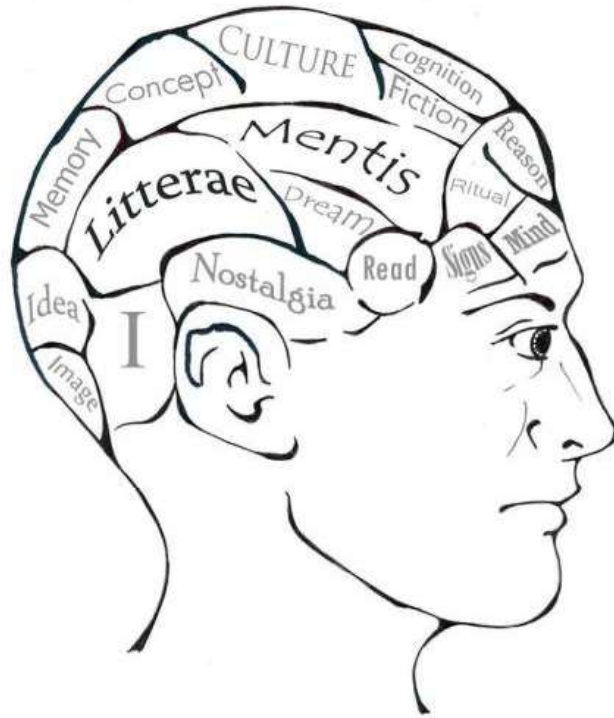

Litterae Mentis:

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Editorial

Welcome to the third issue of *Litterae Mentis: A Journal of Literary Studies*, a postgraduate publication funded by the University of Kent's School of English. *Litterae Mentis* is edited by postgraduate students in the School, and publishes original work by MA and PhD students working in the area of literary criticism. The journal focuses on printing the finest textual analyses and critical theory, thereby fostering dialogues between humanities scholars from a variety of disciplinary and educational backgrounds. It also allows early career researchers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the process of peer-reviewed publishing.

The 2015 issue of the journal focused on the topic of 'ritual', providing a rich and diverse selection of academic papers. Continuing to explore the relationship between literature, habits and the human mind, this year's central theme is 'fear': a pervasive (and often persistent) emotion, which has inspired equally wide-ranging responses. As Dr Juha Virtanen notes in his engaging introduction, the irrationality of phobias can be a source of either comedy or tragedy – or, sometimes, both. Terror draws attention to instabilities within oneself, but also to perceived threats in the external world. In particular, Dr Virtanen highlights contemporary anxieties about identity in the United Kingdom, and shows how language is intricately related to our understandings of being and belonging. The following articles point towards the universal relevance of this topic from both a political and literary perspective. It is worth noting, too, that this issue is the first to include a submission from outside of the UK's European University. It is our hope that future issues will continue to create an inclusive space for transcultural debate.

Journal editing invariably involves knowledge exchange, but especially when the editors are postgraduate students. As a collective, therefore, we would like to extend our thanks to those who have helped to craft, manage and organise this edition of *Litterae Mentis*. We are grateful to Prof. Wendy Parkins and Dr Derek Ryan as Directors of Graduate Studies, as well as the head of the School of English, Prof. David Herd. Many thanks are due to Dr Juha Virtanen for writing a thoughtful and compelling introduction to this volume. We thank Dr Vybarr Cregan-Reid, Dr Sara Lyons, Dr Ariane Mildenberg, Dr Will Norman and Dr Derek Ryan for acting as peer-reviewers. We are also grateful to Frances Reading, Harrison Sullivan and Peter Adkins for their guidance and mentoring throughout the editorial process. Further thanks are due to Lucy Panthaky, designer of the *Litterae Mentis* logo – as well as fellow editor Réka Turcsányi for creating the 2016 cover design. Finally, we would like to thank all those who sent us their abstracts, articles, feedback and revisions. It was a pleasure to edit such stimulating work while compiling this volume – we hope that you will find the same enjoyment in reading it.

The *Litterae Mentis* Editorial Team 2016

Introduction

Dr Juha Virtanen

Lecturer in Contemporary Literature, University of Kent

When I was a postgraduate in the summer of 2008, I came to the conclusion that I was terrified of my mailbox. Not exactly the mailbox itself, but rather the mail that arrived there: the incoming envelopes invariably carried utility bills I didn't quite have the funds to pay, or – about once a year – summons from the Finnish Ministry of Defence, who never failed to remind me about my (then) impending obligation to fulfil my national service. Around the same time, I went to see Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* in the cinema. In one of the most famous scenes of the film, Batman subjects the Joker to a violent interrogation within the Gotham police department; in the middle of the beating, the villain startles the protagonist/vigilante/superhero with a simple utterance: 'you have nothing to threaten me with.' Leaving the cinema, I found myself deeply troubled by the ambivalence of this scene. At the time, the absence of fear in Joker's sentiment struck my anxious mind as an incredibly liberating statement; and yet, by voicing those words via the antagonist of the story, the film seemingly suggested that this liberation from fear was somehow *undesirable*. And, given that I was – at the time – afraid of envelopes, I couldn't accept that apparent undesirability.

I mention this not just because that scene continues to trouble me to this day, but also because – more broadly – fear is

a condition that characterises everyday life in our contemporary moment. This should be obvious from even a cursory glance at the public discourse we see on the news, where refugees escaping from horrific situations are described as 'swarms', and where the competing Project Fears of the EU referendum have paved way for a sharp increase in public instances of racism and xenophobia. In addition, the austerity policies enacted in the UK since 2010 have rendered our age as one of anxiety, where the conditions of our employment, housing, and pleasure all seem temporary, contingent, and precarious. As Judith Butler puts it:

> "precarity" designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection. Precarity also characterizes that politically induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection.[1]

If our current experiences of fear arise from conditions of *precarity*, it follows that contemporary writing about fear would also depart from Moretti's observation of *Frankenstein* as a literature of terror where 'fear is made subordinate' to the philosophical argument that is 'resolved within the text, without penetrating the text's relationship with the reader'.[2] Compare this, for example, to the conclusion of Sean Bonney's 'Letter Against Fear (Unsent)', published in his recent collection *Letters Against the Firmament*:

> Every day I leave the house at least once, to go for a walk. Usually it's just to the supermarket, but sometimes I go as far as the railway tracks. Its all overgrown down there, its kind of peaceful. A damp landscape of rust and brambles, where the signal-towers and voices can begin to seem like the components of some barely remembered dream. And actually, now I can remember, that was the dream I was trying to tell you about, that was its structure, that was all it was. I was in an abandoned station house. The silence was endless. And then I woke up. There was some kind of ticking in the corner of the room. I couldn't tell what it was. I couldn't see to switch on the light. What was that ticking. Why did it sound like it was coming from the centre of my chest. Why was I so helpless and afraid.[3]

The ticking is both external ('in the corner of the room') and internal ('coming from the centre of my chest'), because the conditions that it symbolises are both a physical and emotional experience. The regular rhythm mirrors the repetition of daily walks to the supermarket and the railway tracks, which is matched by both the heartbeat and feelings of alienation. But while we may tease out these readings from the passage, it's important to note that Bonney's text does not solve them. Instead, he concludes with a question. Thus, rather than developing a literature of terror that solves its own predicament to some degree or another – as Moretti might have it – Bonney's fear is expressed through what John Cunningham and others call 'anguish language'. In other words, the fear in Bonney's letter is related through a modality of '(non)communication, rage, despair and investigative angst' that traces out the 'cartographies of how the social crises of capitalism might form and deform the bodies and activities of those subjects forced to survive within them.'[4]

These examples of precarity, literature of terror, and the cartographies of social crises are just a few ways in which we might understand fear within our present moment. In the essays gathered in this issue of *Litterae Mentis*, each author offers further configurations of the theme, all of which are far more illuminating than my brief vignettes above. Isabella Norton delves into the social discourses and performances of terrorist drag. Mona Faysal Sahyoun draws upon Kristeva in order to explore the 'monstrous feminine' in Housman's *The Were-Wolf*. Peter Adkins examines animality and postcolonial embodiment through the 'beastly lives' in Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*. Rosemary Schadenberg focuses on Borges and Corkin, via medical humanities, in order to consider notions of memory and life-changing events in short story and memoir. And Michael Docherty analyses domestic devils in Fante's work.

Oh, and for what it's worth, I'm no longer afraid of my mailbox.

Notes

[1] Judith Butler, 'Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics' in *AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana* 4.3 (2009), p. ii.

[2] Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays on the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 84-85.

[3] Sean Bonney, *Letters Against the Firmament* (London: Enitharmon, 2015), p 102.

[4] John Cunningham, 'Notes on the Anguished Languages of Crisis' in John Cunningham, Anthony Iles, Mira Mattar & Marina Vishmidt, eds, *Anguish Language: Writing and Crisis* (Berlin: Archive Books, 2015), p. 5.

Beastly Lives: Animality and Postcolonial Embodiment in Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*

Peter Adkins

There is a moment near the beginning of Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) where the novel's narrator, Anna Morgan, having returned to her boarding room in London reflects that she is 'poor and my clothes are cheap and perhaps it will always be like this. […] Perhaps I am going to be one of the ones with beastly lives'.[1] Those with 'beastly lives', Anna elaborates, emphasising the animality of the idiom, 'swarm like woodlice when you push a stick into a woodlice-nest' (*Voyage* 23). It is a passage that captures Anna's painful self-awareness of her precariousness as a female living independently in London, whilst its vivid imagery reveals a deep-seated association of the lower social classes with a perverse animality. If Anna should fail to secure the finances to bankroll the middleclass lifestyle she envisions, then she will descend to join the masses of a metropolitan underclass whose 'faces are the colour of woodlice' (*Voyage* 23).

For Anna, raised in a plantation in Dominica and only a recent arrival in England, the encountered prejudices of day-to-day life – which run the gambit from class to race to gender – are not only *articulated through* a fearful hatred of animality, but, as I shall argue in this article, are wholly predicated on a careful disavowal of the animal self. Throughout Rhys's novel, Anna is portrayed as wrestling with this fear of the animal and animality, as she attempts to adjust to her new home and the ambivalent

welcome she receives from naturalised British subjects. It is a fear not of "an" animal in particular, but the figure of the animal in general. That is to say, it is a fear that is expressed through a generalised "zoophobia", which as Jacques Derrida terms it, correlates to an irrational hatred of nonhuman animals and animality that has its origins in Western culture's history of conceptually defining the category of the Human *against* the figure of "the animal".[2] It is a phobia rooted in the history of Western thought, where 'what is proper to man' is derived from 'his subjugating superiority over the animal', a superiority which marks 'his historicity, his emergence out of nature' and 'his access to knowledge'.[3] That is to say, everything that marks out our sense of species exceptionalism – from the privileging of knowledge and reason in post-Cartesian philosophy to what Derrida describes as the 'Judeo-Christiano-Islamic tradition of a war against the animal'[4] – is derived from a expurgating of "the animal" from the Human. Furthermore, the obduracy of the West's cultural zoophobia speaks to the extent to which the figure of animal nonetheless continues to mark the figure of the Human. In this article, I am going to explore how this spectral animality haunts the narratives of Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* and her late short story 'Pioneers, Oh, Pioneers' (1976), looking at how the animal, both figurative and literal, is central to Rhys's modernist mode of engagement with the experiential realities and humanist ideologies underpinning late British Imperialism. Zoophobia takes on a particular valence in the context of European colonial and postcolonial history, and, as this article will argue, Rhys's fiction serves to demonstrate the mode through which the figure of the animal serves as both a discourse of subjugation but also, potentially, a means of resistance.

Imperial Animals

From the early days of postcolonial literary studies in the 1980s, Rhys's novels have been read according to their potential

subversion of and resistance to the hegemony that characterised the late period of the British Empire. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their still influential and widely cited textbook *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) position Rhys's work as committed to a challenging of European 'realities' through 'interrogating the philosophical assumptions' behind imperialism.[5] In this respect, postcolonial studies have ably located how poetry, drama and novels are able to critique a certain post-Cartesian humanism which, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes it, established the European subject as a '*fully-formed man* whose vocation is to be "lord and master"' of nature' and constructed animals and 'primitive' people as its diametric opposite.[6] Indeed, *Voyage in the Dark* is exemplary in conveying how these principles of humanism continued to sustain British Imperialism well into the 1930s. Yet, whilst in this article I read Rhys's novel in the spirit of postcolonial critique, I aim to do so in such a way that does not rush to position *Voyage in the Dark* as neatly homologous with postcolonial theories. Rather, I want to begin by opening up productive points of disaccord and disjuncture between the text and postcolonial theories, and more specifically the humanist tenets that remain intact in postcolonial thought.[7] Tony Davies writes that 'all humanisms, until now, have been imperial' in that they 'speak of the human in […] the interests of a class, a race, a genome' and this article will argue that by attending to Rhys's portrayal of animality and zoophobia her novel implicitly problematizes modes of critique, postcolonial or otherwise, that continue to draw on humanist ideals.[8]

The question of the animal emerged as a concern within postcolonial theory prior to the formalisation of the critical field itself. Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) describes the ways in which 'the Negro' is seen as 'an animal' in European society.[9] For Fanon the term 'Man' was foremost as an existential category, since 'man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him' and, Fanon explains, during the global

ascendancy of Enlightenment Europe this category of Man was concretised through the designation of a primitive, non-European Other with whom Europeans could be identified *against*.[10] The narrative of an advanced Europe, Fanon recognised, relied upon the construction of a primitive non-European Other who was in intimate proximity with the animal world, a designation which implicitly worked to reinscribe the European subject as a fully formed Human and upon which the civilising mission of imperialism could be justified. Yet, for Fanon, European Imperialism's ideological reliance on the category of the Human and its animal Other was not a reason to reject the humanist tenets that had worked towards manufacturing those categories in the first place. Indeed, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon describes the *failure* of an 'English and French 'humanism [that] claimed to be universal' but which instead operated to 'dehumanize' those in the colonies. This corrupted humanism, Fanon argues, has the potential to be corrected by self-determining decolonised peoples' 'rapid transformation into consciousness of social and political needs'. In short, the colonised might enact a 'humanism' that the Europeans had theorized but had proved incapable of practicing.[11] As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in his preface to Fanon's book, 'the yellow and black voices still spoke of our humanism but only to reproach us with our inhumanity'.[12] For Fanon, postcolonial critique stood to return to humanism to its egalitarian roots in such a way as might fundamentally recalibrate and strengthen it. More plainly put, decolonisation, as Fanon saw it, had the potential to operate through a retrenchment of the Human as a category of being.

