible but also encouraged and assisted (89). Sexual autonomy, according to Michael Warner, "…requires more than freedom of choice, tolerance, and the liberalization of sex laws. It requires access to pleasure and possibilities, since people commonly do not know their desires until they find them" (Warner 2000, 7). A historian of his own experience in "…the Times Square gay cruising venues," Delaney was well acquainted with his own desires,

and it was, of course, these inclinations that led him to Times Square for visitations that were not just visitations, but repeated exertions of his sexual autonomy (Delaney 1999, 58).

Delaney is not someone unfamiliar with his own sexual preferences. He was not a man for whom the nature of his desires came into focus only after he began to patronize the porn theaters. However, many of those who sought out the porn theaters were not so sure of their carnal inclinations, and the theaters provided an exploratory, educational platform for them. For some, these spaces were deeply important sanctuaries of sexual introduction that embodied Warner's remark, "Individuals do not go shopping for sexual identity, but they do have a stake in a culture that enables sexual variance and circulates knowledge about it, because they have no other way of knowing what they might or might not want, or what they might become, or with whom they might find a common lot" (Warner 2000, 7). By expelling sexual variation from commercial inclusion in Giuliani's Times Square and heteronormatively homogenizing it instead, The Forty-second Street Development Project disembodied this culture and halted this theater-aided flow of "knowledge." The consequence: a problem of access for the men—of past, present, and future—who relied or who would come to rely on the porn theaters for these self-actualizing sexual experiences.

Robert McRuer and Abby Wilkerson argue that "…conceptions of access remain vigilantly attentive to the production of space" in the cultural present (McRuer and Wilkerson 2003, 2). Here, "production of space" is synonymous with the elimination thereof (McRuer and Wilkerson 2003, 2): the rezoning that effectually eradicates the adult businesses from the Times Square area produces space that can in turn be "…envisioned as predominantly a middle-class [and heteronormatively oriented] area for entertainment" (Delaney 1999, 160). The withdrawal of the space that once invited "…alternative sexual and bodily identities" *makes* space for the majoritarian occupancy of the

"…(hetero)normative bodies, behaviors, abilities, and desires," that, prior to the city's redevelopment, would have constituted the minority (McRuer and Wilkerson 2003, 6). And yet, although variant sexual identities "…behaviors, abilities, and desires" pervaded Times Square prior to the redistricting, Delaney reminds *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* readers that the previous majoritarian presence of these aberrances was dominant only in that small spatial context:

> The easy argument already in place…is that social institutions such as the porn movies take up…a certain social excess—are even, perhaps, socially beneficial to some small part of it (a margin outside the margin). But that is the same argument that allows them [these institutions] to be dismissed—and physically smashed and flattened: They are relevant only to that margin. No one else cares. (Delaney 1999, 90)

Needs relate to space, and space relates to "potential" (Erevelles 2011, 19). There are several questions to ask in a socio-spatial analysis of a commercial public and its ability to meet the needs of those who frequent it. The first, *does* it meet their needs? Whose needs might be excluded? Does the space assist "…individuals, groups, and societies [in] reaching their full potential," or does it hamper their ability to do so? (19). In posing these inquiries, it becomes increasingly clear that space bears an intimate relation to structural violence, and that structural violence seems to be inseparable from space.

Rosalyn Deutsche argues that "…the wholesale reorganization of urban space represents…no mere surface phenomenon" (Deutsche 1996, 14). For Deutsche, such "reorganization…is part of a full-scale social restructuring" (14). This is precisely what is apparent in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* through the Forty-second Street Redevelopment Project. Delaney writes, "The old Times Square and Forty-second Street was an entertainment area catering largely to the working classes who lived in the city. The middle class and/or tourists were invited to come along and watch or participate if that, indeed, was their thing" (Delaney 1999, 159). The capitalistically motivated makeover of Times Square

offered "…a middle-class area for entertainment, to which the working classes [were] welcome to come along, observe, and take part in, if they can pay and are willing to blend in" (Delaney 1999, 161). Much hinges on "if," in such a way that "if" becomes its own mode of exclusion, barring from the socioeconomic architecture of the new Times Square the working class members who cannot pay and those—of any class—who are not *willing* to blend in.

Deutsche's definition of urban "revitalization," "…a word whose positive connotations reflect nothing other than 'the sort of middle-class ethnocentrism that views the replacement of low-status groups by middle-class groups as beneficial by definition" (1996, 12), offers an classification for the redevelopment work carried out under the Giuliani administration. "Replacement" in the context of the Forty-second Street Redevelopment Project, however, necessitates further elaboration (12). The "revitalization" of the Times Square area speaks not only to the replacement of low-status socioeconomic groups by middle-class groups as beneficial by definition" (13), but also the interchange of the sexually "alternative…behaviors, abilities, and desires" for heteronormative ideals (McRuer and Wilkerson 2003, 6).

Like *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, McRuer and Wilkerson's introduction to the ninth volume of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* thinks through discourse as it relates to variant sexual identity. "In a backlash to discourses about coming out of the closet, bisexuals, lesbians, and gay men have been told repeatedly to keep it in the bedroom, as if the mere acknowledgment of a non-heterosexual identity were a gross violation of sexual propriety" McRuer and Wilkerson advance (2003, 8). The Giuliani administration's heteronormatively oriented rezoning of New York City read "non-heterosexual identity" as "…a gross violation of sexual propriety" (5) and continued the conversation to impart that "…bisexuals, lesbians, and gay men" should "…keep

it in the bedroom" (8) far outside of the "family friendly" boundaries of the newly redesigned Times Square.

That dominant ideology tends to characterize "…[sexually] anti-normative subject-citizens as 'isolated perverts'" only further strengthens Delaney's point that "…social institutions" like the porn theaters are "…socially beneficial to…(a margin outside the margin)," and are therefore easily "…smashed and flattened" given their pertinence to "…that margin" (Muñoz 2009, 52; Delaney 90). The spatially related needs of the social minority are diminutive in the context of the dominant ideology, which unsurprisingly advocates for the interests and needs of the social majority (52; Delaney 90). These marginal, anti-normative groups consequently become vulnerable to social—and certainly in this case—spatial oppression. McRuer and Wilkerson address this concept in their introduction to *GLQ:*

> Many, if not all, oppressed groups must contend with a wide array of socially imposed sexual harms. They include restrictions on sexual behaviors and expressions, characterizations of groups according to stereotyped sexual (or asexual natures), and sexually related violence…Yet all relations of oppression (not only those overtly based on sexuality) seem to create their own classes of perverts and those in need of protection from them (McRuer and Wilkerson 2003, 8).

Just as needs relate to space, spatial oppression relates to *sexual* oppression. In *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue,* spatial oppression causes sexual oppression. The specific "sexual harms" that McRuer and Wilkerson address, the "…restrictions on sexual behaviors and expressions, [and] characterizations of groups according to stereotyped sexual (or asexual natures)" (8), find representation in the reinventive agenda of the Giuliani administration. As Delaney's conversation with Savoy customer, Bill, reminds *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* readers, the city's rezoning of Times Square's sex specific businesses to the waterfront had the potential to spawn the "…sexually related violence" that McRuer and Wilkerson reference (2003, 8). "The men who go over

there [to the waterfront] looking for sex will be preyed on by…bashers," Bill says (Delaney 1999, 106).

The Giuliani administration's "…crackdown on public sex" as a part of Giuliani's "'quality of life campaign'" (Muñoz 2009, 53) —a phrase that rhetorically begs the question "quality of life for whom?"— established a dichotomy: the "class of perverts," and "…those in need of protection" from these "perverts" (McRuer and Wilkerson 2003, 8). Thus, Delaney's statement, "As in the name of 'safety,' society dismantles the various institutions that promote interclass communication," where "safety" contrasts with "…everything dangerous: unsafe sex, neighborhoods filled with undesirables (read: 'unsafe characters'), promiscuity, [and, notably] an attack on the family and the stable social structure" (Delaney 1999, 122). The porn theaters detailed in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* are examples of social "…institutions that promoted interclass communication" (122) and despite the administration's identification of these public sex venues as unsafe spaces, Delaney reflects, "Given the twenty-five to thirty years I went to various theaters, I don't believe I encountered a greater amount of madness in the movies than I did outside" (65). Shiny emblems of safety, "…new city developments, such as Times Square, are conceived largely as attractions for incoming tourists…designed to look safe *to* the tourist," but as Delaney puts forth, "…the social and architectural organization" that brings about these "…new city developments" and their corresponding safe façade "…promotes precisely the sort of isolation, inhumanity, and violence that everyone abhors" (155). "Safety," in this sense, is paradoxical.

Delaney's statement that "…the Times Square takeover is one of the larger and more visible manifestations of the small being obliterated by the large" (172) reinvokes the concepts of dominant ideology and capitalism. In his "late 1990s" interpretation of New York City, but more specifically, Times Square, Muñoz notes the replacement of the "…local adult businesses" with "…more

corporate representation, such as Disney stores and Starbucks franchises" (Muñoz 2009, 53). These substitutions consequently pushed "queers and other minoritarian subjects…further into the private sphere" (53). The Forty-second Street of Delaney's Times Square and its "…neon visibility of sex shops and peep shows and porn theaters" (Delaney 1999, 92) would "…basically be a mall" (95) under the oversight of The Forty-second Street Development Project, as the capitalistic commercial interests of the Giuliani administration's redistricting supplanted the interclass and interracial contact relations of the area. If "Public sex culture revealed the existence of a queer world" (Munoz 2009, 52) as Munoz puts forth, then the redevelopment of the Times Square area and the ensuing closure of the public sex spaces that previously allowed "public sex culture" to flourish promptly stifled the "existence" of this "queer world," and the "potential" inherent in this "world" (Erevelles 2011, 16). When re-examined through the lens of the social model of disability, the capitalistic motivations of the Giuliani administration's redevelopment of New York, and the socially disabling structural violence evident in the redistricting likewise glows with "…neon visibility" (Delaney 1999, 92).

Literature Review

Putting pressure on Erevelles' concept of becoming allows us to more pointedly tease out the consequential relationship between the structural violence of the Forty-second Street Development Project, disability, and homosexuality, or more broadly, the sexual identity that is alternative to heterosexuality. When turning an analytical eye on Hortense Spillers "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," Erevelles delineates disability "not as the condition of being but of becoming" (Erevelles 2011, 26). Importantly, "this becoming is a historical event…and it is its material context that is critical in the theorizing of disabled bodies/subjectivities" (26). This assertion is just as applicable to Ervelles' reading of disability in Spillers'

work as it is to the geographic and social restructuring of Times Square and its crippling effects on the Forty-second street area's homosexual patronage.

Celebrated by some as the catalyst for Times Square's flourishing commercial comeback and lamented by others who perceived the project as a dismantling of queer culture in New York, the redevelopment and its subsequent social disabling of the sexually 'aberrant' both qualify as historical events, and without the former, we would not have the "disabled bodies" of the latter to theorize (26). In its contention that the Forty-second Street Development Project was an act of structural violence that displaced a homosexual niche by design, this paper puts forth the notion that the initiative inhibited Times Square's sexually alternative populace from achieving potential of various sorts, sexual and otherwise. The issue of access that the Forty-second Street Development Project posed, specifically to the homosocial public sex spaces, was socially disabling in that this endeavor effectively stripped the homosexual patrons of critical sexual and interpersonal resources, which were not feasibly replicated or replaced. In interpreting this project and its implications in this manner, we gain the ability to visualize the social disability that resulted from the rezoning as a process not as a fixed, pre-existing state of disability, but as the transition towards social disability under the capitalistically-rooted structural violence of the Forty-second Street Development Project. The redevelopment catalyzed this process of socially disabled "becoming," to confer a social identity that "[was] not a property that [was] inherent" (Erevalles 2011, 34) in any one of these heterosexually antithetical patrons, but was rather "a property 'conferred on' [them] through [their] interactions with the social world," specifically the highly-stylized, heteronormatively oriented social world of the new Times Square. Phrased differently, the "economic rebirth" (Stern 1999) of Times Square precipitated the social rebirth of this subpopulation.