Fanon's analysis of the modes through which non-Europeans are construed as animal Others and his articulation of a humanist mode of resistance proved influential in subsequent postcolonial theory, perhaps most famously in Edward Said's description of the 'complex series of knowledge manipulations' through which 'the Other is created'[13]. Even postcolonial theorists whose relation to humanism is ambivalent

at best inherited a conceptual framework in which the human and the animal remain self-evident categories; notably in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's various critiques of the imperialist doctrines that decided 'who was and was not human'[14] and the ways in which 'the boundary [between] human and the animal'[15] was constructed to distance the coloniser from colonised. If, as Derrida argues, an inattentiveness to the gaze of the animal in its singularity is what 'what brings together all philosophers […] from Descartes to the present', then postcolonial thought in the tradition of Fanon presents itself as coterminous with the central pillar of humanist from which zoophobia derives its force.[16]

Arguably, this inattentiveness to the question of the animal and animality is not just a philosophical oversight but constitutes a blockage in any revisionary account of Empire, on the basis that European humanism, zoophobia and imperialism present themselves as thoroughly entangled with one another. Carrie Rohman outlines how the designation of non-European peoples as being closer to the animal world than Europeans intensified in the late nineteenth century through misreadings and distortions of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory. Darwin's theory, Rohman explains, had undermined the 'traditional humanist abjection of animality' and lead to a reactionary displacement of 'animality onto marginalised groups' as a means to 'purify Western subjectivity and […] maintain the imperialist power dynamic'.[17] As Derrida points out, to take account of the 'history' of human animality and our proximity to nonhuman animals involves thinking of the 'multiple and heterogeneous border' between the two – a border, it is worth noting, that for Derrida is characterised by an 'abyssal rupture' of difference rather than recognisable homologies.[18] Whilst Derrida's analysis does not directly address the ways in which zoophobia is promulgated within (and even might be said to characterise) even the most revisionary of historical accounts of colonialism, Rohman is more forthright. For her, whilst postcolonial theorists have long recognised the ways in which

Social Darwinism contributed to the construction of non-European peoples as lesser evolved, the same theorists have nonetheless 'privileged the categories of race and gender' and 'failed to examine the fact that these discourses frequently sought justification through the discourse of species'.[19] The marked hesitancy amongst postcolonial literary scholars to scrutinise the ways that colonial or postcolonial writings might offer insights into animality arguably speaks to the risk that such a focus might implicitly reproduce the sense of an exceptional homology between non-European peoples and animals upon which the imperial project was itself justified.[20] Moreover, there is a political sensitivity to be taken into account. As Cary Wolfe describes, many 'traditionally marginalized groups' fought to attain recognition of their own 'full *humanist* subjectivit[ies]' and have only relatively recently been recognised in such a light.[21] Humanism in this geo-political postcolonial context cannot be straightforwardly disavowed. Yet if animal-orientated approaches to postcolonial studies carry potential pitfalls, the alternative, sidestepping the question of animality and zoophobia altogether, might be worse than either aforementioned consequence. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin observed in their 2002 revision of *The Empire Writes Back*, if imperialism was 'justified on the grounds of categorizing other peoples as animals' then the outright rejection of this category under the auspices of humanism leaves the 'foundational species/race boundary' firmly in place.[22]

How does someone who has been nominated as a primitive or not fully Human resist and investigate the zoophobia at the heart of such an appellation without necessarily succumbing to it? This question emerges as a central concern in *Voyage in the Dark*. The novel's protagonist Anna lives a creolised existence, both in her ambiguous genealogy as the daughter of a white plantation owner and a mother whose racial identity remains unrevealed (Anna's stepmother Hester implies that her 'mother was coloured' (*Voyage* 56)) and in Judith L. Raiskin's sense that the word creole encompasses 'the white

native who lives in a cultural space between the European and black Caribbean societies'.[23] Having moved to England and now working as a chorus girl for a touring company, Anna's creole identity becomes inescapably marked. She is teasingly designated as 'the Hottentot' by her fellow dancers (*Voyage* 12), a term that is not only geographically inaccurate but, as Helen Carr describes it, synonymous with 'the lowest rung of the human evolutionary ladder' in 'nineteenth-century racial theory'.[24] Through received notions of race and popular evolutionary theory, Anna comes to situate her body as somewhere between white and non-white, European and non-European, civilized and primitive. Moreover, Anna's sense of Otherness causes her to reconsider the alienation that had worked to shape her subjectivity long before she had even moved to England. She recalls the circumstances surrounding a childhood incident whilst 'dressing to go to church' in which she was forced to wear 'brown kid gloves straight from England' and was subsequently accused of 'trying to split' them when they would not fit over her hands:

> While you are carefully putting on your gloves you begin to perspire and you feel the perspiration trickling down under your arms. The thought of having a wet patch underneath your arms - a disgusting and a disgraceful thing to happen to a lady - makes you very miserable. (*Voyage* 36)

The passage, breaking from the novel's use of first-person narration and installing a second-person singular, creates distance between the Anna of the present moment and her earlier self. Reflecting a modernist propensity to explore language's potential to estrange and fracture its subject, the text stages the dissonance between remembering and remembered subject, reinforcing Anna's non-identity that emerge from the ways in which her body's dimensions and processes do not conform to the bodily expectations sewn into the clothing sent from England and their implied definition of what it is to be a 'lady'. Interiorising the distorted Social Darwinism articulated by

those she encounters in England, Anna's senses of bodily self and social self become disjointed, manifesting in an obsession with fashion and an obsession with trying to mask her body's apparent racial Otherness, at one point 'thinking what clothes [she] would buy' and not 'think[ing] of anything else at all' (*Voyage* 24). Whilst critics such as Nagihan Haliloğlu have suggested Anna's interest in fashion speaks to an ambivalent consumerist assertion of self-identity, its obsessiveness speaks more clearly to a neurosis bound up with attaining an appearance of bodily normativity on a gendered, class and, most pertinently, racialized level.[25]

Moreover, whilst Anna betrays a self-awareness that her body does not conform to the normative construction of white femininity, her repeatedly vocalised desire 'to be black' (*Voyage* 27) exhibits an awareness that neither does her body accord with the sentimental essentialist conception of blackness that she has been educated in, in which being 'black is warm and gay' (*Voyage* 27). Instead, Anna's alienation is a recurring reminder of her liminal position on the threshold of the two dominant categories of the European Human and the primitive Other, occupying what Homi K. Bhabha describes as the irreducible ambivalence of 'not quite/not white'.[26] It is from this position of uncertainty that Anna gazes upon the bodies of non-Europeans, such as when she remembers 'watching' Francine, the black plantation maid, eating mangoes:

> Her teeth would bite into the mango and her lips fasten on either side of it and while she sucked you saw that she was perfectly happy. When she had finished she always smacked her lips twice, very loud - louder than you could believe possible. It was a ritual. (*Voyage* 58)

Anna hones in on the 'happy' animality of Francine's eating, magnifying the embodied act of eating itself (all 'teeth' and 'lips') conducted through 'ritual(s)' rather than table manners – all of which conform to what Sue Thomas describes as 'identifiably

modernist primitivist tropes'.[27] Contrast the above description with Anna's observations of her lover Walter, a high earner in the City of London, during a meal at a restaurant in the capital. In distinction to the vivid imagery of Francine's face, Walter's physical appearance is described almost wholly in abstract terms: he appears 'very solemn' and his nose is said to be 'exactly alike' with that of his companion and fellow city worker Jones (*Voyage* 18). Ironically, the only concrete image of Walter is the moment in which he is said to have 'sniffed' the wine, a verb with clear traces of a sensuous animality that in this context paradoxically works against itself to emphasise his highly civilized status as a connoisseur (*Voyage* 17). Whereas Francine obeys 'rituals' in her eating, which in the context of the passage becomes a term of condescension, Walter (even in his concealed animality) is *mannered*; his sniffing indicates that he knows how to complain that 'the wine is corked' (*Voyage* 17). Anna's internalisation of a racialized dichotomy, in which blackness is associated with bodies and animality, and whiteness is abstract and civilized, forestalls her attempts to identify her body with either blackness or whiteness. Certainly she is unable to successfully enter into the gendered manners and expectations surrounding the white female body in England, for instance 'kiss[ing]' Walter's hand and disrupting the performance of courtship in which it is the man 'who ought to kiss [the woman's] hand' (*Voyage* 34) – and, yet, neither is she afforded entry into what she sees as its diametric opposite, a sentimentalized primitiveness or animality that she identifies in black Dominicans such as Francine. Yet, Anna's false consciousness becomes the novel's mode of imperial critique. Rhys presents how Anna's distorted sense of self and the unattainability of becoming fully Human are constituted *through* the body, such as her aforementioned childhood experiences of ill-fitting English clothes or the recurring physical ailments that arise from her inability to 'get used to the cold' of England (*Voyage* 1), leading her to the essentialist conclusion that 'being white is [being] cold' (*Voyage* 27). In both of these examples and elsewhere in the novel, Rhys portrays how one's sense of subjectivity and personhood is

wholly embodied, a stance that resists humanism insofar as humanism is reliant on the notion that, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, one's 'relationship to space [is] of a pure disembodied subject to a distant object'.[28] As such, whilst Bhabha argues that this 'not quite/not white' quality derives from discourse in which black bodies are '*displaced*' through nominations of 'bestiality' which 'reveal the phobic myth of the undifferentiated whole white body', in which the appellation of the animal is forced upon its subject, Rhys's novel examines how this animality or bestiality is always already present in the body itself.[29] That is to say, the novel reverses Bhabha's critique: rather than accusing imperialism of projecting animality onto non-European bodies, Rhys's novel speaks of the ways in which imperialism operates through a denial of the European body's intrinsic animality, a denial upon which the very category of whiteness is constructed.

Anna's non-identity derives from the tension between her seemingly animal body and human consciousness, a tension which forestalls her ability to identify with either the supposedly highly-evolved European or the atavistic non-European. Her body becomes the site for what Philip Armstrong describes as Enlightenment humanism's repression of its own animality in order to justify 'its '"civilizing" mission [to pacify] savage cultures and savage natures'.[30] Indeed, if Anna's internalised racial politics are at times presented as unwittingly complicit with her own sense of, to borrow Fanon's term, 'corporeal malediction', then it is a complicity that Anna is not entirely blind to.[31] Finding herself in yet another expensive restaurant with Walter, Anna notices the 'sneering' gaze from a 'bust of Voltaire' looking down upon her (*Voyage* 75): the disembodied head of the humanist philosopher imposing itself as a figure of pure, disembodied Cogito. If, as Merleau-Ponty states, Voltaire's writings assert the transcendence and rationality of European subjectivity by distinguishing it against undeveloped 'primitive' peoples, then Anna's sense of being under the gaze of the humanist philosopher speaks to the anxiety experienced in the non-European subject when subjected to the gaze of humanism.

In both the narrative and Rhys's modernist use of language, *Voyage in the Dark* conveys a fractured and embodied subjectivity, a subjectivity that arises from non-identity rather than self-presence, and works to interrogate the way that both humanism and imperialism justify one another through a denial of human animality.[32]

Frontier Animals

In *Voyage in the Dark* Rhys presents how creolisation not only operates as a mode of slippage between the binary of Coloniser and Colonised, but explicitly undermines what Spivak describes as the 'the human/animal frontier' that separates the European and the Other within imperial discourse.[33] Moreover, Rhys's novel does not work to straightforwardly displace or dismantle that frontier, so much as portray how it is the distinction upon which the category of the fully-evolved Human is predicated. Self-identifying as a 'fifth generation [West Indian] on my mother's side' (*Voyage* 47), Anna positions herself and her maternal side of the family – including her uncle Ramsay "Bo" Costerus – within a creolised genealogy that is shown to be engendered with an irreducible and uncanny animality. For instance, Anna, receiving a letter that her lover Walter is ending their affair, suddenly recalls a childhood memory where she had seen her uncle Bo 'lying on the sofa':

> his mouth was a bit open - I thought he's asleep and I started to walk on tiptoe […] Uncle Bo moved and sighed and long yellow tusks like fangs came out of his mouth and protruded down to his chin - you don't scream when you are frightened because you can't and you don't move either. (*Voyage* 79)

If Anna's early memories of Francine's primitiveness were sentimentalised, here the remembered animality of the creolised

Bo is horrifying; the 'fangs' sliding out of his mouth present an unheimlich image of a latent animal-self residing within and claiming agency of Bo's body as he sleeps. Whilst there is comic irony in the fact that the source of his perceived animality, his false teeth, is a manmade prosthetic, the scene speaks to a profound anxiety about the undecidability of Bo's body. If people are meant to either be mannered and civilised like Walter or primitive like Francine, then the animality of Bo muddies such distinctions. Moreover, the sustained absence of punctuation in the passage not only operates to textually aestheticize the rushing suddenness of Anna's recollection, but the shift into a stylised prose marks the fact that this memory is occurring within Anna's consciousness at the very moment that she reads a letter informing her that 'Walter doesn't love you any more' (*Voyage* 80). Trying to connect Walter's denouement and the forceful memory of her Uncle's animality, Anna asks herself '[w]hat's this letter got to do with false teeth?' (*Voyage* 79). One answer is that, whilst Anna has attempted to fabricate a genteel and sophisticated relationship with Walter, fantasizing about addressing him as '"My darling Walter…"' (*Voyage* 64), its unexpected termination reminds her of the repressed animal uncanniness of her own creolised body and the impossibility of her ever successfully entering into an idealised idea of white subjectivity in which the figure of the animal is absent.