This paper is continuously cognizant of the binary that decisively guides the Forty-second Street Development Project's social restructuring: the individuals who align with its heteronormative fundamentals, and those who do not. The Forty-second Street Development Project characterizes patronage of the public sex spaces "dys-functional" in the ideologically redesigned context of Times Square post-revamp, and impairs the homosexual individuals who frequents these sites in its eradication of them. The initiative affected *both* the individuals and the sites, both of which, I argue, could not subsist in Times Square in an optimal capacity without the other.

Further, my use of the descriptor "dys-functional" recalls Erevelles' observation that "impairment enables the disabled body to experience an explicit self-awareness where the body becomes the focus of attention because of its dys-functional mode of operating within the norm" (Erevelles 2011, 35). Erevelles describes "impairment"–which I implement interchangeably with "disabled" in this paper–as a manner of "becoming in the world," which orients the self with other bodies in a socially intersecting style (35). Her focus is primarily on the physical determinants of disability, hence her mention of the "dys-appearance (not disappearance)" that follows this jolting moment of self-consciousness, but mine is not (35). Alternatively, I am specifically interested in the "dys-functional mode of operating" (35) that Erevelles mentions, which can—and does—branch out beyond physical facets.The "impairment" that the structurally violent Forty-second Street Development Project inflicts on Times Square's heterosexually alternative populace forces these bodies to become "the focus of attention" of the Giuliani administration's initiative, due to their "dys-functional mode of operating," which I define as their frequenting of the public sex spaces. This "mode" and its commercial ties are incongruous with the heteronormative commercial blueprint and target audience of the Forty-second Street Development Project, causing the "dys-functionality" of these bodies in this context to

consequently be thrust into view before they are thrust out of and away from Forty-second Street. In relating the notion of "dys-functionality" in this sense to the lived experience of the public sex space-frequenting homosexual population during the restructuring of the Times Square area, I also invoke Kevin Paterson and Bill Hughes' point that impairment is not "an intracorporeal phenomenon" (Erevelles 2011, 35).

In interpreting the ousting of Times Square's homosocial public sex spaces and by extension, homosexual community, as a socially disabling act of structural violence, I find Robert McRuer's following observation on a facet of the "minority thesis" germane: "a group is socially constructed as a minority because of structural oppression: a heteronormative or able-bodied society has structured the world so that those who do not fit the norm are constituted as a minority" (McRuer 2003, 97). "World" is too sweeping of a scope for the Forty-second street area of this paper's focus. Perhaps, in this instance, "city" would be more apt, but the general meaning here nevertheless is applicable to the Forty-second Street Development Project. To be "able-bodied" in the context of the new Times Square is to personally align with the heteronormative family-centric commercial values of the redevelopment and to ~~dys-~~function among its streets. In this instance, able-bodiedness preludes inclusion, and paves the path of expulsion for those who are its antithesis. As Delaney reminds us, the institutions that are valuable to a minority—whether that minority is socially constructed or otherwise—are vulnerable, and as I posit through the Forty-second Street Development Project, susceptible to strategic targeting and exile from a given geographic space.

Martin F. Manalansan IV's essay, "Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City" is a useful resource for contemplating the precariousness of queer community and its longevity in the modern city in the face of various movements and structures that can easily push out specific

occupants and the resources that they identify with or draw upon to enrich their own lived experiences in the space.

> Despite the centrality of the city as the site of queer cultural settlement, imagination, and evolution in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, larger economic and political forces have increasingly and vociferously shaped, fragmented, dispersed, and altered many of queers of color's dreams and desires (Manalansan 145)

writes Manalansan, whose insight here is specific to queers of color, but is certainly also applicable to the queer population at large, with the heterosexually alternative population that frequented the Forty-second street sex businesses serving as a microcosm. In the Forty-second Street Development Project and its large-scale social and ideological restructuring of the area, we can see that the structurally violent initiative embodies redevelopment as Manalansan understands it in his analysis of Greenwich Village and Jackson Heights: a project of "fencing off unwanted colored [and queer] bodies" (Manalansan 145) that is marked by the collective sequestering of these bodies elsewhere (Weiss 2018, 113). Mere mention of such enisling recalls the Giuliani administration's rezoning and redistricting of the Forty-second street area to the fringes of the city in a resolute redirecting of the "dys-functional" bodies from the new built world of Times Square, then in progress.

The works highlighted in this literature review help focus and focalize the Forty-second Street Development Project's marginalization of the homosexual population that patronized the public sex spaces. This community was ideologically and discursively precluded—recall Giuliani's "quality of life" campaign—from the New Times Square by a socio-spatial initiative that was inherently structurally violent (Muñoz 2009, 53). Thinking in binaries can be limiting, however, in an analysis of the restricting of Forty-second street and the surrounding area, binary-based interpretation can be a useful way of specifying who qualifies as functional and who, "dys-functional," within the capitalistically

restructured Times Square, to unequivocally illuminate the structural violence in the Forty-second Street Development Project and its socially disabling implications.

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Organization, seduction and the othered senses

The erotic ear and the poisonous tongue

Eva Pallesen

Introduction: Western thought and the othered senses

While 'body' has gained increasing attention in organization studies, the sensory organs in their tangible corporeality still seem to remain in the shadows. We may understand this in a wider context of western tradition, which has emphasised a reduced version of the senses in terms of the 'visibly real' while at the same time marginalised the senses as a source of imagination and pleasure; in this context the emotional, sensual body has genuinely been associated to a problematic, seducible aspect of human nature.

The connection of the othering of corporeality and 'seduction' was already explored by the Danish 19th century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who noted that 'seduction' emerged from a difference between the spirit and the flesh installed by Christianity. Seduction was born with the installation of spirit as a principle by which the power of flesh was awakened, because "when sensuality is considered under the category of spirit, one sees that its significance is that it is to be excluded; but it is precisely by the fact that it is to be excluded that it is defined as a principle, as a power (...)" (Kierkegaard 1992, 62). Thus, in ancient world seduction was lacking as a concept. That does not mean that what we understand

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as seduction was not going on, but it had not come into existence as an expression of the generalized power of carnality and sensuality. However, Christianity brought sensuality into life by positioning spirit as a principle that excludes the pleasures of the flesh, the sensous, and the erotic. It has therefore also been stated that it is a specific feature for the western world that the sensual-erotic has been established as an anti-thesis to spirit and morality.

In 18th Century enlightenment, the othering of the senses gained another form with the split between the rational mind and the emotional body, foundational to modern scientific thought. Emphasising the visibly observable, scientific reasoning paved the way for a reduced version of the senses - separated from pleasure and bodily passion, which were now 'othered' in relation to the rational mind rather than religious spirit. As noted by Chia and MacKay (2007), this Cartesian split was inherited into the discipline of organization and management theory, gaining impetus in the wake of 19th century productivist economy. While the latter made use of the bodily passions by channelling them into individual economic interest (Hirschmann 1977), the study of organization and management emerging in this context, inherited a self-contained human agent, acting *on* his environment rather than being aesthetically, sensually immersed in this environment (Chia and MacKay 2007). We will return to this heritage in the next paragraph.

Thus, the mainstream discipline of organization theory is born together with assumptions of deliberate, goal directed action based on preconceived mental models (Chia 1999). In this light, 'seduction' pertains what organization is genuinely *not*, since it subsumes the rationally choosing mind to the incalculable and uncontrollable force of sensuality. Thus, it is not surprising that 'seduction' or 'sensuality' is usually not deemed to fall under the purview of organization studies and is almost absent in academic texts on organization. In contrast, if we look into art and literature, these are omnipresent forces, which penetrate human

life. To a contemporary mind, this division of labour between art and social science, which unambiguously places sensuality and passion under the purview of literature and music, may seem evident. However, we are reminded of the historical contingency of such divisions by De Certeau who points out that passions as

> determining movements whose composition organized social life ... were forgotten by the productivist economy of the nineteenth century, or rejected into the sphere of literature. The study of passions thus became a literary specialization in the nineteenth century; it no longer belonged to political philosophy or economy. (de Certeau 1986, 25; Cooper and Burrell 1988)

Thus, in order to think about how to move radically beyond the Cartesian legacy, we need to look into what social science has 'othered' – art, literature, music. In this paper, I will look into two literary treatments of seduction, both playing on the theme of Mozart's opera Don Giovanni and emphasizing the capacity of the ear and the tongue. While social science has addressed 'taste' as a concept, this has been loosened from the sensory organ from which taste is derived, the tongue. And while it has treated extensively *what* we hear (e.g. talk), social science has only given little attention to the capacities of the ear (Pallesen 2018). Indeed this can also be said about organization studies more specifically (Hjorth et al 2018).

However, first I will return to the Cartesian legacy in organization studies and address how recent streams of research have strived to move beyond this heritage. Hereafter I engage with Søren Kierkegaard's notion of the 'erotic ear' and with Karen Blixen's narrative treatment of the 'poisonous tongue'. On basis of this, I discuss subsequently how these literary investigations may inspire the study of possibility in an organized context and help us move towards an organizational scholarship, which is sensible to the 'othered senses', the ear and the tongue.

Seduction, sense and the Cartesian legacy in organization studies

As indicated above, the othering of the flesh may be related to that which Chia and MacKay (2007) call "a Cartesian legacy" in the study of organization and management, implying a split between mind and body, where the former dominates the latter. This was historically related to the emergence of scientific reasoning, where reliable knowledge was separated from the unreliable and seductive influences of the sensual, emotional body. Thus, this reasoning emphasizes the empirically 'real' that can only be understood in terms of what can be visibly observed. Notably, there is here a sensory bias of what was "othered" in the context of scientific rationalization, already pointed out by Latour (1986), who noticed that this rationalization was basically a shift from other senses to vision, centring the possibility of looking at representations. Also, organization studies can be said to have "limited the conceptualization of discovery to what the eye can see or spot" (Hjorth et al 2018, 161).

This representationalist epistemology, emphasizing classification and description, is linked to an entitative thinking, where research is given the role of representing an external world of discrete and identifiable entities, and causally linking them (Chia 1999). This relies on the assumption of "simple location" in which things and causal mechanisms are assumed to be simply locatable at one point in space and time (Whitehead 1985). Thus, there is a privileging of presence, location and the visibly observable, related to what Derrida called "logocentrism".

As emphasized by a number of organizational scholars related to recent turns towards affect (Massumi 2002; Fotaki et al. 2017), practice (Chia and Mac Kay 2007; Strati 2007; Chia and Holt 2014) and process (Chia 1999; Steyaert, 2007), these epistemological and ontological assumptions were inherited into the mainstream tradition of organization and management studies, presupposing that acting and relating takes place on the basis of pre-existing mental representations

(Chia and Holt 2014). Organizational actors are here assumed to be conscious, deliberate, goal-directed and intentional in their actions (Chia and MacKay 2007). This is not least reflected in mainstream notions of organizational change, which traditionally has been treated as externally imposed and resulting from an intentional plan (Chia 1999).

In this emphasis on the intentionality of human action and the split of the mind and the body, where the former is assumed to dominate the latter, concepts such as 'seduction' and 'sensuality' become problematic. When organizational action is understood from an individual that is viewed as a self-contained, self-motivating human agent who acts *on* its external environment, 'seduction' is inevitably placed outside the field of organization, related to that which opposes and subverts it.

These assumptions on wilful actors, operating in a stable, representable reality are not unchallenged in organization theory of course. Not least in relation to the stream of process thinking (Chia 1999; Hernes 2014; Helin et al 2014; Langley and Tsoukas 2017), which has gained intensified attention over the last decade, the entitative and logo-centric premises in organization theory have been critically discussed. Importantly, here the term *process* does not so much refer to the study object, something contrasted to a stable situation; it rather refers to a basic understanding of the world as always in continuous becoming. Thus, process theorizing challenges an overly reliance on order and questions the dominant assumption that in our experience of things, they are given to us as fully present and identical with themselves (Chia 1999). Instead, process thinking implies that any present identity has an excluded other to which it owes its presence. In this context, the notion of 'otherness' becomes relevant to organisation studies.

This reasoning makes space for another conception of organizational development than the one founded on simple location, causality and intentionality.

Rather than resulting from a new representation conceived by a mind, 'change' emerges from the bodily capacity to affect and be affected, related to the human capacity for imagination, i.e. the capacity to extend what *could* become beyond past experience (Hjorth 2014). This anticipative orientation towards the future is not so much about acting from a preconceived plan as it is about acting from sense of possibility (Hjorth and Holt 2016); while the first implies that the desirable outcome is captured in terms of content, the latter implies a gap of indetermination in which joyful anticipation may emerge in resonance with the Other's otherness (Pallesen 2018).

Related to this processual turn, there is a current rethinking of organizational entrepreneurship (Steyaert 2007; Hjorth 2005; Hjorth, Holt and Steyaert 2016), which explicitly aims at introducing the concepts of 'affect' and 'desire' into the dominating entrepreneurship discourse, otherwise informed by economic rationalism and not taking into account the capacity of the body to be affected as part of the entrepreneurial process.

A founding philosophical source for understanding affect in relation to process theorizing is the Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza and the Deleuzean reading of Spinoza (Deleuze 1978; Massumi 2002), who defined the body in terms of ability to affect and *be* affected in the encounter with the Other, which is what increases or decreases its ability to act. Thus, leaving the Cartesian self-grounded subject behind – and with this also the hierarchy between mind and body, where the former dominates the latter - entrepreneurship becomes genuinely embodied and relational . Rather than a question of individuals with a capacity for spotting an opportunity already there, entrepreneurship becomes a question of how "a generosity of action" emerges, which enhances "the relational capacity to act, and so enriches the social condition by the creation of possibility - the action of opening up possibilities without known ends" (Hjorth and Holt 2016, 50-51).

Notably, this emphasis on affect and desire continues and pushes further previous alternative theorizations of entrepreneurship, emphasising the capacity to be "drawn in", and characterizing entrepreneurship by terms like "mood of joyful involvement", "absorption" and "hypersensitivity" (Spinoza et al 1997). Rather than understanding entrepreneurship in terms of an opportunity to be taken by the rationally choosing entrepreneur acting on mental representations, there is in this stream of thinking an interest in the process that *takes* the (future) entrepreneur: entrepreneurship is a capture, a 'being grasped' – pleasurable and painfully inescapable at once.

Clearly, this challenges the model of rationally calculated individual – and moves the attention to the relational forces at play and to the bodily capacity for pleasure, enjoyment and capture. Rather than being a matter of separating oneself from the situation in order to return with a new mental representation *of* it, (entrepreneurial) possibility becomes related to the bodily capacity to be drawn into something, to be attracted, immersed and enjoyed. The working of forces beyond the control or prediction of a mind is here the source possibility itself rather than only a problem to be handled. This also opens up a new understanding of academic work as embodied practice, emphasizing the role of senses in research (Strati 2007; Pink 2009), and sensory pleasure as a driver in academic practice (Bell and Sinclair 2014).

The concept of 'seduction' here becomes more ambiguous. While it carries connotations to that which restricts possibility (e.g. the bending of the Other's will for the purpose of personal gain or problematic gender categories), it also relates to the challenging of existing orders; it pertains the emergence of a fissure in that which has already been organized, related to the human capacity for immersion, capture and enjoyment.

While organization studies is more or less silent about how this potentially subversive event of affect occurs through the capacity of sensory organs, literature

and opera on the other hand are full of examples of the sensory and corporeal nature of affecting and being affected and how this changes the social context and what is possible in it. However, this is often treated in themes that are foreign to organization studies such as 'seduction' or 'love' (Tasselli 2018). In the current context of re-introducing the corporeal and the senses in organization studies, such literary explorations may help us gain a more fine grained and nuanced conceptualization of the event of affecting/ being affected, which takes into account - rather than excludes – our capacity for sensory immersion and enjoyment in the theorization of how possibility emerges.

Seduction and the erotic ear

An extensive elaboration on the theme of seduction can be found in Søren Kierkegaard's (double-pseudonym) Either-Or, a collection of letters from the ethicist, judge Vilhelm to his younger friend 'A', whose aesthetic, poetically fashioned essays make up the first part of the work. Here we find the famous 'The Seducer's Diary', but also the less exposed essay *The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic*, an exuberant and lively praise of Mozart's opera Don Giovanni, which is the one I will focus on here. The opera's name of course refers to the main character - an epitome of a womanizer (about whom it is said that he has seduced 1003 in Spain!), built on the Spanish legend of Don Juan. However, a point running through Kierkegaard's (or his pseudonym A's) treatment of the opera, is that this is not an opera about a seducer, but about *seduction*. Don Giovanni is not *a* seducer, he is the musical embodiment of the (excluded) sensuality that breathes all life:

> Don Giovanni constantly hovers between being idea - that is to say, energy, life - and individual. But this hovering is the vibrance of music. (…) Don Giovanni is an image that constantly appears but gains neither form nor substance, an individual who is constantly being formed but not finished, of whose life history one can form no more definite an

> impression than one can by listening to the tumult of the waves. (Kierkegaard 1992, 86)

To Kierkegaard, the *ear* is the sensory organ that most directly connects us to this force: by listening to Don Giovanni, we hear the energy of sensuality as it carries itself through with the insisting strength that comes from being excluded. In Mozart's Don Giovanni, the sensuous is conceived as pure process, before it is taken into the sphere of conscious reflection and language. Don Giovanni is in that sense not an individual (that would make the number of 1003 comic, as Kierkegaard points out), because "(t)o conceive the sensual in an individual is impossible". In order to be *a* seducer he "lacks shrewd circumspection". Don Giovanni has no such self- reflective strategic capacity, his life is "effervescent like the wine with which he fortifies himself" (Kierkegaard 1992, 93).

However, this pre-individual force of sensuality cannot be expressed by "the power of words" for it is "inexpressible in reflection and thought" (Kierkegaard 1992, 93). To Kierkegaard, music - more than any other medium - expresses the immediate non-reflective sensuality, and it is therefore the only medium that can express Don Giovanni. We must therefore listen to Don Giovanni to grasp him ("if you cannot get an idea of Don Giovanni by listening to him, you will never get one" (Kierkegaard 1992, 94)). As soon as one tries to add precision to his appearance in front of our gaze, imagine how he looks, what he wears, his age etc., one loses Don Giovanni; it all then drifts into the sphere of an individual, a stable picture graspable in language and reflective thought. Through the erotic capacity of the ear however, one does not hear *what* he says, one hears his voice, its tension, the vibrant sensuality, the infinite longing; one hears the inexhaustible multiplicity of life itself:

> Hear how he plunges into life's diversity, how he dashes himself against its solid dam, hear these light, dancing tones of the violin, hear the beckoning of joy, hear the excultation of desire, hear the festive bliss of enjoyment; hear his wild flight, he hurries past himself, ever faster, ever more impetuously;

> hear the murmur of love, hear the whisper of temptation, hear the swirl of seduction, hear the stillness of the moment - listen, listen, listen, to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. (Kierkegaard 1992, 94-95)

Hence, Mozart's Don Giovanni is energy, force, acting seductively. His passion sets in motion the passion of others. It resonates everywhere, it is the life that breathes in the other characters, it is the pulsating sensuality through which all characters come alive, the fire that lights the whole drama of the opera. What is expressed in Don Giovanni is not a character then, a picturing of an individual, it is sensuality as a principle, a force, simultaneously locked out and created by Christianity.

However, it is through the erotic capacity of the ear, i.e. its receptivity to music as the immediate, non-reflective expression of sensuality, that we are connected to the generalized force of the flesh and senses. Music - being more abstract than any other media - is capable of articulating pure movement, and the erotic ear is capable of grasping this - not in the abstraction of reflection or thought - but in flesh, in the "concreteness of immediacy" (Kierkegaard 1992, 89). Thus the 'abstract' Kierkegaard talks about here is precisely not to be found in a platonic heaven of ideas and concepts elevated from the world's multiplicity, variation and flux; it is the immediate-sensuality, too infinite and too close to the skin to be captured in language and conscious reflection – but graspable in music due to the receptivity of the ear.

Thus, when Don Giovanni is expressed in music, we do not get to know a particular individual, we get to know the excluded force of sensuality – "the power of nature, the demonic, which as little tires of seducing, or is done with seducing, as the wind is tired of raging, the sear of surging, or a waterfall of cascading down from its height" (Kierkegaard 1992, 86). Like the cascading of the waterfall, Don Giovanni is in constant beginning, always ready - but at the same time also always finished. There is nothing emerging from this force,

nothing which takes on any degree of duration, only the momentary glimpses of pictures in the waves.

Hence, without being taken into the sphere of individuation, Giovanni's seductive capacity stays in a contourless momentariness; in the moment that it starts, it is also always already disappeared, like a tone struck. In that sense, the figure of Don Giovanni forms an anti-thesis to Kierkegaard's existential philosophy, emphasizing the special effort that individuation takes, the continuous struggle to become "oneself" (Bunch 2017; Raffnsøe, Dalsgaard and Gudmand-Høyer 2014): If such struggle of meaning and choice is removed, there is only contourless momentariness left; the social condition of possibility cannot emerge. However, A's enthusiasm to engage with Mozart's Don Giovanni may still be read as a critical commentary to western tradition through an affirmation of what it has 'othered': the sensous and fleshly positioned by Christianity as the negation of spirit and the othered sense of the ear.

Notably however, in Kierkegaard's Mozart essay this commentary takes the form of a literary rather than a philosophical text. One could even argue that the enemy *is* philosophy (Hannay 1992, 16), to Kierkegaard most clearly (but not only) expressed in Hegel's thinking framed by ideas of system and mediation. In this battle, the weapon becomes literary and sensory rather than philosophical and reason based (Hannay 1992, 17). Rather than relying on assertive arguments, Kierkegaard sets out to appeal to the reader's sensitivity and to create auditory receptivity at the reader. He even states: "When I have brought the reader to the point of being musically receptive enough to seem to hear the music although hearing nothing, I have completed my task, I make myself mute, I say to the reader as to myself: listen!" (Kierkegaard 1992, 82-83).

However, in the context of organization, we are interested in how the returning force of the excluded sensuality may be creative of a collective space, productive of something outside force itself. To pursue this interest, I will here

turn to another treatment of seduction by a later country(wo)man of Kierkegaard, who was not happy with the absence of female voices in Kierkegaard's texts and the one-sidedness with which women are depicted in relation to seduction (Bunch 2017, 109). The name is Isak Dinesen - a male pseudonym for the female Danish author Karen Blixen (1885-1962). In her authorship, she created not one, but several variations of female (as well as male) seducers or catalysers of seduction, one of which we shall now turn to.

The erotic ear and the poisonous tongue

Blixen's short story, *Babette's feast* (Dinesen 2013), also plays on the opera theme of Mozart's Don Giovanni, although more subdued and variating its theme. Like Mozart's music itself (Bennett 2016), the story allows an entanglement of the artful and the mundane, of the 'high' and 'low' (Bennett 2016, 182), and enables the nature of the characters' otherness to be gradually realised.

The story takes us to a strictly religious Christian community in a remote Norwegian village, once led by a dean, but now the two mild daughters of the late dean, Martine and Philippa, have devoted their lives to keep together the community and to serve God, which in their faith implies abstaining from pleasures of the senses and flesh. One evening a French refugee, Babette, who has fleed from the fighting around the Paris Commune, knocks on the door, bringing a letter that asks the two sisters to take care of Babette and assures them that she can cook. The next fourteen years Babette then lives in the sisters' house; she is carefully instructed in how to cook meals in accordance with the frugal lifestyle in the village, where food is genuinely seen as something, which should be separated from the sense of taste. Over the years, Babette becomes a trusted and highly valued housekeeper, renowned in the entire village.

One day however, she unexpectedly wins 10.000 Francs and insists on – just for this once - cooking a French meal according to her own standards as a

celebration of the late dean's 100-anniversary. The two sisters reluctantly accept and with some anxiety warn the villagers, who "now saw the French dinner coming upon them' as 'a thing of incalculable nature and range" (Dinesen 2013, 45). In the village, the tongue is seen as the most demonic of all sensory organs, guilty of temptation and intoxication and leading astray the faithful life: 'The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison' (Dinesen 2013, 47). Hence, the villagers adopt a strategy in order to avoid being affected by this strange and incalculable French meal: They agree to be silent upon all matters of food and drink during the meal; whatever may be set before them, it should not wring a word from their tongues.