Rhys's sudden burst of creativity in the late 1960s and 1970s, following the well-received publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), was characterised by a return to the subject of the Caribbean under British Imperialism. Whilst in *Voyage in the Dark* Rhys presents how the spectral presence of the animal haunts the creolised body, leading to a painful fragmentation of subjectivity, in her short story 'Pioneers, Oh, Pioneers' (1976) Rhys explores the manner in which this repressed yet intrinsically latent animality is similarly present within those identify as the white ruling class. Set in 1899, the narrative opens with Englishman Mr Ramage arriving in Dominica. He is 'a handsome man in tropical kit, white suit, red cummerbund, solar

topee'[34] and keen to tell anyone who will listen of his intention to settle in a remote corner of the island to establish and run a new estate. To all intents and purposes, he is the apotheosis of the highly civilised and outwardly civilising British ruling class. The narrative quickly skips two years and Ramage is revealed to have undergone a stark metamorphosis. He is seen hunting near the boundary of a cricket ground, naked apart from 'sandals and a leather belt' his skin 'burnt a deep brown, his hair [falling] to his shoulders, his beard to his chest' ('Pioneers' 16). To Mr and Mrs Eliot, the white English townsfolk who encounters Ramage in his newly transformed state, he is a figure of atavistic, one might say zoophobic, revulsion and horror.[35] Ramage's leathery skin and unkempt hair situates his body as a site of transgression within a model of Social Darwinism that posits a linear narrative of progression, in which the telos of evolution is realised in the figure of the fully-formed enlightened European subject. In this light, Ramage's bodily transformation upsets not only the straightforward, progressive linearity within the discourse of Social Darwinism, but the implied distance between the Human and lesser-evolved organisms that both gives rise to and is absorbed within racial theory.

To be sure, the story retreads certain generic tropes of the "going native" narrative that Patrick Brantlinger identifies in late Victorian literature and which he suggests speak to then prevalent fears of evolutionary regression, yet the narrative also subtly departs from the ways in which those earlier stories often worked to reinscribe European superiority.[36] Chancing upon the Eliots at, of all places, the cricket grounds, Ramage lampoons Mrs Eliot for wearing such an 'uncomfortable dress' in her surroundings ('Pioneers' 16). It is a criticism that serves as the catalyst for Mrs Eliot's own transformation. Mr Eliot recounts how, returning home after the traumatic encounter, his wife 'locked herself in the bedroom' and 'when she came out she wouldn't speak' to her husband apart to say, ambiguously, that Ramage 'was quite right' in what he said ('Pioneers' 16). In a similar way that Uncle Bo's 'tusks' (*Voyage* 79) instil Anna with

the uncanny animality of her own creolised body in *Voyage In The Dark*, Ramage's transformation leads Mrs Eliot to reflect on her own sense of alienation and animality. For both Mrs Eliot and Anna, anxiety about their embodied identities relate to concerns about sexual identity. Anna perceives that it is the germ of the animal within her Creole body that means she cannot sustain an idealised relationship with Walter. Conversely Mrs Eliot's moment of bodily self-awareness brings a realisation that despite the social conventions that denote her body as superior compared to the "lesser-evolved", her husband does not 'care what she looked like' ('Pioneers' 16). Mrs Eliot's insight into the fact that her perceived value is wholly as a foil to her husband's public position in colonial society, brings a heightened sense of her own body and a realisation, if only temporally, of her own animality.

Carr outlines how throughout Rhys's oeuvre she repeatedly returns to the way in which European gender values operate through a punitive patriarchal 'sexual code', yet in Rhys's various portrayals of the ways in which female experiential realities are at odds with prevalent humanist ideologies of the Human and the animal, Rhys underscores the ways in which this 'code' operates on sexual bodies that are shot through with animality.[37] Derrida uses the word 'frontier' to describe the point of separation between the Human and the animal, a 'frontier' which modernity has revealed to be 'no longer … a single indivisible line but more than one internally divided line', one which 'can no longer be traced [nor] objectified'.[38] That is to say, whilst for Derrida there remain important and perceivable differences between the human and the animal, these differences can no longer be relied upon to present themselves in a neatly schematic manner. Rhys's fiction draws out the implications of imperialism and conquest implied within the word 'frontier'. In 'Pioneers' the dividing line between human bodies and animal bodies both sustains and is sustained by real, colonial frontiers, creating a feedback loop of self-identification. Yet, arguably, Rhys goes further than Derrida in making her point here. Where

for Derrida, some reassurance might be found in the fact that the 'frontier' though 'internally divided' is still nonetheless a 'frontier' (or indeed, even more strongly, an 'abyss' or 'rupture'), Rhys's story speaks of eroding frontiers; the failure of frontier as either a reality or a trope. In the bodies of Ramage, Mrs Eliot or even Anna, it is the *absence* of an identifiable dividing line between the Human and the animal that undermines the certainties of their position with an imperial society.

'Pioneers, Oh, Pioneers!' only offers hints of the destabilising consequences that will follow Mrs Eliot's distressing glimpse of the matrix of patriarchy, imperialism and zoophobia upon which she has constructed her white subjectivity. The story's conclusion shifts back to Ramage – whose transgressions necessarily position him as a scapegoat, and whose death functions to re-establish the zoophobic schema underpinning the social structure of the colony.[39] In contrast, Anna in *Voyage in the Dark* is portrayed as tragically attempting to repress her animality in order to maintain control of her subjectivity. In the short and stylised concluding chapter to the novel, in which the reader follows Anna's thoughts and experiences as she undergoes a botched abortion and subsequent haemorrhage, Rhys presents a series of seemingly unwilled transitions between a traumatic present and childhood recollections of a Dominican Masquerade carnival. It gives voice to a cacophonous miscegenation of styles and registers that reflects Anna's own embodied heterogeneity; Anna recollects Bo looking upon the masked revellers 'banging […] kerosene tins' and exclaiming that 'you can't expect niggers to behave like white people' (*Voyage* 157), an utterance that both dismisses and reveals anxieties about the presence of perceived primitiveness within the white body. Yet the carnivalesque bricolage of voices, memories and images which burst forth from Anna's unconscious onto the final pages of the novel portray a limit to the act of repressing certain elements of one's embodied identity in order to perform an idea of white subjectivity. If earlier in the text the 'happy' animality of Francine is framed in terms of

condescension, here human animality becomes forceful and even violent. This dynamic and dangerous mix of subjectivities and subjects that would appear to transgress the categories separating the Human and the animal speaks to Anna's own repressed animality. Whilst for Fanon, the potential for effective decolonisation and liberation is contained within the potential of 'a new humanism' and a 'new humanity', Rhys's novel speaks to the dangers of inheriting an Enlightenment notion of the Human that, at even at a bodily level, defines itself in opposition to the animal.[40]

In the final paragraph of *Voyage in the Dark* Anna reflects on the fact that, having undergone the catharsis of an abortion, she is in one sense, 'new and fresh' and that 'anything might happen' – yet she also acknowledges the likelihood to her old unhappy life 'starting all over again, all over again…' (*Voyage* 159). This sense of an inescapable recurrence adds to the novel's irreducibly ambivalent ending, reinforcing the fact that she remains in the same marginalised social position as at the novel's beginning, whilst, like 'Pioneers, Oh, Pioneers!', also inscribing the slim possibility of unforeseeable change. Whilst Urmila Seshagiri gestures towards Rhys's censored ending to the novel in which Anna dies during the abortion as evidence that Anna faces an irrevocably condemned existence, Rhys's revision arguably resists the closure and moralism of the original conclusion.[41] [42] If, in the original ending, the glimpsed spectre of one's own animality is followed by death and the obliteration of self, the published version offers a degree of undecidability that does not succumb to such morbid pronouncements. Bhabha argues that the apparent transparency of realist texts 'signifies a discursive closure' which can, and in the history of Empire *did*, convey totalising ideologies.[43] Rhys's forcefully ambiguous ending, conveyed not only in the uncertainty of the narrative but the overt formal experimentation with style, asserts undecidability and unknowability over closure or telos, and in doing so marks a final reiteration of irreducible Otherness. Seshagiri suggests that the violent trauma at the end of Rhys's

novel, especially in its original ending, should be read as a metaphor for the 'antiproductive' nature of modernist formal experimentation and a movement towards the 'repudiation' of high modernism that she identifies in postcolonial literature.[44] Yet, such a polemical view of modernist form overlooks the degree to which Rhys's textual strategy work to complicate modes of discourse that asserts normative notions of subjectivity – normative notions, it hardly need be added, that implicitly work to demark who is Human and who is animal. Where Seshagiri's critique does offers a useful insight is in its honing in on the way in which human-animal relations speak to high modernism's complicated relationship with Enlightenment philosophy and the way that the affiliations and ambivalences that characterised that relationship informed modernist writer's literary strategies. Rohman, for instance, describes how the categories of the human and the animal represent the point 'beyond which [modernists such as Eliot] are not willing to … go".[45] Rhys's heterogeneous and irreducibly ambivalent engagement with zoophobia and animality, through both narrative and forms, can be seen as productively complicating accounts of modernism and animals, and gestures towards the heterogeneities that characterise modernism's humanist underpinnings.

Rhys's fiction works to present the way in which animality functions as a point of slippage in the dominant categories of Civilised and Savage, Coloniser and Colonised, Human and Animal. If the imperial project was predicated on constructing the non-European Other as primitive, an idea bolstered by Social Darwinism, then the latent and irrepressible human animality that Rhys portrays as intersecting across categories of race and class functions as a point of anxiety that eats away at the ideological structure of Empire. Writing in 1985, Spivak criticised the practices of western feminists whose readings of Victorian women writers overlooked the dynamics of Empire building going on in nineteenth century English novels.[46] With the hindsight of thirty or so years and the

ascendancy of animal studies, the same criticism might be made about the representation of the animal within postcolonial theory. If, as Wolfe has argued, the 'imperative of posthumanist critique' is not only to address anthropocentric ideologies but to function within a 'larger liberationist political project' that will furthermore dismantle the *discourse* of humanism, then a theoretically-sophisticated postcolonial animal studies is already in the process of arriving.[47] In revisionary re-readings of texts such as *Voyage in the Dark* and 'Pioneers, Oh, Pioneers!' it is possible to explore how writers shed light on the discourse of zoophobia within imperialist ideologies, and how they do so through experimentation with form and narrative. Moreover, in exploring how these textual practices relate to ideas of modernism and the inheritance of modernist practices in later literary epochs, such readings present new ways of evaluating the historical and critical narratives attached to terms such as Modernism and Postcolonial themselves.

Notes

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[1] Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p.23. Further reference will be cited parenthetically within the text as 'Voyage'.

[2] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal Therefore I Am,* trans. by David Wills, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallet, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p.101-2. It is worth noting that Derrida has little regard for the term 'the animal'; he writes that "the animal" is 'an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other' without attending to the singularity of animals (p.23) and later calls the terms an '*asinanity*' (p.31). I use the term 'the animal' in this article only as a very provisional placeholder and without losing sight of its inadequacy.

[3] Ibid, p.45.

[4] Ibid, p.101.

[5] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Second Edition, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.32.

[6] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, trans. by Oliver Davis, (London: Routledge, 2008), p.55.

[7] Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes sum up the benefits to such an approach in their introduction to *Semicolonial Joyce*, arguing that it is 'precisely from the limited compatibility' between postcolonial studies and James Joyce's oeuvre that 'the most interesting lessons can be drawn – for both readers of Joyce and theorists of colonialism'. The same, I would argue, is true for all modernist novelists writing in the period of late British Imperialism. See: Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes, 'Introduction', in *Semicolonial Joyce*, ed. by Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.1-18 (p.3).

[8] Tony Davies, *Humanism*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.141.

[9] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann, (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p.113-4.

[10] Ibid, p.216.

[11] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p.15 and p.204.

[12] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Introduction', *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp.7-34 (p.7-8).

[13] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.40.

[14] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Remembering the Limits: Difference, Identity and Practice', *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism*, ed. by Peter Osborne, (New York: Verso, 1991), pp.227-240 (p.229).

[15] Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): 243-261 (p.249).

[16] Derrida, p.13.

[17] Carrie Rohman, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p.22 and p.29. Whilst beyond the capacity of this essay, an extended analysis of animality in *Voyage in the Dark* would examine how the displacement of animality occurs not only along racial but class boundaries. Anna's aforementioned correlation between the white underclass and 'woodlice' (*Voyage* 23) speaks to an entomophobia that is further pronounced in her description of Ethel as an 'ant' who 'had her own cunning, which would always save her, which was sufficient to her. Feelers grow when feelers are needed and claws when claws are needed and cunning when cunning is needed…' (*Voyage* 91-2).