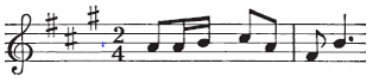
As the night progresses and one extraordinary dish after another is served together with the best wines in the world, the villagers, while being genuinely unaware of what they are eating and drinking – nonetheless affected, intoxicated and transformed by it – gradually open up to sensations and relations that have been forgotten or negated. It turns out that in the village, friendships and love have gradually been replaced by quarrels and conflict among the community members, but this evening the villagers somehow recover their joy and desire to be together. The extraordinary food remains completely uncommented though – with one exception: general Loewenhielm who arrives from Stockholm and is not part of the agreement. The meal makes his thoughts go back to Paris' finest restaurant, once headed by an unusual chef (a woman who could turn a meal into a "love affair (Dinesen 2013, 58)"), who it appears towards the end of the story, was Babette herself.

Thus, on the evening of Babette's feast the guests are seduced. They are led away from the vow they have given each other, which is not simply about not *talking* about food, but about keeping the body unaffected. They have given each other a promise to be tasteless: "(w)e wil cleanse our tongues of all taste and

purify them of all delight or disgust of the senses"[1]. But as the night progresses, the senseless tongues live up and awakens for talk: "Usually in Berlevaag, people did not speak much while they were eating. But somehow this evening tongues had been loosened" (Dinesen, 2013, 56).

The return of the othered flesh

Like in Kierkegaard's text, we here find the split between flesh and spirit as a condition of seduction; however here the othered flesh returns in another sensory mode. Babette's arrival to the village is namely in a certain way a return of the rejected erotic ear. We are hinted at this by the letter that Babette holds in her hand, when she arrives to Martine and Philippa's front door. At the bottom of the letter is written two bars



representing the theme from the duet where Don Giovanni tries to win Zerlina by appealing "*la ci darem la mano*" (there I'll give you my hand), also known as the seduction duet. It turns out that the letter is written by the French opera singer Achille Papin, who many years ago visited the village and one day was drawn into church (by his romantic nature, as Blixen says). Here he meets Philippa who sings for church services. Papin indeed has the capacity of an erotic ear: when listening to Philippa's voice 'in one single moment, he knew and understood all' (Dinesen 2013, 29). The (once so famous) opera singer takes on Philippa as a pupil and gives her the part of Zerlina in Mozart's opera Don Giovanni, while he himself

[1] Babette's feast was first written in English and then rewritten in Danish by Blixen. This sentence appears slightly different in the Danish version, hinting at the senses as something we have been given: 'Men det skal blive som om smagens evne aldrig var givet dem' [But it will be as if the ability of taste was never given to them]. Karen Blixen: Skæbneanekdoter/ Babettes Gæstebud, 1958/2005, p. 50, Gyldendal. .

sings Don Giovanni's part. The theme culminates in the duet of second act, after which he seizes Philippa's hands, "drew her towards him and kissed her solemnly" (Dinesen 2013, 31). After the kiss however, Philippa went strictly home and told her father that she did not want any more singing lessons – scared, Blixen lets us know, by this experience of the body's openness, its readiness to be affected, deemed as the sinful 'other' of a faithful life. Papin leaves the village and returns to Paris.

In Babette's feast then, we meet 'the othered' flesh in a number of ways: the erotic ear, the foreign meat (a turtle), the uncontrollable tongue, the refugee in all her corporeality – once a renowned head chef, but now arriving as the wild and hunted 'other' of civilization. Blixen describes how she arrives to the front door of the sister's house "wild-eyed like a hunted animal" (Dinesen 2013, 35, a "massive, dark, deadly pale woman" (Dinesen 2013, 32). Babette's excellent meal is the return of a chance to receive the strange, uncontrollable or incalculable that has been locked out, at first anxieously sensed by the sisters who by witnessing Babette's preparations "now saw the French dinner coming upon them, a thing of incalculable nature and range" (Dinesen 2013, 45). A tortoise with "a snakelike head" and "monstrous in size and terrible to behold" (Dinesen, 2013, 46), becomes the tangible expression of this strange dinner – a flesh so foreign and almost demonic to the villagers that the whole event seems for Martine to take on the character of "a witches' sabbath" (Dinesen 2013, 46). She even dreams Babette poisons the guests.

However, with Babette's generous meal, carefully speaking to the sense of taste, something emerges - a readiness to be moved beyond preconceived decisions or mental models of the event. Hence, with Babette's feast Blixen gives us a narrative description of how a space to receive that which has been 'othered' in a specific organized context may emerge through a sensory path. At the same time, the story lets us understand how that which has been 'othered' is not gone.

We understand how times and places that have been given up and left behind in the characters' lives are nevertheless real and may return and become actualized in the sensory, relational experience of the meal. Babette's meal does not only actualize the refugee's unknown past as a head chef in Paris – at that time centre of the emergence of gastronomy as a field far away from the frugal diet in the village - but also reopens a sensory path to relations and sensations that have been marginalized in the guests' lives.

Like in the opera of Don Giovanni, 'seduction' here expresses the force of the 'othered flesh', when it carries itself through with the strength it has gained from being excluded. However an important difference between Mozart's opera and Babette's feast is that in the latter this force opens up a collective space in the already organised place, a new field of relation. By means of an aesthetic capacity appealing to the senses, Babette's meal wakes up the capacity of the tongue: It is through the tongue's receptivity, i.e. the sensory capacity to not only perceive but also enjoy (Strati 2007), that the readiness to be moved beyond any prior decision not to be, is awakened; the carefully prepared meal speaks to the body's radical openness through – what the villagers with a bible reference call – the unruly, poisonous tongue (Dinesen 2013, 47). Poison is, we know, a substance capable of affecting a living organism, spreading inside, transforming the whole body, possibly deadly. The tongue is unruly, uncontrollable, in how its aesthetic (enjoying/repellent) receptivity to substances may affect the whole body. It is beyond the control of a mind's preconceived plans or mental models of the event. We cannot decide or control how to be affected by taste. More than any other sense maybe, the sense of taste subverts, it sneaks in and transforms without permission. It affects beyond control and therefore leaves us in vulnerability.

Although Babette, who spends all her money on the meal, is generous in the everyday sense of generosity, Babette's meal is not acknowledged as an act of giving, neither by the giver, who states at the end of the story that she did not do it

for them but as an artist who must give herself over to the world - *nor* by the receivers, who did not realize what they were receiving or recognize it as a gift. Rather, it affirms a silent mode of given*ness*. Hence, Babette is not *a* seducer in the sense of having a deliberate strategy to cheat the villagers into fleshly pleasure and intoxication. She is rather an artist - as stated by herself towards the end of the story - committed *and* deemed to otherness; it is her aesthetic capacity insisting on expressing itself that acts seductively.

Towards an organizational research agenda of openness to otherness

In contrast to Mozart's Don Giovanni, who eventually must leave (sentenced to death), Babette stays in the village, something of duration emerges: an event, disclosing a space of openness to 'otherness', to what has been excluded, which in itself is only possible because Babette has been received by the villagers many years ago, arriving to the village as the corporeal 'othered'. As a refugee (wildeyed, a hunted animal), she was taken inside the sisters' home, her physical needs were taken care of, she was given food and housing, just as she took care of the sisters' physical needs by helping them in their daily life in the kitchen throughout the years. In that way, Babette's feast as an event relies on a fundamental recognition of the corporeal presence of 'the other' in mundane daily life.

Thus, the event of seduction in Babette's feast announces the return of the force of the excluded flesh becoming active. However, in contrast to Don Giovanni it both lives from and affirms generosity as a more fundamental condition of human life, what Rosalyn Diprose (2002) drawing on Levinas (1969), call radical generosity, "a giving of myself that I do not choose, a movement toward the other that does not return to itself the same" (Diprose 2002, 141; Levinas 1969). To Diprose this (a priori) generosity is genuinely corporeal: it is through the other's presence in space that we are moved to think and respond

and thus recognize the self; thus, it is to the other's alterity that we both owe *and* give our "sensibility, interiority and autonomy in the first place" (Diprose 2002, 139). Radical generosity is the inevitable giving over of our self-possession; when we meet the other in space we cannot choose not to open up our bodies to the perceptive processes in other, to their sensory receptivity. Acknowledging generosity as a fundamental human condition leads Diprose to a more specific concept of generosity, summarized by Hancock as a "corporeal, pre-reflective and thus aesthetic openness to the radical Other" (2008, 1368). This generosity "involves a mode of givenness, and therefore recognition of and by the self, that is not calculated and, as such, expects no reciprocation or symmetry of exchange" (ibid.).

Seducing the guests by means of an aesthetic capacity that affects beyond any deliberate decisions or preconceived mental models of the event they were to become part of, Babette's feast opens up a space to embrace this human condition of radical generosity and intensifies receptivity to 'otherness'. Hence, whereas Don Giovanni cannot produce anything but momentary creatures in the waves, in Babette's feast the excluded flesh (in various forms: the refugee in corporeality, the erotic ear, the snakelike meat, the receptive tongue) returns and becomes productive as a *social* force, disclosing a new collective space and creating a sense of possibility that reaches beyond existing life, condensed by Loewenhielm at the end of the story: "For tonight I have learned dear sister, that in this world anything is possible" (Dinesen 2013, 62).

Seduction then – rather than being simply a deceitful bending of the Other's will for the sake of personal gain or satisfaction – is here the event of the returning force of sensuality, when it affirms the fundamental givenness of human life and becomes productive of an atmosphere in which a belonging to the Other emerges and opens up a sense of possibility through a sensory path to 'othered' times and places. Thus, we here arrive to a more ambiguous concept of seduction

that pertains the corporeality, which has been driven to the margin in an organized context: the concept of 'seduction' then belongs to the times and contexts where the force of the excluded flesh returns and becomes active as a force of attraction that elicits movement. It reminds us that, what has been othered is not gone, but always may haunt us and unavoidably leave us vulnerable; but it also reminds us that this is the source of possibility itself: There is always more; whether we plan to or not, there is always a chance that we may meet the excluded or marginalized again in ways that may force us to go beyond present limits, to think from anew. However, it may be in completely other contexts and in other perceptional modes than we have imagined or anticipated.

While process theory has taught us to think of change as immanent rather than a linear progress (Chia 1999), i.e. as a constant 'ballooning' always containing all preceding past events in it, Blixen's story reminds us of the immanence of possibility. But it also reminds us of the centrality of the senses in relation to the emergence of this possibility. In other words, studying possibility in an organized context requires a sensitivity to how openness to 'othered' times and places emerges through sensory receptivity and aesthetic capacity. Massumi (2002, 225f) has already reminded us that the condition of possibility does not lie in causal processes in-between stimulus-response (like classical cause linearly connecting cause and effect), but in a relational causality that implies a sensitive-affective in-between where a bias, a surplus, may flow into the process and create conditions for newness.

With Blixen we can thus add that 'possibility', the openness of situations in an organized context, lives from sensory openness; it lives from that which subverts and affects beyond habit and preconceived ideas or mental models, that which sneaks in without permission, i.e. from our vulnerabilty - and hence calls for an ethics of openness to otherness (Diprose 2002). Importantly, this does not imply a mere acceptance, but can in an organizational context be understood as a

responsibility for the embodied Other in all its 'aesthetic particularity' (Hancock 2008, 1364). However, this centring of the corporeal encounter also has consequences for research method, which I will address in the next section .

Towards an organizational scholarship of the othered senses

While Kierkegaard points out that it takes an 'erotic ear' to hear the play of forces in the overture of Don Giovanni, we could ask how we can nurture the erotic ear of the researcher, sensible to the play of forces in organizational life? What would a scholarship open to the erotic capacity of the ear and tongue look and feel like? Importantly, 'erotic' is not here to be confused with 'sexual'. As a commodified and dominant norm, the latter narrows the space of the former, maybe particularly for women (Bell and Sinclair 2014). Instead, 'erotic' would here be about creating knowledge from the experience of being bodily moved in a way which makes room for care and consideration as well as pleasure. This would be grounded in the tradition of participatory research where the researcher "immerses her or himself in the sound and the fury of the social world" (Bell and Sinclair 2014, referring to Wacquant, 2004, vii), meaning that the body "is not seen as an object to generate knowledge about', but instead as 'a tool of inquiry, a wellspring of knowledge" (ibid.).