[18] Derrida, p.31.

[19] Rohman, p.29.

[20] Certainly, postcolonial scholars were not alone in sidestepping the question of the animal. Rather, the point being made here by Rohman is that the centrality of animality to the discourse of imperialism makes the lack of critical attention to the category of the animal all the more conspicuous. More recently however, attention is beginning to be directed towards questions of postcoloniality and animals. As I revised the final version of this article a book of essays entitled *Cosmopolitan Animals* was published that included a cluster of essays around postcolonial animals and focused on what Kaori Nagai and Caroline Rooney in their introduction to the cluster describe as the 'significant part' that animals play 'in upholding the humanist grand narrative of the postcolonial'. See Kaori Nagai and Caroline Rooney, 'Introduction', *Cosmopolitan Animals*, ed. by Kaori Nagai, Karen Jones, Donna Landry, Monica Mattfield, Caroline Rooney and Charlotte Sleigh, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), pp.197-200 (p.198).

[21] Cary Wolfe, *Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the "Outside"*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p.43. My emphasis.

[22] Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. p.215.

[23] Judith L. Raiskin, *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.98.

[24] Helen Carr, 'Jean Rhys: West Indian Intellectual.' *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bill Schwartz, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp.93-113 (p.102).

[25] Nagihan Haliloğlu, *Narrating from the Margins: Self-Representation of Female and Colonial Subjectivities in Jean Rhys' Novels*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), p.84 .

[26] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), p.92.

[27] Sue Thomas, *The Worlding of Jean Rhys*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1999), p.101.

[28] Merleau-Ponty, p.42.

[29] Ibid, p.92, my emphasis

[30] Philip Armstrong, 'The Postcolonial Animal', *Society & Animals* 10.4 (2002), pp.413-419 (p.414).

[31] Fanon, *Black Skin*, p.110.

[32] Merleau-Ponty, p.55.

[33] Spivak, 'Three', p.247.

[34] Rhys, 'Pioneers, Oh, Pioneers', *Sleep It Off Lady: Stories by Jean Rhys*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1976), pp.9-23 (p.12). Further reference will be cited parenthetically within the text as 'Pioneers'.

[35] Rhys's choice of names for the conservative English couple is, whether intentional or not, difficult not to read as an invocation of T.S. Eliot and his position as the figurehead of English modernism. Incidentally, Eliot had made a number of trips to the Caribbean in the 1950s and claimed to find 'nothing attractive in the West Indies other than the weather'. See Charles Pollard, *New World Modernisms: T. S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), pp.1-2.

[36] Patrick Brantlinger. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.39.

[37] Carr, *Rhys*, p.16 .

[38] Derrida, p.31.

[39] Rhys's short story, in this final aspect, offers is a particularly insightful example of René Girard's 'scapegoat effect' theory in which society maintains its equilibrium through a process in which conflicts and ruptures are 'reconciled at the expense of a third party who appears guilty or responsible for whatever ails, disturbs, or frightens the scapegoaters.' Rhys' story is exemplary in drawing out the zoophobia at work in the process, in which the term 'scapegoat' becomes more than a metaphor but actively aligns the scapegoated individual with the figure of "the animal". See René Girard, *The Girard Reader*, ed. by James G. Williams, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000), p.11.

[40] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.246.

[41] Censored, that is, by the publishing industry. Rhys's publishers, Chattos and Windus, rejected the manuscript and the novel was then sent to Constable, who agreed to publish it on the agreement that Rhys altered the ending so as Anna would not die on the abortionist's table.

[42] Urmila Seshagiri, 'Modernist Ashes, Postcolonial Phoenix: Jean Rhys and the Evolution of the English Novel in the

Twentieth Century', *Modernism/Modernity* 13.3 (2006), pp.487-505 (p.489).

[43] Bhabha. 'Signs Taken For Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817', *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985), pp.144-165 (p.153).

[44] Seshagiri, p.492.

[45] Rohman, p.30.

[46] Spivak, 'Three', pp.244-5.

[47] Wolfe, p.43.

‘I Am Your New Celebrity, I Am Your New America’: Disgust, Protest, and Performance in Terrorist Drag

Isabelle Norton

Currently, one of the most popular reality television shows in America is *RuPaul’s Drag Race*,[1] a competition show for drag queens modelled after programmes such as *America’s Next Top Model* and *Project Runway*. The programme retains relevance after eight seasons and several spin off series, and the effects of the show’s popularity have manifested in the material world. It has extended beyond the expected gay male audience, bringing large numbers of straight women and even straight men out of their living rooms and into gay bars to watch their favourite performers. For the first time since RuPaul’s reign as ‘Supermodel of the World’ in the 1980’s, drag has expanded beyond cult films and pride parades to become truly mainstream. In a time when LGBTQ organizations such as GLAAD are fighting for queer representation in the media and queer rights in general, the assimilation of drag into mainstream straight culture appears to be an example of enthusiastic acceptance for queer culture. However, critical viewing of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* and its reception produces a contrasting conclusion: the drag featured on *RuPaul’s Drag Race* and in most

performance venues is a heavily sanitized, often desexualized, rigid version of drag which prioritizes 'passing' as female, upper class, and conventionally beautiful.[2] The popularity of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and live drag performances within straight audiences is indicative of acceptance in some cases, but also of voyeurism and exoticism. As Daniel Punday notes in his article 'Foucault's Body Tropes', 'the modern body, we can say, is the normalized body – a body subjected to scientific, social, and economic surveillance'.[3] Participants in Western society can always expect to be surveyed against the parameters of normalized aesthetics and behaviours, and entertainers experience surveillance much more intensely. The point of mainstream drag is to create a beautiful, passably hyper-feminine character-object whose sole purpose is to be looked at. Her aesthetic represents the pinnacle of Western female beauty, embodying what straight women aspire to look like, while remaining exaggerated and performative enough that straight men can separate her from cisgendered women and uncomfortable stirrings of accidental desire for another biological man. Though this 'commercial drag' is the only brand of drag seen as acceptable to be shown on television and accepted into mainstream culture, an alternative form of drag has been created that directly opposes and protests sanitized commercial drag and everything it represents.[4] Rising out of the genre of tranimal drag, founded by Jer Ber Jones, terrorist drag deploys aesthetic and performance techniques which enables it to function as a legitimate form of performance art, as preceded by the highly lauded performance art of Leigh Bowery, Divine, and others. Terrorist drag actively and consciously uses drag performance as a social discourse, protesting norms in both straight and gay culture. (And queer culture in general, though it most directly addresses homosexual male cultural phenomena.) Unlike what José Esteban Muñoz describes as 'corporate drag' or 'commercial drag' in his article 'The White to Be Angry: Vaginal Davis's Terrorist Drag', terrorist drag aims to incite feelings of disgust, unease, desire, and contemplation simultaneously.[5] Terrorist drag inspires and

exacerbates these uncomfortable feelings by confronting and subverting mainstream ideas and practices of the American gay rights movement, gender/sexuality tropes, and class division. As its name implies, the disruption of the expected combined with forced confrontation with the Other creates an atmosphere of fear around the drag terrorist and their performances. This fear is transformative, both amplifying and complicating reactionary feelings like disgust or desire. Terrorist drag stands directly in opposition with sanitized corporate drag which removes the gay sexuality of its performers, generally in favour of replacing it with a heteronormative idealized version of straight female sexuality. Terrorist drag performances celebrate gay sexuality, protesting a common gay rights organization message that 'we are just like you' by enabling visibility of gay sex acts, cruising, and other practices associated with gay culture, while parodying the mainstream trope of the promiscuous gay man. Terrorist drag performances, in addition to confronting heteronormative fears of unabashedly sexual gay men, also plays with mainstream American fears and disgusts of the lower class, such as prostitutes and 'hicks', women, and ugliness.

Tranimal drag differs from most other genres of drag, including commercial and similarly popular pageant drag in that its general interests do not include meeting hegemonic, human standards of beauty. Muñoz described both the aesthetic and purpose of 'corporate' or 'commercial' drag as presenting 'a sanitized and desexualized queer subject for mass consumption, representing a certain strand of integrationist liberal pluralism'.[6] The desexualized feminine object that more traditional forms of drag aim to embody is inoffensive to a mainstream, mostly heterosexual audience. This proves problematic, because it perpetuates the notion that gay individuals are only fit for public consumption by subscribing to the stereotype that gay men are always incapable of any Western ideal of masculinity, and hinges on commodifying feminine beauty. In terrorist drag, 'the body provides a central point of resistance and challenge' to these

discourses; terrorist drag queens inscribe messages of protest onto their performing bodies for others to see.[7] Most performers aim to defy Western standards of human beauty in multiple ways, including wilful opposition in the case of terrorist drag performers. Within the Tranimal drag genre, artists tend to heavily feature found objects in their performance, or the garments they wear are destroyed and repurposed, like the common use of painted, ripped stockings worn as faces. The terrorist drag subsection of Tranimal drag shares the common use of garbage as garment, but in ways that are often disturbing and problematic for viewers. Using Trotter's theories on mess and waste detailed in his book *Cooking With Mud: The Idea of Mess in Nineteenth-Century Art and Fiction* enlightens the use of garbage in terrorist drag by studying the societal purposes and reactions to the waste performers smear on themselves. In essence, terrorist drag performance capitalizes on the capacity of mess to 'both nurture fantasy and destroy it'.[8] Terrorist drag uses costume to protest traditional standards of human beauty by acknowledging the 'rules' (for example, that women should be hairless and buxom) and defiantly performing the opposite. Performers commonly use rubbish bags as clothing, implying that the contents of the bags (the artist), are garbage. By willingly debasing oneself and self-identifying as garbage, terrorist drag performers challenge many closely held American ideals. By identifying as garbage, terrorist drag artists disown the quintessential American ideal of individual value by proclaiming oneself to be stripped of value, aligning oneself with the fear-inspiring abject. Additionally, such proclamations pre-empt criticism by outsiders on the worthlessness of terrorist art by playfully adopting the notion first. The integration of garbage into terrorist drag aesthetic, and the assertion that the performer is garbage herself, functions by raising the question inherent in waste: whose trash is she? Trotter's insight into the nineteenth century art remains relevant by answering, 'Modernity's redundant excess, and product of too much money, too many machines, and freedom of thought'.[9] Terrorist drag embodies

the waste of contemporary entertainment and political culture, the social byproducts of a market saturated with female pop/social media stars who are publically consumed and discarded before they are thirty-five. The nearly naked body of the drag terrorist echoes the female celebrities who maintain fame merely by being scantily clad, and the disgusting return of what society hoped to send away from itself. Christeene, the performance persona of Paul Soileau and perhaps the most popular terrorist drag performer, confirms this association between terrorist drag queens, celebrity culture, and trash by declaring 'I am your new celebrity/I am your new America/I am the piece of filthy meat you take home and treat to yourself' in her music video for the song 'African Mayonnaise', which will be returned to later in the essay.[10] As well as performing as the waste products of celebrities, drag terrorists also perform the dregs of society such as cheap prostitutes, the homeless, and other members of the lowest class. The bruises, rubbish bags, ruined pantyhose, and matted hair of the terrorist drag queen may not enable her to pass as a woman, but her ruined appearance does help her to pass as what American society constitutes as a degenerate. Combined with the philosophically rich notion of waste, the conflation of degeneracy and celebrity serve to create a more striking, anxiety-inducing drag persona. Both subsets of society are immediately familiar, from the street or the screen, but their unnatural combination with garbage as (sometimes literal) glue, encourages an uneasy mix of fascination and repulsion. The performance of being waste enables the creation of new fantasies, totally separate from the fantasy of female 'passing' that many other drag queens nurture.

In more prevalent genres of drag such as commercial or pageant, most drag queens prioritize passing, basing the personal value of their character and their own professional success on the perceived sexual and financial value of that character. For example, the performance of RuPaul Charles's character of the same name depends on viewers believing that she is

'Supermodel of the World', regardless of her actual place in the international modelling market which is actually dominated by biological women like Heidi Klum, Tyra Banks, Kate Moss, etc. By protesting passing in performance, drag terrorists put into actual practice the first of what Arlene Stein and Kenneth Plummer identify as the four hallmarks of queer theory, specifically, 'the conceptualization of sexuality which sees sexual power embodied in different levels of social life, expressed discursively and enforced through boundaries and binary divides' while protesting those boundaries and binary divides by stretching them to the point of rupture.[11] The passing that marks the skill, entertainment value, and marketability of a drag performer in more common genres of drag makes hard distinctions between portrayals of men and women, marking the success of a performance by how convincingly a performer moves between hegemonic gender expressions. Mainstream genres of drag also determine which types of women are worthy of emulation, privileging celebrity impersonation and trophy wives over prostitutes and unabashed gold diggers. Terrorist drag performers commonly wear little to nothing on their bodies, both obliterating any chance of passing and introducing an explicitly queer sexuality to the performance. Returning to Trotter's mess theory, the enthusiastically awful play at female passing in terrorist drag makes a mess of gender. The drag terrorist fails so spectacularly at passing that the masculine attributes of his body are actually amplified, and while the performer's body may remain an object of sexual desire to the queer male viewer, it serves to alienate and disgust the straight male viewer. Speaking of this disgust, Trotter observes 'you vomit because you have lost confidence in your ability to make sense of the world: your ability to categorize, order, explain, or tell stories about what has happened to you. Disgust is the product of conceptual trauma'.[12] When Christeene Vale performs 'Fix My Dick'[13] directly following 'Tears From My Pussy',[14] viewers cannot categorize her performance character as a man, a woman, or a man performing as a woman. Christeene's

gender can be determined by no one but Christeene, and can shift at any second, or refuse to stabilize for even a moment. This mess protests by wresting control of individual gender from a heteronormative, binary-minded audience. Conversely, a good mess also encourages the expansion of entertainment fantasies to include radically queer and gender-fluid identities, promoting visibility of the socially invisible.

If terrorist drag accurately emulates any component of a more mainstream aesthetic, it is pornography. Many drag queens and porn stars already craft several common features to create a hyper-feminine character, including full lips, hairless bodies, and large breasts. The popularity of pornography in the internet age and the pornification of popular culture, such as in the fashion and music industries, ensures that aesthetic references to pornography are generally recognized and well received. Terrorist drag queens subvert the porn aesthetic by abandoning the aspects that are visually arousing, such as by keeping their body hair and not wearing prosthetic breasts or hips, and retaining the general style of pornography. Rather than attempt to look like porn stars in their most polished and beautiful state, terrorist drag performers tend to imitate what female porn starlets look like at the end of the most degrading types of heterosexual porn videos. Removing the aesthetically pleasing aspects of pornography reveals the underbelly of an industry built on selling bodies, often the bodies of young women with finance or substance abuse problems. Christeene retains the mussed hair, smeared lipstick, inner-thigh bruises, and tear-streaked mascara of low budget porn starlets, composing the visual message that someone has been roughly used and discarded, like garbage. The conversion of a woman into waste that creates part of the appeal of mainstream straight porn is made shockingly obvious, repulsive, and quite sad in videos such as 'Tears from My Pussy'. Terrorist drag successfully twists the epitome of sexiness for many people, pornography, and makes it tremendously ugly and unappealing by replacing the usual,

expected female object with a male one. Trotter describes the horror that one feels when confronted with waste and people who are waste as 'loathing imbued with fear, a terrified revulsion which permits neither fight nor flight…in horror, you do not fight back either, either because the object of horror is too revolting to strike or grapple with, or because it is already inside you, so that to destroy it would be to destroy yourself'.[15] In Western society, where most people consume pornography, to recoil in horror from the filthy figure of Christeene requires the viewer to recognize what she is emulating, and the viewer's own role in producing the porn aesthetic. Furthermore, the decision to imitate the conventions of straight porn specifically with the aim of instilling horror and disgust also acts as a subversive gay rights protest. By igniting disgust and horror with a character almost directly ripped from heterosexual pornography, the straight viewer comes to loathe normalized, straight sexual behaviour. The disgust that drag terrorists engineer towards this type of heterosexual behaviour is strikingly similar to the disgust that many heterosexuals might feel towards displays of gay sexuality; in a way the drag terrorist has forced sympathy into the viewer. Attempting to inspire sympathy in potential heterosexual allies is a common tactic of gay rights campaigns, but the drag terrorist's execution is uniquely subversive.

In the American gay rights movement, many organizations seek to normalize LGBT+ relationships and people by likening them to straight ones, sending a message to the wider straight audience that 'we are just like you'. Unfortunately, by asserting that all gay people and all straight people are alike in their desires to pursue the stereotypical American Dream, organizations can alienate those who have no interest in such a life, or cannot achieve it for a variety of reasons. Gay rights organizations do important work, but projecting an assimilationist message can risk catering to possible straight allies at the expense of queer people in need. Terrorist drag loudly protests this notion; challenging the

assumption that in order to be accepted by heterosexual people, gay individuals must be like heterosexual people. Such assumptions underestimate or deny gay and straight difference on individual and cultural levels. Drag terrorists often privilege explicitly gay sexuality and cultural phenomena, countering gay rights messages that downplay gay identity and acknowledge an adapted heteronormative lifestyle as the legitimate way of living. In this way, drag terrorists practice Stein and Plummer's third hallmark of queer theory. By protesting both common straight perceptions and the messages of large gay rights organizations, terrorist drag performances serve as 'a rejection of civil-rights strategies in favour of a politics of carnival, transgression and parody which leads to deconstruction, decentring, revisionist readings and an anti-assimilationist politics'.[16] Themes in terrorist drag songs and performance may include a fervent love of cruising, blatant disinterest or distain towards the institution of marriage, frequent recreational drug use, and more risqué aspects of gay culture that many organizations choose not to advertise. Even now that casual sex is generally accepted in mainstream culture for young straight men and to a lesser extent, straight women, general homophobia and the after-effects of the AIDS scare of the 1980's still affect views on casual gay sex today. By hiding the prevalence of cruising and other perceivably high-risk behaviours in gay rights campaigns in order to relate and appear nonthreatening to the straight audience, the concept of gay sex and gay people as shameful and diseased persists. By voluntarily distancing activities that might be considered disgusting by the general public, widespread LGBTQIA acceptance becomes more unreachable, because the implicit message is that these activities are considered deviant in the LGBTQIA community itself. This disgust is rooted in a paranoid fear of contamination; either by heterosexuals as gay sex acts infiltrating their everyday lives, or by homosexuals as public knowledge of risqué activities poisoning the entire movement. In terrorist drag, performers are unabashedly sexual, and more importantly, the sex acts performed or alluded to in

performances are without consequence. The performer is not slut-shamed by herself or her partners, and the men she partners with enjoy themselves with equal abandon (even when the songs performed are about seducing straight men). This is the carnival politics that Stein and Plummer describe: playfulness and visual spectacle are used to disseminate political messages. Rather than a message of equality, terrorist drag performances may even advocate a notion of gay superiority. Performances often laud the positive aspects of a gay sexual life, including having no fear of accidental pregnancy, improved sexual availability, lack of inhibition, and enjoyment of a higher quality of sex. In his article 'Sexual Outlaws and Class Struggle: Rethinking History and Class Consciousness from a Queer Perspective', Tim Libretti suggests that 'If queers, incessantly told to alter their 'behavior,' can be understood as protesting not just the normal behavior but the *idea* of normal behavior, they will bring skepticism to the methodologies founded on that idea'.[17] By embracing gay sexuality and culture in a new form of gay pride, drag terrorists aim to question normality and all of the social limitations attached to it. Drag terrorists like Christeene present the gay party lifestyle as the enviable method of living rather than the traditional heteronormative model, sometimes by attacking heterosexuality outright and suggesting that straight men should give up on women entirely in order to join in the carnivalesque fun. Christeene's 'Bustin' Brown' video does this spectacularly, as she and two male-presenting partners joyfully roll around in a jumble of body parts and gunk, she raps about straight men secretly envying her sexual activities.[18] The idea that such a switch between sexualities could even be possible parodies tactics generally used by homophobic straight people in religious camps meant to 'reverse' homosexuality. No heterosexual man is going to be seduced by Christeene's lurid appearance, just as no homosexual person could be seduced or forced into change. By overtly and exaggeratedly praising homosexuality and claiming its superiority, terrorist drag queens are able to simultaneously show their gay pride and illustrate how ridiculous

traditionally straight claims of heterosexual superiority appear to others. Their performances imply that acceptance should not come packaged with limits, and promote cultural awareness and acceptance not only of gay people who prefer to live a more traditional lifestyle, but of all kinds of sexual and recreational activities between consenting adults.

Terrorist drag seeks to attack many assumptions and stereotypes attached to cultural ideas about gender, but two that it protests most loudly are against the trope of the 'fallen woman' and the 'promiscuous gay man'. The most foremost observation is that being a 'fallen woman' such as Christeene's prostitute, Vaginal Crème Davis's aged showgirl, or Jayne County's gutter-punk is generally disdained by Western society. Though the term connotes Victorian morality, its ability to describe the complex interplay of social alienation, financial destitution, and perceived moral failure remains relevant. Characters such as the aforementioned are generally only shown in popular media as victims, criminals, or corpses, in ways that are meant to demonize them while underrepresenting the actual number of 'fallen women' that exist. By not only portraying such characters, but placing them on stage/on camera, terrorist drag challenges acceptable representations of women. 'Fallen women' are essentially seen as the waste of society; their lives are defined in the public image as being systematically used by other people and discarded. Their lives illustrate the notion that 'waste can often be recycled, or put to alternative uses; if the system which produced it will not accommodate it, some other system will. Waste remains forever potentially in circulation because circulation is its defining quality'.[19] Here, the system that has produced 'fallen women' is the patriarchal contemporary society that correlates a woman's worth directly with the amount of sex she has had, and the system that accommodates them are more specific groups such as the prostitution industry or exploitative entertainment. As evidenced by Christeene's ballad 'Tears From My Pussy,' describing the life of a low-cost prostitute, 'fallen

women' are defined by their capacity to be used and recycled daily by men. In terrorist drag, 'counterpointing the tragedy evident in this systematic abuse of human potential is a certain bleak comedy'.[20] 'Tears From My Pussy' is unexpectedly sympathetic, and when Christeene croons 'My tee-ta's raw inside and I cannot hide the pain | Ya ain't payin' me for my quality | And you're gonna be to blame' the more comic vernacular and obvious visual cues that Christeene does not actually have female genitals cannot completely negate the imagery of being sexually used to the point of injury, and acknowledging oneself as utterly worthless, while blaming the men who made her this way.[21] While describing the cross-racial desire explored in Vaginal Davis's terrorist drag, Muñoz's ruminates on the minority 'snow queen' who believes that her entire life can be made better by obtaining a white partner and peripherally enjoying his privilege.[22] His work is useful in considering the prevalence of other 'fallen woman' type terrorist drag characters of several ethnicities. Though race features heavily in some drag terrorist performances, the theme of trying to better one's own situation by attaching oneself to a more privileged man runs through many songs and shows regardless of the artist's ethnicity. Even though many of these performances may be humorous, the aim seems to be tearing apart the 'snow queen' or *Pretty Woman*-type fantasy.[23] The efforts of these characters to build relationships with men are never fruitful, and often only lead to additional exploitation, degradation, and bodily injury. In addition to critiquing the social structures that enable this suffering to take place, terrorist drag does not totally absolve the victim of her unfortunate fate. Christeene's character is portrayed as stupid, or at least naïve, oblivious to her own unattractiveness, and foolish for trying to market herself based only on looks she do not possess. Vaginal Davis's character is presented similarly, though her character is poor and black, while Christeene (played by a Louisianan) is 'poor white trash'. However, the naiveté that leads the 'fallen women' characters to get themselves into exploitative situations is not based on actual

prostitutes or gold diggers, but on societal tropes of such figures. The idea that 'fallen women' are victimized because they lack something, like intelligence, restraint, or dignity confirms for the viewer that she somehow deserves her treatment and no regular citizen could suffer in the same way. Drag terrorists are not confirming that all sex workers are unintelligent in their performances, but protesting the entire concept of victim-blaming that imagines women this way. As with the appropriation of porn aesthetic and incorporation of explicit gay sex acts in regards to tropes about gay male promiscuity, the drag terrorist protests by portraying exactly what a society's popular opinions are and following them to the most extreme end, revealing the ugliness and ridiculousness therein.

The trope of the 'promiscuous gay man' is one that is often seen in American movies and television. Almost any time a gay character is introduced, which is not often, the character is an attractive white man who attempts to sleep with every man he encounters, gay or straight. While straight men are never successfully seduced by the gay character, the portrayal perpetuates the conception of gay men as predatory and without boundaries or morality in regard to sex. While this is a portrayal that many gay rights organizations try to combat by improving visibility of lesbians and gay men in 'normal' monogamous relationships, terrorist drag exaggerates this trope to absurd extremes. Performers protest censored images of gay people by being aggressively sex positive, but also protest the trope as shown on television by altering the intensity of performance. Rather than amuse straight audiences with homosexual flirting and implied sexual misadventure, drag performers explicitly simulate and perform sex acts in front of (or with) the audience in a way that would generally disgust a straight audience. Terrorist drag flips the gaze, as it were, making performances that are specifically enjoyable for a gay audience. Christeene's music video for 'African Mayonnaise', a critique of celebrity worship, illustrates this split by cutting footage of Christeene

and her backup dancers performing in public spaces, businesses, a Scientology centre, and finally a LGBTQIA-focused music festival.[24] When Christeene and her dancers arrive in a space where heterosexual people are presumably the majority, the reactions to their (nearly) nakedness and provocative dancing usually begin with camera phones being used to capture the strange activity, but shifts quickly to disgust and discomfort when Christeene actually gets near them, generally resulting in the performers being ejected from the space. Basically, her performance is fun to watch, but to be physically touched by Christeene is disgusting, as if her gayness was contagious or manifested in some unpleasant texture on her skin. 'Nausea, we might say, is fascination's limit, the point at which it becomes aware of itself in its own excess', and the nausea of the heterosexual audience is the exact point when the cameras are abandoned to push Christeene away.[25] Perhaps her gayness somehow is manifested in her bodily juices, in the sweat and saliva generated by her vigorous activities. Trotter refers to spitting specifically when he writes, 'it is to inflict a part of your inside on the world's outside', but this can be applied to excreted bodily fluids such as sweat as well.[26] Christeene wants to literally inflict her inside upon her viewers, as visually evident in the sweat and saliva of the 'African Mayonnaise' compilation or the positively slimy video for 'Bustin' Brown', which is set inside a giant rectum. While her performances in the street inspire straight men to shout religious criticisms at her, in the festival where the audience is presumably mostly queer, people react to Christeene with the same vigor she performs with. People copy her choreographed dances, men and women kiss her full on the mouth, they lie on tables and let her writhe on them. Drag terrorism for queer viewers is a good mess, and if her various juices, and therefore shamelessness and joie de vivre, rubs off on them, all the better. The trope of gay male promiscuity meant to portray gay men as morally incompetent at best and predatory becomes transformed into a message of sex positivity and gay pride.