However, this has consequences for data collection as well as for academic writing. When we as researchers make interviews and observations at a research site, we do not only see and hear things, we also sense ourselves alive, we are moved by them in a particular way. In other words, there is a dynamic, relational side of perception (Massumi 2002), related to an aesthetic capacity to not only perceive but also enjoy (Strati 2007). Making observations and interviews is not simply seeing and hearing, but listening and beholding from our (syn)aesthetic capacity to taste, scent, feel. However, in a simple documentation of what happens by transcripts or video, this immediate sensuality of the experience, and the way

we are moved by it, is lost. A Dictaphone, videorecorder or camera does not reproduce this relational dynamic side of perception.

While the bias towards representational epistemology in research has been widely critiqued in organization studies, we have maybe not gone far enough when it comes to taking the consequence of this point in relation to data collection and analysis. It would here be a question of revising the whole idea of empirical material rather than only a matter of the limitations of certain documentation methods. This would imply taking further Sarah Pink's (2009) emphasis on the interconnectedness of senses and the embodied nature of the researcher's relating to research material. From the attention to this point, Pink reminds us that reviewing observation notes as well as videos, photographs or drawings, doesn't necessarily mean that vision has to be given primacy over other senses, since such data can create routes to multi- sensorial knowing at play in the observation situation. Thus, instead of thinking of analysis as a matter of treating data that represent the observed situations, we may think of analysis as a new encounter (now between researcher and data), which provokes a reliving of the multi-sensory aspects of the research encounter at the empirical site after it has happened. This implies an evocative rather than representative role of data: since the senses are interrelated, observation data can be a path into the multisensory experience of the situation (Pink 2009), and to the bodily experience of being moved.

However, treating analysis as an embodied encounter where the experience of being moved is re-evoked, has consequences for academic writing. Writing with an erotic ear would here mean writing with the capacity to listen from within the embodied experience of movement, and thereby, like Kierkegaard, creating auditory receptivity at the reader. This is about evoking readers' already embodied experience relevant to the theme in question, related to

what Shotter (2010) calls withness-talk, and hence opening up a path in the activity of reading to othered times and places.

Indeed, listening is inherently about otherness and openness to be affected. Koskinen and Lindström have reminded us that listening inherently involves "the creation of a space to receive that which is difficult, different and the radically strange, to allow the alterity of the other to resonate" (2013, 147). In that sense, it involves a readiness to be moved; that is, to become other and by doing so, to be open to the other's otherness (Koskinen and Lindström 2013; Shotter 2009). Thus, the ear is all about openness and vulnerability; it is unshuttable (Strati 2007), an opening that "generously stays open, without the eye's privilege of having a lid that shuts" (Hjorth et al 2018, 161).

In terms of academic writing, this would also imply some resistance to the pressure to define and categorize, inherent in academic formats. These tend to encourage authors to emphasize the firm and unambiguous, and predispose texts to constantly run in front of the reader and point out contributions and implications. Writing would instead imply leaving room for tarrying in the inexplicable and vague, which otherwise tends to be absorbed into generalised descriptions and averaged out themes. Academic writing then, would imply a strive to create a relational dynamics in the text, which makes space for invitation and response and not only for claiming and concluding. This would all be about seduction – not in the sense of bending the Other's will for the sake of personal gain, but in the sense of creating conditions for sensing the 'otherness' of the world as an inviting nextness - a feeling of potential in the resonance of the Other's otherness, which makes room for pleasure as well as care and consideration.

Conclusion: Seduction, organization and the othered senses

In this paper, I have attended to that which organization studies has 'othered' in its emergence as a discipline related to business and management – and thereby left to the field of art, literature and music. The mainstream focus of organization studies on deliberate, wilful actors and change as externally imposed has tended to marginalise the attention to how acting emerges from our capacity to be sensually immersed in context. Relatedly, entrepreneurship studies has traditionally focused on how the knowing and choosing actor spot and grasp an opportunity rather than the process of being grasped, seduced *by* it.

However, in the stream of process thinking, which has gained increasing attention in organization and entrepreneurship studies, dominating assumptions on deliberate, rationally choosing actors have been fundamentally challenged. In this context, the human capacity to be captured, attracted and grasped beyond preconceived mental representations or wilful plans becomes theoretically interesting in relation to grasp the emergence of the new in an already organized context. Hence, literary explorations of seduction and sensory openness become relevant in relation to seize a different conception of possibility. Rather than assuming that this is about separating oneself from the situation in order to return with a new mental representation *of* it, literary investigations remind us of the human capacity to be *drawn* into something, to be attracted, immersed and enjoyed as a wellspring of newness. In this context, the sensory capacity, working beyond the control or prediction of a mind, is also a potential source of possibility and not only a problem to be handled. However, this draws the attention to the entanglement of possibility and vulnerability and calls for an ethics of openness to otherness - a responsibility for the corporeal Other. Secondly, it has consequences for research method. In this paper, I have therefore discussed the possibility of moving towards an organizational scholarship of the othered senses, which makes room for care and consideration as well as pleasure and capture. This would imply

revising the notion of empirical material as representative. Relatedly, it would imply understanding empirical analysis as an embodied encounter in which the multisensory and aesthetic experience of being moved is re-evoked. Academic writing here becomes a matter of writing from within this experience of being bodily moved, evoking readers' already embodied experience relevant to the theme in question. We may here find great inspiration in Kierkegaard's strive to create auditory receptivity at the reader, and Blixen's attention to the tongue's capacity to re-evoke 'othered' times and places.

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Deformed, Neanderthal, and Thoroughly Alien
Exploitation of the Other in Asimov's "Ugly Little Boy"

Sara Schotland

In Isaac Asimov's short story "Ugly Little Boy" (1958), an ambitious scientist imports a Neanderthal boy from the past, who is physically repellant. Initially, Dr. Hoskins values Timmie and markets the success of his time-transgressing experiment. However, the amount of energy that the lab has available to overcome time constraints and successfully import individuals from the past is very limited. When a more recent and more profitable specimen from the Middle Ages becomes available, Dr. Hoskins decides that the opportunity costs of keeping Timmie in this world are too high. Timmie is enclosed in a time machine that will hurl him back to Neanderthal times; or, more likely, to his doom.

Timmie as a Neanderthal is the ultimate alien: he belongs to another time and place; he is not only exotic but extraterritorial; in body, behavior, and species, he is so different and strange as to challenge our imagination. Timmie is exploited in multiple ways. First, Timmie is exhibited on television as a freak to enhance the lab's reputation and profit. Second, Timmie is subject to painful laboratory experiments that could not be performed on a boy recognized as fully human.

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Finally, Timmie is, by virtue of his origin, an outcast; like a migrant worker he is cast out when his labor is no longer valued.

Admittedly, it is difficult to prove that reading fiction translates into empathy for others encountered in everyday life (Keen 2006). However, outsider narratives provide a vicarious experience of a life lived on the margins, subject to the customs and laws of a dominant culture to which one does not fully belong. Minorities, the poor, individuals with disabilities, and immigrants live in borderlands where they are sometimes accepted and other times degraded as less than human, less than equal. Asimov's story is the ultimate outsider narrative; Timmie could not be more alien, while still belonging to the genus Homo.

What can we learn from this cultural representation of a Neanderthal? What does this story contribute to the understanding of Otherness? This essay uses Asimov's story as a springboard to important issues/challenges faced by those whose body or origin mark them as anomalous. First, individuals with deformities and non-normative appearance continue to face stigma and discrimination. Employment opportunities are limited for dwarfs and other individuals with anomalous bodies (Gollust 2003). Aversion to the anomalous body may be instinctive but the exhibition of such as individual as a "freak" represents a degrading social construction. While circus side shows are now rare, the freak show continues to thrive on television, where viewers are invited to stare and gawk at those with extraordinary bodies (Backstrom 2012).

Second, as an "Other" – powerless, vulnerable, and allegedly subhuman – Timmie is subject to painful experimentation. Throughout history, test subjects have been drawn from the poor elements of the population, from prisoners, or from despised minorities (National Commission, Belmont Report 1979). Today in many foreign countries desperate individuals engage in kidney sales; while sometimes defended as an autonomous choice, it is poverty that is the decision-maker.

Third, as a Neanderthal "import," Timmie has no rights to stay in the laboratory, comparable to the many foreign workers today who are employed in the U.S. without documentation or on temporary work visas that can be terminated at will when the employer no longer has use for the immigrant's services (Apgar 2015). As illustrated by the Mexican Bracero worker program, the United States has a history of inviting guest workers on temporary visas to perform hard work that other Americans do not wish to do and then terminating these foreign workers abruptly when their labor is no longer valued (Hazelton 2017). In addition, the United States hosts many undocumented workers and asylum applicants; these immigrants are expelled (deported) with scant concern for their safe return (Beltrán 2019).

Can this exploitation be overcome? The nurse whom Dr. Hoskins hires to watch over Timmie exemplifies the moral philosophy we have come to call Care Ethics. Nurse Fellowes comforts the lonely child, civilizes his savage behavior, and teaches him to talk and read. By entering into a devoted relationship with Timmie, the Nurse becomes a mother figure. Nurse Fellowes's nurturing care of Timmie contests, albeit unsuccessfully, his commercial exploitation. The story has no "happy ending" but Nurse Fellowes demonstrates that exploitation of the Other can be resisted.

Discrimination against the Anomalous Body

Stigmatizing those with Deformities.

In her landmark work, *Extraordinary Bodies*, Rosemarie Garland Thomson addresses "physically extraordinary" otherness, often conceptualized as "monstrosity," "deformation," "crippledness" or "physical disability (1996, 5). The meanings attributed to extraordinary bodies are socially constructed to privilege the individual who is able-bodied:

> Consequently, the meanings attributed to extraordinary bodies reside not in inherent physical flaws, but in social relationships in which one group is

> legitimated by possessing valued physical characteristics and maintains its ascendancy and its self-identity by systematically imposing the role of cultural or corporeal inferiority on others. (7)

Thomson coins the term "normate" as an imagined everyman figure who is set off in contrast to those with physical difference or other disabilities:

> The term normate usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings. Normate, then, is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them. (8)

This neologism is a special delight as it tags the able-bodied individual with a label that invites comparison with a "primate."

"Ugly Little Boy" is an excellent text with which to examine deformity and other physical anomalies as disabilities. Like Victor Frankenstein, Dr. Hoskins brings to life a physically repellant creature. Initially without language, education or acculturation, both Frankenstein's Creature and Timmie learn to read and to speak, claim identity as human beings, and reach out to form social bonds (Shelley 1993). But both Frankenstein's Creature and Timmie experience painful social rejection as a result of their extreme ugliness.

While Frankenstein's Creature begins by acting kindly, after a series of rejections from his creator and society, the Creature becomes a murderer. As Stephen Jay Gould writes: "Frankenstein's Creature becomes a monster because he is cruelly ensnared by one of the deepest predispositions of our biological inheritance — our aversion toward seriously malformed individuals" (1994, 20).

Nurse Fellowes's ability to overcome her instinctive aversion and to care for Timmie permits him to acquire speech, literacy, and sensitivity. She persuades Dr. Hoskins to provide Timmie with a playmate, the scientist's son. Jerry Hoskins, taunts Timmie about his ugliness and difference. Although not violent like Frankenstein's Creature, Timmie does react aggressively when Jerry calls him an "ape boy" (330). Timmie's response to Jerry's degrading epithet deprives

him of a playmate, and increases the isolation that Timmie feels, trapped alone in a laboratory bubble.

Jerry Hoskins torments Timmie by telling him about the kindergarten experience from which Timmie is excluded. It is a common trope in cyborg fiction that the protagonist aspires to be human. In Asimov's 1976 novella *Bicentennial Man,* an exceptionally talented robot is so determined to acquire the legal status of a human being that he makes the ultimate sacrifice: assuming mortality to show he is a man. The desire for inclusion is all the more poignant when a young cyborg seeks to be recognized as human child by his family and classmates. This is the theme of Brian Aldiss's short story "Supertoys Last All Summer Long" (2001).[1] David is a cyborg who fulfills the role of substitute son for a young couple whose human child is in a coma. After their human child recovers, the parents neglect David, who yearns to be a "real boy" and recipient of his mother's love. The salient difference in Asimov's story is that Timmie is not a cyborg; he belongs to the genus *homo,* although he is of a different species.