Tied into both the 'fallen woman' trope and the copious use of garbage allows performers to portray characters that live in the lower, rougher echelons of the Western class system. Characters can include prostitutes, homeless people, 'trailer trash', or combinations thereof. The portrayal of lower class individuals connotes the history of earlier subcultural movements, including the punk movement, and gay culture's own place in American economic environments in recent history and the contemporary moment. Gay individuals have played key roles in the gentrification in American communities, and a large percentage of homeless youth are gay or transgendered, but these and similar facts remain unacknowledged in general American consciousness. Terrorist drag can be seen as protesting how current drag culture of 'commercial' and pageant-centric has dealt with, or failed to deal with, the legacy of drag left by 1970's ball culture as documented in queer cult films such as *Paris is Burning*.[27] By processing the legacy of ball culture in an alternative way, the drag terrorist's 'body provides a way of reading historical tensions and changes'.[28] Balls generally consisted of very poor, often black, performers competing to most realistically portray categories they could never hope to actually exist in (Marine, CEO, and cast member of *Dynasty* are examples). Present day pageants often judge competitors in similar categories, privileging performers with a high class or 'polished' aesthetic that focuses on 'realness' (or passability). Rather than continue producing fantasies of high class life and style, terrorist drag performers create characters with more in common with the individuals who competed in balls, many of whom worked in the sex industry, or were homeless. Trotter notes that 'Fantasy plays a decisive role in the formation of political identities and allegiances', and rather than perpetuate the same fantasies that 1980's ball queens created out of yearning, drag terrorists use fantasy to align themselves and pay homage to those lower class performers.[29] By portraying lower class figures such as prostitutes, drug addicts, and the homeless, drag terrorists can

attack issues that are arguably more serious and much less publicized than issues such as gay marriage. Police brutality, drug addiction, forced prostitution, and childhood sexual abuse are some of the dark themes that are present in drag terrorism which undermine the priority of much more popular, well-funded campaigns against bullying in schools and for gay marriage. The wrongness or rightness of those issues are not in question, but drag terrorists protest by dragging uglier, but still very widespread, issues into public visibility. Performing as exploited lower class individuals raises awareness for issues that are objectively more likely to endanger human life and inflict suffering. Such problems affect a significant portion of LGBTQIA individuals, particularly youth, while also being relatable to large populations of heterosexual women, and many heterosexual men as well. By introducing low class characters into drag, the drag terrorist uses intersectionality to expand gay rights protest, which generally focuses more on social issues, to include class-based protest. The combination of class protest and arguably feminist protest involved in battling the porn aesthetic and 'fallen woman' trope can serve to make terrorist drag very appealing to groups that may not otherwise join a gay rights movement, namely, heterosexual women. While a fun show done by a 'commercial' drag queen may bring heterosexual women and men into the gay bars, terrorist drag engages with them on a more relatable, visceral level. The fear invoked is not only of the unfamiliar, but of the traumas either lived or ignored daily by viewers. The possible political alliance formed by the drag terrorist's slum-based fantasy functions to both protest issues pertinent to improving LGBTQIA quality of life, and attracting allies from a much larger pool into the cause.

By protesting both mainstream heterosexual and homosexual culture by critiquing normalized standards of feminine beauty, passing, the gay rights movement, media tropes, and acceptable representations of both women and gay men, terrorist drag seeks to subvert public opinion towards

these issues in favour of limitless acceptance. Using theories of waste and mess, terrorist drag queens create a mirror to society to reflect what is both constantly produced and constantly rendered invisible, such as 'fallen women', sexualized or otherwise radical queers, and the lower class. Terrorist drag queens such as Christeene fortunately seem to be growing in popularity as viewers of programs such as *RuPaul's Drag Race* become more interested in the drag scene. The multimedia presence of Christeene and others increases the visibility of this alternative genre of drag by producing music albums and festival-quality videos in addition to touring live performances. The popularity of terrorist drag queens rising in tandem with commercial drag suggests that not only have many other viewers noticed the problematic nature of the themes terrorist drag queens confront, but that they are willing to support such protests and probably recruit others as well. The triggering of disgust, desire, and contemplation that is central to terrorist drag performances not only produces revelations and motivation for protest then, but may also inspire an expansion of discourse. They share Trotter's description of Melville's spit-flinging character Landless when he notes, 'this lack of dignity furnishes Landless with a certain strength, at once enviable and repellent'.[30] The strength of the terrorist drag queen, entwined with her baseness, ensures that social injustice may never be without a terrorist drag queen spitting in its face.

Notes

[1] 'RuPaul's Drag Race', dir. by (Logo, 2009-Present).

[2] Eir-Anne Edgar , 'Xtravaganza!': Drag Representation and Articulation in 'RuPaul's Drag Race', *Studies in Popular Culture*, 34.1, (2011), 133-146, in <*http://www.jstor.org/stable/23416354* > *[accessed 24 March 2016]*.

[3] Daniel Punday, 'Foucault's Body Tropes', *New Literary History*, 31.3, (2000), 509-528, in <*http://www.jstor.org/*> *[accessed 16 January 2014]*. (p. 511).

[4] José Esteban Muñoz, 'The White to Be Angry: Vaginal Davis's Terrorist Drag', *Social Text: Queer Transexions of Race, Nation, and Gender* , 52/53, (1997), 80-103, in <*http://www.jstor.org/*> *[accessed 16 January 2014]*. (p.85).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Punday, p. 521

[8] David Trotter, *Cooking with Mud: The Idea of Mess in Nineteenth-Century Art and Fiction* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000). (p. 1).

[9] Ibid, p. 19.

[10] Paul Soileau, African Mayonnaise, 2012 <*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJd9kxX7too*> *[accessed 25 March 2016]*

[11] Arlene Stein, Kenneth Plummer, 'I Can't Even Think Straight: 'Queer' Theory and the Missing Sexual Revolution in Sociology', *Sociological Theory*, 12.2, (1994), 178-187, in<*http://www.jstor.org/*> *[accessed 16 January 2014]*. (pp. 181, 182).

[12] Trotter, p. 158.

[13] Paul Soileau, Fix My Dick, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkL9Fpp1FF4> [accessed 25 March 2016].

[14] Paul Soileau, Tears From My Pussy, 2012 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dt_HcHtGG3Y> [accessed 25 March 2016]

[15] Trotter, p. 153.

[16] Stein and Plummer, pp. 181, 182.

[17] Tim Libretti , 'Sexual Outlaws and Class Struggle: Rethinking History and Class Consciousness from a Queer Perspective', *College English*, 62.2, (2004), 154-171, in *<http://www.jstor.org/> [accessed 16 January 2014]*. (pp. 161, 162)

[18] Paul Soileau, Bustin' Brown, 2012 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5ycIxB4MTI> [accessed 25 March 2016]

[19] Trotter, p. 20.

[20] Ibid, p. 17.

[21] Soileau.

[22] Muñoz, p. 84.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Soileau.

[25] Trotter, p. 211.

[26] Trotter, p. 64.

[27] 'Paris is Burning', dir. by Jennie Livingston (Academy Entertainment, 1991).

[28] Punday, p. 513.

[29] Trotter, p. 263.

[30] Trotter, p. 66.

'My own flesh and blood, old Nick': John Fante's Domestic Devils

Michael Docherty

I have never understood why people who can swallow the enormous improbability of a personal God boggle at a personal Devil. I have known so intimately the way that demon works in my imagination.

Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair*

John Fante is perhaps best remembered as *Ask the Dust*'s (1939) chronicler of sun-baked, strung-out Los Angeles street life. A great number of his stories and novels, however, are set against the altogether different landscape of snow-covered small-town Colorado. These are tales deeply rooted in Fante's own boyhood as the eldest child of a poor Italian-American family in the town of Boulder in the 1910s and 1920s. Anthony Julian Tamburri puts it simply: they are stories which 'celebrate their ethnicity and cultural origin [by] tell[ing] of the trials and tribulations of Italian immigrants and their children'.[1] These meditations on the transient joys of childhood and the disquieting epiphanies of growing up between two cultures are populated by thoughtful, frustrated (male) children, intensely religious mothers, and unreliable fathers who regularly bring their families to the brink of financial ruin.

Although they vary from story to story, these character types return time and again in Fante's Colorado tales, as I will show, alongside another recurring figure: God. Catholic guilt and the horror of potential damnation loom large in these tableaux of working-class Italian-American existence, as indicated by even a cursory glance at some of their titles. The posthumous anthology *The Wine of Youth* includes 'First Communion', 'Altar Boy', 'The Road to Hell', 'The Wrath of God', 'Hail Mary' (all these originally collected in 1940's *Dago Red*), 'A Nun No More', and 'My Father's God'.[2] The theme of Catholic faith, specifically a particularly devout, literalist belief in God, miracles, and Heaven and Hell as tangible physical entities,[3] is such a familiar one in Fante's work that it has also become something of a commonplace in Fante studies. Scholars including Fred L. Gardaphé, Catherine Kordich, Rocco Marinaccio, and Stephen Cooper have all addressed the theme of religion in Fante's work.[4]

It is perhaps surprising then that the obvious and necessary counterpart to the fear of God – that is, a fear of the Devil, tempter of the good Christian and tormenter of the failed one – has thus far escaped the attentions of Fante criticism. In partial redress, I will here attempt to demonstrate that in a significant number of Fante's writings the Devil is every bit as prevalent and vital a presence as God. Moreover, I will argue that such a foregrounding of the Devil in a new reading of these texts significantly recontextualises the intersection between two of Fante's other major themes: the role of fathers as viewed by their sons, and the economic privations endured by Italian immigrant families in early twentieth-century America.

'The Orgy' is a tale of a typical Colorado-dwelling son of Italian immigrants whose bricklaying father is improbably given the deed to a goldmine by his hod-carrier, a sharply-dressed African-American gambler named Speed Blivins, who has just won big on the stock market.[5] The boy's Papa and his best friend, a coarse, heavy-drinking, truculent atheist called

Frank Gagliano, begin making weekend excursions to the mine, but these trips prove fruitless. The boy's devout, quintessentially Fantean mother, who is terrified and disgusted by Frank's faithlessness, becomes suspicious and insists upon the boy accompanying the men on one of their trips. When he does so, his mother's worst fears are confirmed, as his Papa and Frank are joined by an unfamiliar woman named Rhoda Pruitt for the titular congress – a bathetic Bacchanal held in a frozen shack reeking of 'urine and bowel gas, of mouldy mattresses and cooking grease'.[6]

The Devil looms large throughout 'The Orgy', as a persistent, imminent and palpable threat to the boy's world, and is initially identified with Frank, who is regarded by the boy's mother as an 'evil disciple of the Devil', his allegiance to a 'sinister philosophy' further alluded to in his left-handedness.[7] Such is Mama's certainty of Frank's alliance with Satan that she fears her husband too will be dragged towards Hell by his friend's influence and that, indeed, this is Frank's express design. She 'saw the mine as a satanic hole [...] where an evil atheist lured a good Christian man'.[8]

It is clear that for Mama the fear of a Satanic presence in the household is intimately bound up another great anxiety common to Fante's Colorado matriarchs. This is the fear that even the household's most basic needs may come to exceed her husband's meagre, inconsistent means and that in consequence she will be unable in her role as homemaker to prevent the family from passing from the realm of mere financial insecurity (termed 'comfortable poverty' by the narrator) and into that of outright penury.[9] Such a fear recurs in the figure of the terrified mother facing the grocer to whom the family is indebted in the story 'Charge It'.[10] It is also the fear of the boy in 'A Wife for Dino Rossi', for whom the delicious smell of ravioli on a day other than Christmas or Easter causes only suspicion and anxiety, so rarely can his family countenance such an indulgence.[11] It is the terror of Grandma Bettina in the

posthumously-published *1933 Was a Bad Year* (1985), who has '"travelled five thousand miles in steerage to a barbarian land"', only to find '"hunger and men walking the streets, [...] your father without a job for seven months"'.[12] It is the shame of the weeping mother in the story 'Altar Boy', lying to her son that the embarrassing wreck of a second-hand bike he has been given on St Joseph's Day is only in such a condition because it 'got ruined on the way down from Heaven'.[13]

'The Orgy' is set during a single summer, and thus unlike some of Fante's other stories (e.g. in 'Bricklayer in the Snow',[14] or the aforementioned *1933 Was a Bad Year*[15]) need not address the existential risks of economic dependency upon the seasonal vicissitudes of the building trade. As such, the family in 'The Orgy' is less conspicuously marked by hardship than some of its counterparts in the Fante corpus. Nevertheless, even here there are clear signs that the spectre of privation is a constant concern.

More significant is the reason that Mama tolerates Papa's friendship with Frank: it is an 'economic fact of life she had to accept'. Mama accepts that the family's subsistence, contingent as it is upon the construction business itself, is by extension also contingent upon Frank, because he works on the same sites and crews as Papa and is therefore irremovable from their lives. She understands that the only way to exorcise Gagliano's dangerous presence from her family's world would be for her husband to abandon his employment in the only trade he knows, and that this is impossible. Mama's accession to the 'economic fact' of Frank's dangerous, spiritually-contaminant presence is thus the result of weighing the metaphysical terror of possible damnation against the more proximate concerns of day-to-day hardship. Even the story's moral and spiritual arbiter is forced to concede that the temporal-but-immediate must take precedence over the eternal-but-deferred: the worldly fear overpowers the supernatural one – even though the Mama's

own belief system dictates that the ramifications of the latter are of far greater consequence.