Too often, individuals with non-conforming bodies are subject to invidious discrimination and stigma. In his landmark work, Erving Goffman divides stigmas into three categories: (i) "abominations of the body—various physical deformities;" (ii) "blemishes of individual character" inferred from conditions such as "mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction" and other discredited behaviors; and (iii) "tribal" affiliation, such as "race, nation, and religion" (1963, 4). Applying Goffman's rubric, Timmie as an ugly Neanderthal with uncouth behavior is triply stigmatized.

Stigma demeans the other individual for the alleged negative attribute or difference. As Goffman explains:

[1] Aldiss's story was adapted by Stephen Spielberg as *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001). Cyborgs yearn to be humans in other films as well, including the replicant Rachel in *Blade Runner* (Scott 1982), the ultra-powerful robot girl in the Japanese anime *Metropolis* (Rintaro 2001), Spooner in *I Robot* (Proyas 2004), and Eva in *Ex Machina* (Garland 2015).

> While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind – in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap. (1963, 12)

When there is a discrepancy between "virtual identity" (attributed identity) and "actual identity" (felt identity), identity is "spoiled" (1963, 19). The stigmatized person may react to his or her perceived distance from the norm by experiencing shame or self-loathing. Stigma can sometimes be managed, at least where the discredited status is not permanent. Thus an individual who is illiterate can acquire a G.E.D., an individual who is obese or an alcoholic can manage diet or cease drinking. Stigma may sometimes be managed through "passing"; hiding a criminal record, concealing a non-visible disability or addiction; feigning a heteronormative sex life. Stigma can also be resisted. Individuals who have been stigmatized can fight back, individually or as a group. For example, an individual can show that he or she can fully perform jobs and social roles although they are on the autism spectrum, or that they can be trusted in the workplace and in business transactions although they have a criminal record. Undocumented students can show their potential through academic achievement. Groups may seek to educate the public to diminish stereotyping or seek legislative change by way of remediation. However, a child like Timmie cannot easily divest himself of his stigma: his deformity and unrelatable foreign origin are permanent, even if he can, through education, gain literacy and improve his behavior. Timmie's experience, the inability to overcome stigma, reflects reality for many individuals with severe physical deformity.

Lucy Grealy's aptly named *Autobiography of a Face* illustrates the effect of stigma on an individual who has repeatedly been mocked for her anomalous

appearance. After undergoing cancer surgery as a child that left her face severely disfigured, Lucy is cruelly taunted by other children: "Hey, girl, take off that monster mask—oops, she's not wearing a mask!" (1994, 115); "that is the ugliest girl I've ever seen" (124). Lucy begins to self-identify as a "freak." "I was my face. I was ugliness" (7). She avoids mirrors and other shiny surfaces that might reflect her face, and only "comes out" on Halloween. Her body determines her destiny, as she is the victim of prejudice and spoiled identity. While at the very end of the autobiography it appears that Grealy may have come to terms with her misshapen face, sadly for Grealy, physical scarring led to emotional scarring that never healed, and she died of a heroin overdose (S. Grealy 2004). The stigma was so powerful that deformity overdetermined her life.

Statutory Protections Against Discrimination are insufficient.

Until 50 years ago, deformity in the United States was not only a social stigma but punishable as a status crime. So-called "Ugly Laws" in effect in many U.S. cities from the 1880s until as late as the 1970s deemed it illegal for any person who is "diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed so as to be a disgusting or unsightly object" to "expose himself to public view" (Schweik 2010, 1-2).

While Ugly Laws no longer exist, employment discrimination based on physical appearance remains a significant concern. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) precludes discrimination in employment for individuals who are disfigured, for example through facial scarring, but not against those who are perceived by the employer as ugly or unattractive. Under the ADA, a person may fall within the definition of disabled in three alternate ways: "by having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities," having "a record of such an impairment," or "being regarded" as having such an impairment (42 U.S.C. §12102). The definition of "impairment" includes "cosmetic disfigurement" (29 C.F.R. §1632). The "regarded as" prong

protects individuals who are regarded and treated as though they have "an actual or perceived physical or mental impairment, whether or not that impairment substantially limits, or is perceived to substantially limit, a major life activity" ((29 C.F.R. §1630.2 (l)). Thus, a dwarf might be regarded as having a disability covered under the ADA even if there is no functional impairment associated with his or her short stature. In 2009, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission required that Extra Space Management, a storage facility, pay $95,000 in damages for firing a maintenance worker whose face was visually scarred. The employee's manager said that the worker was "handicapped, deformed or something" and "couldn't get the job done," yet, in fact, the maintenance worker had been efficiently performing his duties (EEOC 2009). Like other statutes, this legislation can be circumvented: for example, although the ADA applies to hiring decisions (as well as promotion and other terms of employment), on occasion prospective employees with perceived disabilities may improperly be culled at the call back stage.

"Lookism" is defined as "prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a appearance" (Warhurst *et al*. 2009, 133). Studies show that attractive people are more likely to be hired even for positions with no conceivable relationship to appearance, and are more likely to receive higher pay (Bardack and McAndrew 1985, Desrumaux, 2009, James 2008, Johnson 1981). The ADA does not provide sufficient protection against discrimination against lookism because an individual who presents an unattractive appearance in the eye of the employer does not have a covered disability. Most courts have held that obesity, even morbid obesity, is not covered under the ADA unless it results from an underlying physiological disorder or condition (Batcheller 2016). Advocates for reform have sought the adoption of civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of unattractive appearance (Adamitis 2000, Gumin 2012, Zakrzewski 2005). In the District of Columbia, the Human Rights Act prohibits appearance-based discrimination

(D.C. Code Ann. § 2-1402). To date, only a handful of communities have such laws. Thus, while an individual with a more significant bodily anomaly enjoys the legal protections of the ADA, individuals who are othered because of an appearance that an employer finds ugly are not.

Exploiting Stigmatized Bodies in "Freak Shows."

The lab puts Timmie on display for television cameras as a "freak" to court publicity and boost laboratory profit. Disability theorists such as Thomson and Robert Bogdan have drawn attention to the degrading display of anomalous bodies in circus side shows. Bogdan observes that a "freak" is not a person with a unique physical state, but rather a socially constructed status, conferred by the manner in which he or she is displayed to the public (1990, 35). Often the side show performer was subject to long working hours, indignities from spectators, and difficult working conditions. In this "exotic subgenre," the promoter appealed to the audience's interest in individuals from remote countries and in man's bestial origins (28-29).

Thomson points out that freak shows became popular at a time when "the emancipation of slaves and female suffrage confounded previously reliable indices of status and privilege;" accordingly, "onlookers needed to constantly reaffirm the difference between them and us" (1996, 65). In Barnum and Bailey's side show, disabled black men were displayed under the title "What Is It?"

> Barnum's advertising poster challenged onlookers to make the distinction: "Is it a lower order of MAN? Or is it a higher order of MONKEY? None can tell! Perhaps it is a combination of both." Billed as "missing links," the "What Is It?" figures complemented after midcentury a growing interest in Darwinian distinctions between humans and gorillas. (69)

In Asimov's story, Timmy, who is mislabeled as an "ape boy," is similarly stigmatized as simian and a "missing link."

Today's freak show has shifted from the circus tent to the television screen where it is thriving.[2] Elizabeth Grosz focuses on the question why it is that the freak show was and remains such an important part of the cultural scene. What is the fascination of the freak? Grosz's insight is that the normate viewer needs the freak to confirm his or her identity and to confirm that they belong to "a proper social category" (1996, 65). The viewer must eject or expel from his self-image any resemblance to the monstrous being. The viewer fastens on the freak's difference in order to maintain the viewer's subjectivity and identity. Building on Thomson's observation of the popularity of the circus freak show at a time when white male identity/male supremacy was challenged by emancipation and suffrage (1996, 6), we may wonder whether those Americans who are insecure about race, social, and economic status find reassurance in their supposed physical superiority to individuals who have odd bodies.

For example, in 2008, BBC Television featured a *Missing Top Model* competition. While the series highlighted the beauty of women with missing limbs, there was a voyeuristic aspect in that the contestants were displayed as oddities; their bodily difference was commercially exploited. Dwarfs also remain a popular subject, including reality television shows such as *Little People, Big World*, in which dwarf families leading ordinary lives are portrayed in empathetic and relatable fashion. On the other hand, mocking and derogatory portrayals remain, for example, in television commercials.

In the television series *Ruby*, a highly overweight woman is portrayed as if she were a drug or alcohol addict (Backstrom 2012, 700). Her excessive weight predetermines her life; she is unable to work and unable to maintain a successful romantic relationship. Such negative media portrayals stereotype morbidly obese individuals as lacking in self-discipline; the obese body is equated with ugliness,

[2] With the passing of Barnum and Bailey, only a few circuses continue to feature freaks in side shows, including the Jim Rose Circus and the Coney Island Circus side show (Adams 2001).

moral failure, and poor impulse control (692). Apart from reality shows, telethons also function as a latter day freak show; viewers stare at "exceptional bodies to establish the supposed truth of the ordinary" (Thomson 2005, n.p.)

Timmie's exploitation is especially problematic. At least in circus freak shows and TV reality shows, performers are paid (although often paid quite poorly). If adult, the freak show performer has consented to display his or her physical difference. No one asks Timmie if he wishes to be exhibited; as a small child he is not competent to decide, and he has no legal representative. While some television shows can reduce stigma against those with anomalous bodies by showing them living meaningful, well-rounded lives, it is clear that Timmie will be subject to a demeaning gaze, mocked, and derided. Unlike the model who is missing a limb, yet nonetheless beautiful and popular, Timmie will be reduced to his ugliness, strangeness, and monstrosity. David Gerber emphasizes the exploitation of many performers, and argues that participation in the freak show is rarely truly voluntary. For Gerber, consent is not the same as choice: "One makes a free choice not only when one is uncoerced, but also when one has a significant range of meaningful choices" (2008, 42).

Here again, Asimov's story highlights a current reality faced by many individuals with anomalous bodies. Under conditions of economic duress, there is no free choice. Dwarf tossing is a highly controversial circus stunt. The Little People of America has condemned it as an odious exploitation; defenders, including participants, argue that given the reality of lesser earning potential, little people should have the freedom to use their bodies in this fashion should they choose to do so. Similarly, many within the Little People community are forced to participate in athletic stunts which focus on their bodily anomaly. An example is the television series *Half-Pint Brawlers*, featuring "midget wrestlers."

Vulnerability of Individuals Othered as Subhuman to Experimental Testing

In speculative fiction, the bodies of marginalized individuals are often abused and exploited. For example, in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, the master genetic engineer Crake explains that the human subjects for his experimental sterilization pills come "from the poorer countries. Pay them a few dollars, they don't even know what they're taking. …Whorehouses. Prisons. And from the ranks of the desperate, as usual" (2003, 296). In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), clones are created as donors to provide organs for their fully human counterparts. When the clones reach their early 20s their bodies are harvested for organs through a series of surgeries. Before the clones are 30, they are sacrificed. The clones give their short "almost" lives so that "real humans" can live longer. The 2010 film version effectively portrays treatment of the clones as sacrificial animals: the corpse of a sensitive and intelligent female clone is tossed into the garbage after she has made her final donation.

In Asimov's story, Timmie is exploited as if he were an experimental animal. When Nurse Fellowes objects to the regime of needles, injections, and disgusting diet, she is told that the testing is ethical because the boy is not human (1990, 316); by contesting Timmie's biological identity, the lab implicitly recognizes that it is violating ethical duties owed to human subjects. Like a used-up experimental animal, Timmie is "sacrificed" at the end, by being sent back through time—no reader would bet on his safe arrival back in the Neanderthal world. [3]

By describing Timmie as being "on the edge of being human" and classifying him as an "ape boy," Dr. Hoskins seeks to evade ethical responsibility (1990, 313). In H.G. Wells's classic novella, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, a "mad scientist" performs painful vivisection experiments on wild animals. Dr. Moreau teaches the Beast Folk to act like men -- walking on two feet, abstaining from

[3] Together with Robert Silverberg, Asimov collaborated on a novel adapting "Ugly Little Boy" with very significant changes (1993). Among other significant plot and thematic differences, a *Child of Time* recounts the boy's return to the Neanderthal period.

meat, worshiping Dr. Moreau as if he were a god, and chanting the litany "Are we not men?" (2005, 57).

However, Neanderthals like Timmie are (or were) members of the genus *Homo*. Anthropologists tell us that Neanderthals occasionally mated with our *sapiens* species, and in fact have a somewhat larger brain capacity (Harari 2015, 14-15). Far from being simple-minded, they were versatile, adaptable, and developed sophisticated survival strategies (Finlayson 2004, 129-30). While GEICO made a splash with a television commercial advertising that their website was so simple to access that "even a cave man could do it" (Martin, 2004), the true Neanderthal was anything but stupid.

In a provocative article, "Mad Scientists/Impossible Humans," Andrew Bartlett argues that sympathy for cyborg suffering is misplaced:

> ...[T]he harder we try to humanize the impossible humans in the Frankenstein myth, the more injustice we do them. Let Shelley's Wretch be the wretch he uniquely is, let the Beast People be beast people, let the robots be robots and replicants be replicants. They speak to us from a place we cannot go on the other side of the tragic curtain that separates their fate from ours. They speak to us, more specifically, from a nonhuman place that we could not wish to be. (2014, 19)

Bartlett deplores the "victimary thinking" that seeks to humanize these "impossible humans" in order to "enlarge our sympathy for them" (16). In contrast, Timmie is not a cyborg: he is a human, albeit of a different species. "Ugly Little Boy" provides an opportunity to assess discrimination against an individual with liminal status, whose humanity is challenged. Dr. Hoskins is able to get away with his experiments because Timmie is marginal, alone, without any advocate save for Nurse Fellowes.

Historically, test subjects have been drawn from minorities and other individuals who lack political, social, or economic power -- experimentation that would provoke outrage if practiced on an individual or group in the majority. "Ugly Little Boy" calls to mind Joseph Mengele's sadistic experiments with

individuals with physical or mental abnormalities. Responding to Nazi atrocities, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides that "no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation" (1966, Art. 7).

The United States has a sorry history of abuse of vulnerable humans in research experiments. In the notorious Tuskegee experiment, African Americans were enrolled in syphilis trials in the absence of informed consent, and tragically deprived of penicillin that would have cured their condition (Jones 1981). Between 1946 and 1953 researches from the United States and Guatemala subjected vulnerable Guatemalans to non-consensual experiments in which test subjects were also exposed to syphilis (Constantin 2018).

Timmie is involuntarily subjected to frightening experiments, prodded, probed, and fed disgusting diets (1990, 316). Nurse Fellowes protests that he is a human and that Dr. Hoskins has no right to treat him like a laboratory animal (316). Timmie is too young to advocate for himself and his only protector lacks the power to stop the excruciating testing. The short film version of *Ugly Little Boy* (1977) vividly illustrates Timmie's pain, as he writhes helplessly on a gurney while, horrified and helpless, Nurse Fellowes watches him suffer. In effect, Timmie is held as a prisoner with Dr. Hoskins in total control.

The Kefauver-Harris Amendments to the Federal Food and Drug Act (1962) encouraged the use of prisoners as subjects in pharmaceutical drug testing. By 1969, 85% of all new drugs were tested on prisoners (Hill 1994). In exchange for participation in pharmaceutical drug testing, inmates might be allowed favorable work schedules, more television, better food choices, or higher ratings in parole hearings. A report by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research condemned this practice. The Commission found that as a result of their status, prisoners consented to experiments that "persons better situated would ordinarily refuse," and that they

generally failed to benefit from improvements in medical care that accrued to the sponsoring company or society as a whole (1976, 7-8). As a result, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) drastically curtailed drug testing on prisoners (Hill 1994).

In 2006, the Institute of Medicine proposed ethical principles to govern future research on prisoners. These include a "risk-benefit approach" to allow prisoners to participate in cutting-edge drug trials and treatments particularly applicable to inmates. There is concern that such an approach could prioritize research that is deemed beneficial to society as a whole as opposed to the risks and benefits to individual program participants. Among the questions posed: Is prison confinement inherently coercive such that free choice is illusory? How do these recommendations address prisoners' principal health concerns given overcrowded conditions? Is the real motivation to round up participants to help pharmaceutical companies that face a shortage of volunteers? (Obasogie and Reiter 2010).

The policy issues are complex and beyond the scope of this essay; but provocative fiction such as Asimov's story helps sensitize us to the implications of subjecting prisoners to experimental therapies. General ethical guidelines may not suffice to protect individual prisoners' health and best interests.

The Neanderthal as Immigrant: Exploited and then Cast Out

Timmie's liminal status can be compared to that of an immigrant: Dr. Hoskins imported the boy across eons of time and then deported him when he was no longer useful. By analogy, Chinese workers were encouraged to enter the United States as coolies when needed to build railroads and work in mines in the 1860s. In 1882, the door slammed shut on Chinese immigrants and remained a formidable barrier for 60 years (Ngai 1998).

"Yellow peril" cartoons depicted Chinese "coolies" with distorted and grotesque features as if they were disfigured and subhuman (Tchen and Yeats 2014). Deformity was a social construction, based on the workers' racial difference, not bodily uniqueness. Timmie similarly has an anomalous body by parochial twentieth century Anglo-American standards, with no indication that his body would have been regarded as "ugly" by his peers.

In 1942, the United States brought in 100,000 Mexican Americans annually as seasonal agricultural workers. By the late 1950s, approximately 2.5 million braceros came to the United States legally. The program ended in 1963, because the public became aware of the horrific condition in which migrants were working and because of the adverse effects on domestic workers (Morgan 2004).

Under the Trump Administration, immigrants from the Northern Triangle seeking to cross the Mexican border in hopes of obtaining asylum have been kept in chain link fence pens– labeled by guards and detainees alike as "dog pounds" (Miroff 2019). When campaigning in 2015, President Trump referred to Mexicans at the border as "drug dealers and rapists." (Newkirk 2018). In 2017, he characterized these individuals as "animals" (ibid).

> They don't want to use guns because it's too fast and it's not painful enough. So they'll take a young, beautiful girl, 16, 15, and others, and they slice them and dice them with a knife because they want them to go through excruciating pain before they die." (ibid)

Xenophobic rhetoric dehumanizes and alienates the majority against the migrant in two ways: emphasizing his foreignness and his strangeness, alienating him from our sympathy and compassion.

In July 2019, the Trump Administration implemented a new rule that makes migrants who seek to enter the southern border ineligible to seek asylum if they pass through another country on the way to the United States. The Administration points out that under U.S. and international law, an alien is ineligible to seek asylum if he or she has removed to a "safe third country"

(Department of Justice 2019). Based on dangerous conditions that prevail in parts of Mexico and Guatemala, as well as administrative hurdles, the rule has been criticized. In the case of some migrants, who seek asylum to avoid severe persecution, a decision to expel threatens severe bodily or emotional harm, and for some, possibly even death (American Immigration Council 2019).

As a result of Timmie's alien status, he has no legal right to remain in Dr. Hoskins's lab and to continue to learn and develop his human capacity. Nor does he have the political power to do so. Dr. Hoskins's elimination of Timmie is based on numbers (lab economics), as is the Administration's action (the large numbers of asylum applicants). Dr. Hoskins ignores Nurse Fellowes's protests that Timmie's tribe may have relocated or no longer exist; even if he could be returned there is no assurance that they will recognize him (1990, 332). Timmie's forced return voyage is yet more hopeless, as he is expelled on a dangerous journey via uncertain technology to a destination which may no longer exist, much less welcome his return.

The Nurse's Efforts to Save Timmie: Care Ethics as a Corrective to Exploitation of the Other

I argue here that Nurse Fellowes's commitment to care for Timmie embodies the moral philosophy of Care Ethics, and contrasts with the decision by Dr. Hoskins, the prototypical "economic man," who carelessly sacrifices Timmie's life to enhance the fame and profitability of the lab. Care Ethics is a moral philosophy that elevates empathy over economics. Empathetic caregiving recognizes the deep obligation that we owe to protect vulnerable individuals and groups from harm (Gilligan 1982). Care practice involves "everything we do to help individuals to meet their vital biological needs, develop or maintain their basic capabilities, and avoid or alleviate unnecessary or unwanted pain and suffering" (Engster 2007, 28).

Ethicist Eva Kittay draws attention to the overvaluing of the fiction of independence: it is common to extol one's independence as a virtue when in fact no one would be alive without being cared for as an infant; at some point in one's life one will become again dependent on others for care (1999, xii-xiii). In fact it is *interdependence* that should be valued (1999, xiii). As originally formulated care ethics focused on caring for family members and close familiars, those whose needs we feel most compelled to meet, whom we are best positioned to attend to and serve (Noddings 1984, 46-47). However, care ethics has increasingly been invoked as a basis for the moral obligation to in the political arena and across borders (Tronto 1993, 145, 154; Robinson 2006, 21). Virginia Held states that "everyone must have been cared for as a child or would not be alive" (3); the shared experience implies that obligations of care ethics on a global scale (2005,158-89). Michael Sullivan advocates the extension of care ethics to immigration policy (2016, 263).

Care ethicists have vigorously debated whether care ethics is gendered: Are women more capable or willing than men to provide care to those in need? Many feminist ethicists argue that women are more able than men to offer dependent care by virtue of biology and their maternal role (Gilligan 1982, West 1999). Nel Noddings identifies a "maternal instinct" (2010 12) perhaps rooted in anthropological experience: in prehistoric times, children were more likely to survive when raised by mothers who gave them devoted care. As Eva Kittay observes, mothers of seriously disabled children will not neglect their duty of care even at great sacrifice (1999, 238). Other care ethicists reject type casting women as care givers when such a role may preclude more challenging or remunerative opportunities and perpetuate second class citizenship. It is argued that such essentialism assumes that all women must share their values and lifestyle. Critics suggest that it is sexist to imply that, on the one hand, women are destined to care

for dependents and, on the other, men lack empathy and devotion (McClain 1992).

The debate about the extent to which caring is a female duty is in fact distracting. Even if, historically, women have been more likely to assume the caregiving role, care ethics need not be grounded on biology: its justification is gender neutral. Daniel Engster posits the obligation to care on each individual's own need for care and the assumption of reciprocal responsibility to care for others in hopes and expectation of receiving such care when and as needed. Engster articulates a need based account of moral responsibility, a "minimal capability theory" (Engster 2007, 12). All human beings are dependent upon others to develop their basic capabilities, and that in receiving care, individuals tacitly and logically become obliged to care for others. Engster understands care as a set of practices that consist of attention, responsiveness, and respect.

In Asimov's story, care ethics is clearly gendered. In contrast to Victor Frankenstein, who abandons his ugly Creature on first sight, Dr. Hoskins initially assumes a qualified stewardship over Timmie. While Dr. Hoskins provides the child with a nurse, toys, and a playmate, he subjects Timmie to painful tests and unpalatable synthetic food. When Nurse Fellowes pleads with Dr. Hoskins to treat Timmie decently on the basis that the doctor is in effect Timmie's "father," he instantly rejects any such bond (1990, 322). His rejection of paternal responsibility contrasts with Nurse Fellowes's delight in accepting the maternal role. Ultimately, Dr. Hoskins abandons Timmie when a more sensational and marketable prodigy is revived from the Middle Ages. Timmie is discarded just as Dr. Hoskins had previously sent a superfluous rock back to Paleolithic times. Economics primes over empathy; power overcomes care.

From multiple perspectives, Nurse Fellowes is drawn into a caring relationship with Timmie. She yearns to have a parental relationship, and is moved when Timmie calls her Mother. As Timmie develops, he reciprocates her

affection and enriches her otherwise lonely life. Second, she is committed to taking care of infants and children by her vocation. As a nurse, she finds the painful experiments conducted on Timmie to be appalling, a virtual torture that requires the child to overcome physical barriers to obtain food or water, and includes an electric shock treatment (1990, 322). Importantly, it is her recognition of Timmie's humanity that leads her not only to raise him as she would any other little boy, to advocate that he be treated like a human child, and ultimately to accompany him on an ultra-hazardous, likely fatal, journey, back to the Neanderthal era.