In light of this, it is worth noting that the form of Catholicism practised by Italian-Americans in the early twentieth-century was itself marked by a particularly complex relationship between economic and spiritual outcomes. Some insight on this unique religious culture can be found in William Foote Whyte's landmark participant observation study of an urban Italian-American community, *Street Corner Society* (1943). Whyte remarks upon the significance of the *Festa*, the annual celebration dedicated to a community's patron saint, in understanding the complex consanguinity between the spiritual and the worldly (specifically, the financial) in the belief systems of these communities.[16] The *Festa* was a social phenomenon defined by monetary transactions: first in the soliciting of donations from the (typically poor) community by the organising committee prior to the event, and then most strikingly the practice of making monetary donations to the statue of the saint as it was carried through the streets. These were donations with a dual meaning: they paid for earthly things – the festival itself and the maintenance of local religious institutions – but were also understood to have divine currency. One of Whyte's interviewees explains this practice thus:

> Yes, God knows everything, but we are weak sinners. Why should he grant us the favors that we ask? […] If the sinner prays to the saint, the saint stands in right with God, and God takes pity upon the sinner and forgives him his sins. That is the spiritual world. It is the same way in the material world except that here we are dealing with material things. If you drive a car, and the policeman stops you for speeding and gives you a ticket, you don't wait till you go before the judge. You go to […] some person of influence [… P]erhaps the captain knows

> your brother […] Out of friendship he will forgive you.[17]

Whyte provocatively asks his interlocutor if 'paying the captain to drop the matter was the same thing as giving money to the saint in the procession'. His respondent's rebuttal is firm yet, tellingly, only partial. He protests that 'that's different', and '[y]ou cannot buy a favour from God' – but in the same breath concedes that the donation to the saint is a way 'to show your faith', having already explained that it is by showing one's faith to the saint that one hopes the saint will intercede with God.[18] Thus the *Festa* denotes an explicit connection in early twentieth-century Italian-American Catholicism between being in good standing financially (i.e. having the wherewithal to make a socially-respectable donation to the saint) and being in good standing with God. Earthly capital is necessary collateral for the extension of a divine line of credit.

The ancestral culture of the *Festa* intervenes idiosyncratically in yet older and still-unresolved arguments within Christianity more broadly as to the status, role and significance of poverty in religious life. The awkward superposition thereon of early twentieth-century Italian-American Catholicism's saint cults, with their idiosyncratic and explicit relationship between financial means and the fate of one's soul, represents the subtext and intertext of the near-impossible situation in which Mama of 'The Orgy' finds herself regarding the simultaneous economic necessity and spiritual danger of Frank's presence within her family's life. When the acquisition of wealth and goods can simultaneously be a temptation of the Devil, a prerequisite for achieving intercession with God via a saint, *and* a necessary part of keeping one's family alive and healthy, the question of what poverty means becomes fraught with difficulty.

For Fante's Colorado matriarchs therefore no "straightforward" binary choice (if such a choice could ever be

so called) exists between spiritual and worldly prosperity – the fear of penury (while remaining devout) or the fear of damnation (while preserving a more comfortable standard of living on earth). This is because, as Whyte makes clear, this is a socio-religious culture in which God, no less so than the impatient local grocer, may wish to settle in cash. In the Fante texts I will discuss in the following sections of this paper I find that that the complex intersection between these twin fears (damnation and privation) is located regularly within the figure of the family's father. This is because he embodies both the principal threat to the family's economic fate (as an unreliable sole breadwinner) *and* makes threateningly corporeal the threat to its spiritual fate – as time and again Fante aligns his father figures with images of the Devil.

This begins to become clear throughout 'The Orgy', as an extended act of misdirection betrays itself and both the boy and the reader start to apprehend that the truly Satanic figure may not be Frank, as per Mama's initial suspicions, but in fact Papa himself. In the very first scene we see that Frank is calmly unaffected by Mama's righteous tirade against him, but her husband is visibly 'disgusted' and averts his eyes, 'blotting out the scene' as she cleanses her home with holy water after Gagliano has visited.[19] It is then her husband's face in which she throws a handful of the holy water, further heightening the sense that he, not Frank, might be the real evil to be expelled.

As the family prays for success at the mine the phenomenon of the saint cult, as referred to in Whyte's discussion of the *Festa* and more recently detailed by Salvatore Primeggia, is invoked by Papa, who implores his children not to petition God but saints, the more obscure the better.[20] As characteristic of Italian-American Catholicism in this period as saint cults were, there is something curious in Papa's determination to reject God so completely as a possible source of divine benevolence. God, Papa claims, is '[n]ot lucky [… He] never done a thing for me yet'.[21] The boy asks him point-blank

if he believes in God; Papa refuses to answer.[22] Furthermore, when one of his children declares he will pray to St Joseph, reasoning that, as a carpenter, Joseph will intercede for a fellow member of the building trade, Papa rejects this suggestion with a curt dismissal: 'I don't like carpenters'.[23] It is impossible to ignore that such a wholesale distaste for the carpentry profession must necessarily include its most famous exponent: St Joseph's "stepson" and the Devil's great adversary, Jesus Christ himself.

Papa's preferred choice is San Gennaro, who is patron saint of Naples and, Papa claims, has aided him in the past. Hiding within this apparent display of hagiographic knowledge, however, is another subtle suggestion of a rejection of God. San Gennaro, referred to by his Latin name of Sanctus Januarius, is the subject of a poem and the title of a book in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*,[24] and it is in *The Gay Science* that Nietzsche first declared that 'God is dead'.[25] There is no suggestion that Papa has read Nietzsche, but Fante was a devoted disciple of his work, especially in his youth, and as such it is difficult to dismiss the allusion as coincidental. Stephen Cooper has noted Nietzsche's major foundational influence on Fante's writing and personal philosophy.

> Hand in hand with his conversion to [H.L.] Menckenism came Fante's autodidactic encounter with […] the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche […] Fante passed into a thoroughgoing if unsystematic immersion in several of Nietzsche's principal works.[26]

Though in later years Fante became more circumspect in his appreciation of Nietzsche's work, the German philosopher nonetheless remained 'one of Fante's gods'.[27]

As the boy approaches the mine alongside Papa and Frank, the Devil makes his most explicit appearance yet:

> Crowning it all was the sign on the roof over the door. It was painted on a sheet of plywood, the figure of a devil done in red and black, with horns, hooves, and a speared serpentine tail. His eyes were slanted and his mouth was screwed into a grin. Beneath was the inscription:
>
> RED DEVIL MINING CORP.
>
> VICO STEFFANINI AND FRANK GAGLIANO, PROP.[28]

The boy's reaction to this fearlessly God-baiting display is one of terror and bewilderment: 'You didn't show off a devil. […] It was frightening. It was madness'.[29] As he attempts to make sense of this, there follows a further play of misdirection as to who is identified most closely with the figure on the sign. Again, the initial connection is with Frank, who happily declares the painted Devil – 'old Red' – to be his 'buddy'.[30] By this point in the tale, however, we are aware that Frank's temperament is so abrasive that he seems only to have one real 'buddy' – Papa. The text is clear that they are 'best friend[s]'.[31] Given this, Frank's declaration of friendship with the Devil on the signboard takes on an insidious new meaning: if Papa is Frank's only friend, then to reveal that the Devil is his 'buddy' is to admit that Papa and the Devil are one and the same. To reverse and re-parse the syntax, his buddy is the Devil.

The name on the sign is also revealing. Whilst the boy's father is usually referred to simply as 'Papa', he is also called 'Nick' by Rhoda Pruitt. On the sign, however, he is 'Vico Steffanini', and the story never confirms his true name. One of the Devil's defining characteristics in scripture and folklore alike is a propensity for shifting, false guises, and he is known by a lengthy list of pseudonyms and epithets. Triple-named Nick/Vico/Papa seems to exhibit something of the same quality

here; moreover, one of the Devil's popular sobriquets (Nick or Old Nick) is also one of his own – a fact to which I will return.

As Papa attempts to duck responsibility for the presence of the painted Devil, another grammatical sleight of hand appears superficially to locate the Satanic association with Frank while in fact subtly redirecting it once more to Papa.

> 'Frank's idea,' my father said guiltily. 'It don't mean a thing.'
>
> Maybe not, but as I glanced at him again he looked like the king of the mountain and a long time resident of those parts.[32]

The use of the pronoun 'him' rather than a specific name, in addition to the fact that it is Papa with whom the boy is conversing, creates an ambiguity as to whom the 'glance' is directed. In both grammatical and narrative context, the sentence can be read with equal sense whether the subject of the glance - 'the king of the mountain and a long time resident of those parts' – is the Devil on the sign or Papa himself. In refusing to assign itself with certainty to either figure, the sentence generates a dual consciousness, extending the possibility that it in fact refers to both, suggesting a closeness of association between Papa and the Devil by superimposing them in the same grammatical space.

Another failure to read accurately the relationship between Frank, Papa and the Devil occurs when Mama tells Papa about a troubling dream:

> 'It was a sign from God. You were down at the bottom of the mine, and he was throwing big rocks at you, burying you alive.'

This reflects the boy's aforementioned understanding that Mama believes the mine to be a 'satanic hole' to which Frank 'lures'

Papa. Given, however, the long-held familiar identification of Hell as a place "under the earth" or associated with a descent into darkness,[33] and persistently implied within the text by the association of the mine with the Devil, the image from Mama's dream is problematic. If the mine, as a 'satanic hole', is identified with Hell, the Devil's notionally underground home, surely the person located within and identified with the bottom of the pit, i.e. Papa, is the truly Devilish figure. It is Papa, not Frank, who owns the figurative Hell of the mine; he is granted the deeds and invites Frank to join his enterprise. If anybody is being 'lured' to the mine it is Frank, not Papa. This sense also bears upon the boy's own wish to see Frank 'condemned […] to the depths of hell [where] he would cook […] in a great cauldron of hot oil, with the gleeful devil dancing about'.[34] If Frank can be condemned *to* Hell, he cannot be "of" Hell to begin with; given he cannot logically be the 'gleeful devil' of his own tormenting, we might ask who that might be. Once more, apparent connections between Frank and the Devil in fact reveal Papa's Satanic association to be the far closer and more coherent one.

The boy awakes in the squalid mountain cabin to the sound of the three adults' voices. He runs, 'enchanted by the sense of evil' in the best Gothic tradition, unable to resist the call of the terrifying mystery even as he dimly senses the doom it portends.[35] Sure enough the boy soon finds Frank, Papa and Rhoda at the mouth of the mineshaft, 'grunting and sucking and squirming in the naked heavy slithering of arms and legs.'[36] Immediately there is a Satanic image – they are 'like a ball of squirming white snakes' – followed by the boy's ultimate realisation of the truth that the text has been inviting him (and us) to recognise: 'I saw my father's face. It was the face of the devil on the door.'[37] The boy begins madly dousing the adults with holy water. Grappling with the shocking new possibility that his father is not an innocent man assuaged by the Devil but in fact the Satanic host himself, he is unsure whether he must kill the Devil to prevent his father from being attacked, or

exorcise the Devil from within his father, and alternates wildly between the two possibilities: 'drive the devil out, kill the devil, save my father, free my father!'[38]

Afterwards, the boy attempts to rationalise what has happened, to deny his epiphany of the Devil within his father and instead to assign all culpability to Frank Gagliano. The desperately circular logic of his attempt, however, reveals its futility: 'he was my father and he could not have done that, for he was my father and some things were not possible'.[39] Such attempts at self-deception fail because they cannot erase a tell-tale physical reminder of his earlier encounter with his father's transmogrified Satanic state, recalling the long-standing folkloric image of the Devil as having cloven hooves, or being goat-like: 'his thick calloused hand […] was like the hoof of an animal.'[40]

'The Orgy' is perhaps Fante's most explicit and sustained engagement with the Devil as a personage identified with the figure of the father, but the association between fathers and the image of Satan recurs in several other Fante texts. In 'The Road to Hell', Sister Mary Joseph instructs a class of children on the confessional, illustrating her lesson with an account of 'the Kid', a boy 'spurred on by the coaxing of Lucifer' to commit the 'grievous sin' of stealing a baseball glove'. [41] When the nun invites the class to speculate as to her narrative's outcome, the male students are certain that he took the glove, having found 'the words of Satan more powerful than the words of his Guardian Angel'.[42] The narrator, whose 'folks were poor people', reasons from his own experience that the Kid stole the glove on grounds of his parents' poverty[43]. The narrator's friend Clyde does not suffer from parental hardship, but draws upon his own experience of over-cautious parents who discourage him from playing baseball to suggest that the Kid 'swiped [the glove] because his folks wouldn't let him have one'.[44]

Intriguingly, in both boys' accounts it is a parental characteristic or action that provides an apparently irresistible

earthly causation for the supernaturally-attributed temptation. At no point, however, do they deny or derogate the literal role of the Devil in the tempting: the narrator 'know[s] how that Kid felt', because he has 'listened to the Devil plenty'.[45] The earthly explanation is not a substitute for or a rationalisation of the supernatural one; they sit alongside each other, equally real, equally proximate, operating in concert. There is a clear suggestion in the children's logic, then, that parental and Satanic temptation are equally strong, and moreover so inextricably linked as to be indistinguishable from each other. Even Sister Mary Joseph gestures towards this possibility of co-operative parental-Satanic temptation when her telling of the Kid's story allows the Devil to speak on behalf of the Kid's father, articulating a supernatural enticement in terms of its earthly counterpart. As the nun's Devil puts it, '"Now tell me where *you'll* get five dollars! It's a cinch your father hasn't got it."'[46]

This dynamic is revisited when the Kid's friends ask him how he obtained the glove. He embarks on a series of increasingly outlandish explanations but his first instinct is to claim that 'his father had got it'.[47] Certainly, this in one sense incorrect and is accordingly described as 'Lie Number One'. Given, however, that the Kid obtained the glove by dint of the Devil, a statement that he received it from his father can be read with equal sense as a suggestion that his father *is* the Devil (a grammatical slipperiness recalling Frank Gagliano's blithe revelation in 'The Orgy' that the signboard Devil is 'his buddy' (i.e. Papa)). That such connections appear even in a story in which Sister Mary Joseph claims the father to be 'a pious man with a horror of evil' only heightens the sense that this strange father-Devil axis has a terrifyingly insidious persistence whereby it is able to articulate itself even where the narrative context should form a periapt against it.[48] Even in a tale told by a nun for its devoutly conventional instructive value, the troubling unbidden counternarrative – that fathers and the Devil might be kin – finds a way to reveal itself.