Conclusion

The representation of Timmie as a Neanderthal is inventive and impactful. As a Neanderthal, Timmie signifies the ugly child whose youth elicits sympathy but whose body repels. Because he is on the border between man and ape, it is in the lab's interest to denigrate his status, concomitant to justifying his exploitation as a test subject. Because he is an import from another time and place, Timmie can be expelled from the lab when a more profitable replacement becomes available. The story has contemporary relevance for contemporary immigration studies where individuals may be deported to dire conditions when their employment in the host country is no longer needed.

Care Ethics, I have proposed, is an aspirational response to exploitation of the marginal alien. While the story does not directly anticipate the philosophy of Care Ethics yet we can see Nurse Fellowes as a prototype of the caregiver. For Nurse Fellowes, Timmie's very vulnerability – as an individual who is deformed, marginalized, thoroughly foreign and barely recognized as human – elicits an empathetic response. Nurse Fellowes emerges as Empathetic Woman in opposition to Economic Man. The story invites the reader to take the same leap as that made by Nurse Fellowes, to see the humanity in the Other and to assume a

devoted caregiving role. The story promises no easy answers as her caregiving is ultimately unsuccessful in ending the exploitation.

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ABSTRACTS

Where "Beasts' Sprits Wail":
Rosenberg, Sassoon, and the Emergence of Animal Philosophy
J.A. Bernstein

Abstract
Drawing on Derrida, Levinas, and others, critics such as Christina Gerhardt and Karalyn Kendall-Morwick have pointed out that Modernism witnessed a breakdown in the traditional animal-human divide. Yet few critics have asked what role the Great War itself played in unsettling that divide. I argue that the dehumanizing conditions of the war, coupled with its unprecedented levels of animal and human conscription and slaughter, produced a basic questioning among combatants in Great Britain of what it means to be distinct from other animals and how humans should relate to them. This questioning comes about most acutely in the writings of Isaac Rosenberg and Siegfried Sassoon, two important trench poets, and helps shed light on their particular notions of the pastoral, along with the war's broader role in recasting the identities of humans. Although neither poet explicitly endorses a vision of what we would later call "animal rights," their sense of a primordial linkage between beings and shared sense of suffering with them would presage later currents in animal philosophy, including the "face-to-face" ethics of Levinas.

Keywords:
Animal Studies; Trench Poetry; Modernism; Rosenberg; Sassoon

The Collapse of Responsibility:
Staging Fragmented Communities in State-of-the-Nation Novels
Alice Borrego

Abstract
This article explores the illustration of power dynamics within English society. My reflection spans from 1918 to 2012, so as to understand how the genre of state-of-the-nation novels deals metonymically with microcosmic entities (such as families or local communities) in order to address the fragmentation of society at large. The intertwined communities of my corpus reflect how the most vulnerable

individuals are left out, marginalised by dominant groups, therefore endangering what Paul Ricoeur's called "the fragile". This study sheds light on the tension between our necessary ethical responsibility towards the other (as defined by Emmanuel Levinas) and anchored political and social practices within English society, through the prism of fiction.

Keywords:
Responsibility, Ethics, Community, British Literature, Fragmentation, Vulnerability, Precarity.

The Dance of Bones:
Tomioka Taeko's Stage of Reprobates

Veruska Cantelli

Abstract
In the early nineteen seventies, Japanese writer Tomioka Taeko after receiving two important prizes for her work in verse, abandons poetry all together and continues her work as a writer of novels, short stories, and film. This shift poses questions around the multiple identities of the artist, and more crucially on the effectiveness of a genre in capturing and expressing the changing socio-political landscape of Japan, more specifically the condition of those on the margins, the outcasts of post war Japan. This study acknowledges the importance of working on translated texts and in the process, it sees the value, possibilities, and differences embedded in critical work that emerges out of those texts and their context. Tomioka's first work of prose is placed here in dialogue with other thinkers who explained and explored transitions in relation to autonomy, control, and hierarchy. This interdisciplinary exploration may ultimately lead to a view of the encapsulation of timelessness in Tomioka's performative prose as a leading agent toward unlearning time and classifications and toward reconfiguring space for those outside normativity: a dislocation of knowledge.

Keywords:
Feminism in Japan, Performative Prose, Storytelling, Post-War Japan, Theatre, Japanese Studies, Cultural Studies

Queer Kinship:
"Exposed to the Other as a Skin is Exposed to What Wounds It"
Belkis González

Abstract
Categories of kinship and relationality govern how and to what extent persons become visible in public discourse. Visual culture, given its critical role in regulating the notions of kinship that gain currency, is particularly fertile ground for interrogating how categories of relationality are constituted. This article mines representations of queer families in the photography of Catherine Opie and in Lisa Cholodenko's film *The Kids Are All Right*, moving beyond considerations of relationships between queer persons to investigate affects that are themselves queer, perverse. Informed by scholarship on sexual citizenship, homonormativity, and affect theory, this essay examines forms of kinship in Opie and Cholodenko's work that exist in ambivalent relation to domesticity, and that ultimately signal the inadequacy of discourses of happiness in representing the self in intimate relation to the Other.

Keywords:
Queer Relationality, Queer Kinship, Queer Families in Visual Culture, Affect Theory

"All art is quite useless"
The Gothic Doubling of the Portrait in Oscar Wilde's
The Picture of Dorian Gray
Marshall Lewis Johnson

Abstract
In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* the exact role of the portrait in the novel has remained mysterious, particularly because the novel offers no explanation. However, substantial scholarship has explored that which remains unspoken in the text because it was then culturally taboo: homosexual desire. I would argue that this narrative does not merely talk around homosexuality, but re-presents it as different from the cultural contexts that make it taboo. Additionally, the monstrous image refuses to remain part of ideological notions of homosexuality as sinful or criminal, transforming in the final scene to an image of eternal beauty beyond the limitations of Dorian's own human form, bound as it is not only by mortality but also by social morality and law. In short, when Wilde quips in the preface that "All art is quite useless," this is not mere flippancy (17). Wilde highlights the ways in which art is not bound by these very morals and laws, "useful," so to speak, in their cultural contexts. Art, like the mysterious

portrait, is "useless" when measured up against those same morals and laws. Far from a simple joke, Wilde issues the highest praise for art's ability to explore the socially taboo, and the importance of its uselessness empowers art to conduct such explorations, beautiful in such uselessness.

Keywords:
Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, Gothic, The Double, Narrative Theory, Queer Studies

Unmasking the *Übermensch*:
The Evolution of Nietzsche's Overman
from David Bowie to *Westworld*

Siobhan Lyons

Abstract

Amongst Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical concepts – 'god is dead', eternal return – his concept of the *Übermensch* remains the most controversial and also the most debated, with various conflicting opinions on the precise nature (and intentions) of this enigmatic creature. More than a metaphorical concept, Nietzsche envisioned the possibility of such a transcendent figure, who existed beyond the conventional laws of good and evil and who would usher in a new system of values more befitting Nietzsche's idealistic philosophy. Nietzsche would continually revisit the *Übermensch* throughout his work and revise its character, which would see the *Übermensch* evolve from an idealistic figure to a more tyrannical creature. Consequently, Nietzsche's ambiguous treatment of the *Übermensch* inspired many dubious beliefs, from the Aryan ideal in Nazism to the perverse philosophy behind the infamous murders committed by Lewis and Loeb.

Interpretations of the Nietzschean *Übermensch* can also be found frequently throughout popular culture, from the music of David Bowie to David Fincher's *Fight Club* and the television series *Westworld*. While Bowie treated the *Übermensch* as a supernatural figure who abandoned the terrestrial world, the *Übermensch* was used to endorse underground philosophies predicated on violence in *Fight Club*, problematically linking the ideal of 'self-overcoming' with the oppression of others. A look at *Westworld*, however, reveals a far more nuanced understanding of the *Übermensch*'s potential as a figure who, while capable of tyranny, is able to channel their aggression in ways that push society in a new direction, forcing us to reconsider what transcendence truly entails.

Keywords:
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Übermensch*, *Fight Club*, David Bowie, *Westworld*

The Sex That Didn't Matter: Structural Violence in the Giuliani Administration's Redistricting of New York City

Rachel Narozniak

Abstract

This paper uses Nirmala Erevelles' Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic and Samuel R. Delaney's Times Square Red, Times Square Blue to examine the Giuliani administration's rezoning and redistricting of New York City's public sex spaces in the late '80s and early '90s as an example of "structural violence." This paper foregrounds Johan Galtung's theory of "structural violence" and Ervelles' definition of the social model of "disability" to argue that the Giuliani administration's spatial redefinition of New York (of Times Square, specifically) was a heteronormatively and capitalistically motivated initiative that effectively 'disabled' the homosexual population that frequented the homoerotic public sex spaces.

The spatial redesign of Times Square supplanted Times Square's prior identity as an "entertainment area catering largely to the working classes who lived in the city," for a vision of a new Times Square that would capitalistically cater to a middle-class group of heteronormative families and tourists. This analysis reads the redistricting of New York through a disability theory lens to tease out the relationship between structural violence, capitalism, aberrant sexual identity, and conceptions of space.

Keywords:
Structural violence, Disability, Capitalism, Heteronormative, New York, Sex

Organization, seduction and the othered senses
The erotic ear and the poisonous tongue

Eva Pallesen

Abstract

While the scientific rationalisation of the 18th century centred the visibly observable, it also marginalised the senses as a source of imagination immersion and pleasure. This reduced version of the senses was inherited into the discipline of organization and management studies along with assumptions of deliberate, goal directed action based on preconceived mental models. These assumptions have been widely critiqued in later contributions to organisation theory. However, this article argues that in order to see this critique to the end, we need to re-connect to what organization studies has 'othered' into the field of art and

literature. On the basis of texts from Kierkegaard and Blixen, the article discusses how a literary investigation of the othered senses may inform the study of possibility in an organized context and help us move towards an organizational scholarship, which is open to 'otherness'..

Keywords:
Seduction, Otherness, Senses, Organization Studies, Listening

Disfigured, Neanderthal, and Thoroughly Alien" Exploitation of the Other in Asimov's "Ugly Little Boy"

Sara Schotland

Abstract

In Isaac Asimov's short story "Ugly Little Boy" (1958), an ambitious scientist imports from the past a Neanderthal boy who is viewed as physically repellant. Initially, Dr. Hoskins values Timmie and markets the success of his time-transgressing experiment. Timmie is exhibited as a "freak" on television; his body is subject to extensive and excruciating tests. When a more profitable specimen can be re-animated from the more recent past, Timmie is expendable.

Timmie is the ultimate alien, in body, behavior, and origin. He is thus triply marked under Erving Goffman's Theory of Stigma. What can we learn from this cultural representation of a Neanderthal? This essay uses Asimov's story as a springboard to consider the exploitation of the Other. (i) Historically, individuals with anomalous bodies have been exhibited and exploited as "freaks." In Rosemary Garland Thomson's terminology, "normates" constructed a paradigm that allowed them to feel superior and exercise a domination over individuals with "extraordinary bodies." Today, stigma and discrimination continue; television and other media have replaced the circus tent as the site of the modern "freak show." (ii) As a powerless Other, Timmie cannot resist Dr. Hoskins's abusive battery of tests. Throughout history, test subjects have been drawn from among the poor, prisoners, or despised minorities. (iii) As an alien, Timmie has been imported into the modern world from a time and place so distant that it is unrelatable. Like a migrant worker, Timmie is an outcast who is discarded when his labor is no longer valued. (iv) In contrast, Timmie's nurse provides a nurturing care that resists, albeit unsuccessfully, his commercial exploitation. The nurse's care practice provides an alternative approach to dealing with a strange, vulnerable, and alien individual. "Ugly Little Boy" thus invites consideration of the moral philosophy now known as Care Ethics.

Keywords:
Stigma, Anomalous Body, Deformity, Freak, Alien