The young Arturo Bandini of Fante's 1938 novel *Wait Until Spring, Bandini* is yet another poor boy whose determination to escape the Devil is stymied by the nagging suspicion that Satan lives very close to home indeed. Arturo is a speculator and calculator of sin: a pragmatic altar boy, his devotion to religious study is rooted in an almost taxonomic determination to understand fully the relative severity of different sins, what they entail and the punishments they incur. Through such diligence Arturo aims minimise his time in purgatory, and at the very least avoid Hell:

> He always got to confession on time – that is, before he died. […] So Arturo was pretty sure he wouldn't go to hell when he died. For two reasons. The confessional, and the fact that he was a fast runner.[49]

The young Arturo is far from sinless, but it is precisely because he studiously catalogues his many misdemeanours, weighing them against the catechism, that he proves to be one of Fante's most religiously credulous, sincerely devout and God-fearing protagonists:

> Sixty-eight mortal sins in one week, from the Second Commandment alone. Wow! […] He listened in alarm to the beat of his heart, wondering if it would stop and he drop dead before he got those things off his chest […] Venial sins? Mortal sins? The classifications pestered him. The number of sins against [the Fourth Commandment] exhausted him; he would count them to the hundreds as he examined his days hour by hour.[50]

This attitude is set in constant dramatic opposition to a father who, even by the low standards of Fante's usual flawed patriarchs, is a man of overwhelming shortcomings. Svevo

Bandini is a heretic outcast, raging against a God whose existence he by turns denies and blames for his misfortunes. Svevo jeopardises the security and wellbeing of his family by drinking and gambling away his earnings; he runs up vast debts and places his wife in the humiliating position of having to ask the grocer to extend already long-overdue credit. Unable to face either the consequences of such actions or the imminent visit of his mother-in-law, Svevo walks out on the family for ten days immediately prior to Christmas, abandoning the saintly Maria for a rich widow. Even when Svevo eventually returns, on Christmas Eve, he does so with a complete refusal to acknowledge his wrongs, instead showing 'defiance in his jaw' and inflaming the situation further (while claiming innocent intentions) by brandishing money obtained from the widow.[51]

Svevo routinely 'scorn[s] the Mass', reasoning that if God is everywhere he may be found just as readily in the poolhall; moreover, Svevo seems to take an impish delight in the consternation such provocations cause, blithely unconcerned at the way his wife 'shuddered in horror at this piece of theology'.[52] Fante casts Svevo's heresy into sharp relief against Arturo, who is wowed by his father's boldness and shares some of his reluctance to attend church, but by contrast with God-goading Svevo finds that when 'he did not go, a great fear clutched him, and he was miserable and frightened until he had got it off his chest in the confessional'.[53] By continually showing Svevo Bandini committing with impunity and without fear of eternal consequence the very sorts of sins that his son Arturo expends so much time and anguish in avoiding, Fante creates the impression that Bandini Sr. can only be, like Blake's Milton, 'of the Devil's party'.[54]

Hints of Svevo's allegiances are apparent from the novel's very first pages. In a description of his shoulder muscles he is, we are told, a man with 'snakes inside', alluding to the Biblical serpent just as the climactic scene of 'The Orgy' does.[55] (The image will recur again later, when Svevo's wife sees 'the

serpent of guilt that wound itself into the ghastly figure of his face'.[56]) Svevo repeats a curse, striking in its brazen blasphemy and enmity towards the almighty: '*Dio cane. Dio cane.* It means God is a dog'.[57] Another curse of choice is '*Diavolo!*' (Devil), but it seems telling that where *'Dio cane*' is always used to express a vengeful fury, '*Diavolo!*' by contrast is invoked in circumstances in which Svevo seeks assistance to calm his temper or manage a situation, as when he trips over Arturo's sled or struggles with his shoelaces[58].

More troublingly, Svevo even appears to carry the uncanny power of some life-draining curse:

> At birth he had stolen [his eyes] from his mother – for after the birth of Svevo Bandini, his mother was never quite the same, always ill, always with sickly eyes after his birth, and then she died and it was Svevo's turn to carry soft brown eyes.[59]

In the very act of emerging from the womb Svevo Bandini apparently commits some kind of metaphysical assault on his mother which causes her to die shortly after by somehow consuming her life-force through her eyes (recalling simultaneously the proverbial window to the soul, the old Italian peasant belief in the curse of the *mal' occhio* (evil eye),[60] and the Biblical exhortation that 'the light of thy body is thy eye').[61] One can scarcely imagine a more ill-omened entrance into the world and the narrative. Indeed, it suggests both the longstanding folklore around demonically- or Satanically-possessed children (later exploited to great effect by horror literature and cinema), and Milton's allegory of Death, son of Satan, who is birthed by Sin (herself Satan's daughter), only to ravage her immediately.[62] Even if Svevo has somehow consumed his mother's soul, however, his own remains chillingly difficult to locate. It is said that Svevo's long suffering-wife Maria has a particular ability to sense the souls of others, 'a woman who looked upon all the

living and the dead as soul, [she] knew what a soul was', yet even she, despite her gift, 'never saw his soul'.[63] Throughout Svevo's introduction, the holy-named Maria is associated with the word 'white' at least eight times in just two pages, while Svevo walks through a blanket of white snow[64]. Again, he stands in sharp relief, the monstrous character outlined above as the only dark blot compromising a pure white landscape and a pure white Madonna figure. The novel's opening pages, then, present a father as a dark contaminant of the pristine, a God-cursing, serpentine life-devourer who killed his own mother in the act of his birth and may even lack a soul entirely. There may be no literal sign of the Devil as in 'The Orgy', but it is difficult to conceive of a more demonic introduction.

Svevo is an extreme example of Fante's Devil-father figure, but many others retain an echo of his characteristics, or those of Vico in 'The Orgy': from Nick Molise of *The Brotherhood of the Grape*,[65] to Peter Molise of *1933 Was a Bad Year*,[66] the male elders in stories like 'A Bad Woman',[67] 'Bricklayer in the Snow',[68] and many others. Perhaps none of Fante's other father characters attain quite the heightened sense of the Satanic that Svevo and Vico display, but whilst not all of Fante's fathers are devils, they are certainly all devil*ish*. By this I refer to the sense of chaos they bring to each narrative, a puckish lack of regard to the consequences for others of their actions, a reckless unpredictability and in many cases a disregard for conventional (Christian) morality, embodied as ever in drinking, gambling and/or adultery. In this, while perhaps not embodying Satan as fully and directly as Vico or Svevo, they still represent the Devil by virtue of being the biggest intrusion of sin and temptation into the lives of their families, their biggest obstacle to living virtuous Christian existences. These less fearsome figures of Fante's patriarchal demonology still cause difficulty and hardship to those around them, but are jocular, vital devils recalling Falstaff – 'that old white bearded Satan'[69] – or prefiguring Philip Roth's Mickey Sabbath[70].

Even in Fante's Los Angeles-set 1952 novel *Full of Life*, regarded as one of his very lightest works, when the protagonist and narrator 'John Fante' invites his retired bricklayer father into his home to fix a collapsed floor, chaos is unleashed upon the domestic idyll. Fante Sr. proves to be an ornery, contrary imp, a minor demon but a demon nonetheless: he drinks to excess, undermines John's relationship with his wife, and even turns the local priest against his son with his loquacious charm. Yet John's own words should alert him to his father's potentially devilish allegiance long before his arrival. As he alights on the idea of asking his father to fix the floor, he refers to him as '[m]y own flesh and blood, old Nick Fante'.[71] The play on 'old Nick' also gestured to in the naming of Nick/Vico in "The Orgy" and Nick Molise of *The Brotherhood of the Grape* is here made explicit. Fante's own father was himself called Nick. Given that he often invented names for characters based on real people, that he so frequently retained his father's actual forename for such strongly Devil-associated characters is suggestive, I would argue, that the persistent invocation of 'Old Nick' as a Satanic alias is quite intentional.[72] '"How blind we are! How stupid!"'[73] exclaims John Fante (the character), ostensibly at his prior failure to think of calling on his father's building skills. With hindsight, however, the line is revealed as a metatextual joke made by John Fante (the writer) at his surrogate's expense: How blind indeed, and how stupid, to miss the onomastic warning about 'Old Nick', even as it is placed in his own mouth by his own pen.

By persistently identifying even his father figures (even the more benign ones) as both Devils and bringers of material turmoil, Fante suggests that the twin fears that grip the other members of these families – the immediate/earthly and the eternal/spiritual – are in fact one and the same, inextricable from each other because they emerge from the same source, and inescapably preoccupying because that common source is the family's father. To illustrate this more precisely, consider once more 'The Road to Hell'. Therein the child narrator believes that

the Kid's father's inability to buy the glove catalyses the theft, but if poverty is defined by the father's economic status, and the father is (as I earlier argued is the case in this story as in others) identified with the Devil, then the failure to provide *is itself* Satan's temptation. Thus a day-to-day worldly anxiety about lack of material goods may be every bit as philosophically terrifying and existentially critical as a fear of eternal damnation precisely because both are embodied within each other *and* within the discomfitingly domestic and inescapable presence of the father.

Conversely and equally, this is why the terror of damnation that stalks the minds of Fante's adolescent boy protagonists and their despairing mothers is every bit as physically real, tangible and immediate as its seemingly more quotidian twin (the fear of poverty). The fear of damnation seems as concrete and proximate as the fear of not knowing where a next meal will come from precisely because it *is*, in the most literal sense, equally proximate: it lives within the family home, in the form of the father-revealed-as-Devil.

I mentioned earlier the importance of a particular brand of literalism in the faith of Fante's matriarchs, a faith that is built absolutely on the certainty that God and the Devil are personal, physical beings and Heaven and Hell spatially-realisable, navigable geographies. Metaphorical or figurative interpretation of one's religion is rejected in favour of an ironclad suspension of disbelief in the literal. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in an episode Stephen Cooper relays regarding Fante himself. Cooper notes that Fante, even after years of drifting from Catholicism in his adulthood, 'through forty-six years of marriage would insist to his wife that as a boy of nine one night at the foot of his bed he had witnessed an apparition of the Virgin Mary'.[74]

Only with an understanding of this avowedly literalist religiosity, rooted in saint cults and *Festas* that further complicated the anxieties of worldly poverty by linking directly

the ability to "pay" a saint with forgiveness for one's sins, that an association between dissolute fathers and the Devil acquires the genuine and immediate terror of 'The Orgy' or the opening description of Svevo in *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*. For the characters who come to a creeping realisation of their fathers' sense of the Satanic, this is no mere metaphor, a set of images invoked as a writerly conceit to illustrate the moral failings of these patriarchs. Rather, it is the sincere and authentic fear that if one's father, the image in which one is made, is not God but the Devil, then one's own odds of outrunning temptation and damnation are vanishingly slim, which perhaps goes some way to explaining why those odds are of such urgent concern to almost all of Fante's adolescent protagonists (and their mothers). They apprehend that Satan cannot be evaded spatially if you live under his roof, and he cannot be evaded spiritually if he is indeed your 'own flesh and blood, Old Nick'.

Notes

[1] Anthony Julian Tamburri, *A Semiotic of Ethnicity: In (Re)cognition of the Italian/American Writer* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 16.

[2] John Fante, *The Wine of Youth* (New York, NY: Ecco, 2002).

[3] See Salvatore Primeggia, '*La Via Vecchia* and Italian Folk Religiosity: The Peasants and Immigrants Speak', in *Modesls and Images of Catholicism in Italian Americana: Academy and Society*, ed. by Joseph A. Varacalli and others (Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum, 2004), pp. 15-39 (p. 16). Primeggia writes on the prevalence among Italian-Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of an approach to religion exported from the peasant communities they had left behind, one in which 'the Catholic Church was seen less as a system of […]

values and more as […] protection against severe everyday realities in a world plagued by evil spirits and demons. It is precisely this sense of urgent practical protection against foes whose danger is as present and phenomenal as it is spiritual and noumenal that inheres in the religious attitudes of Fante's anxiously devout characters.

[4] Fred L. Gardaphé, *Italian Signs, American Streets*: *The Evolution of American Narrative* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Catherine J. Kordich, *John Fante: His Novels and Novellas* (New York, NY: Twayne, 2000); Rocco Marinaccio, '"Tea and Cookies. Diavolo!": Italian American Masculinity in John Fante's "*Wait until Spring, Bandini*"', MELUS, 34.3 (2009), 43-69; Stephen Cooper, *Full of Life: A Biography of John Fante* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2000).

[5] John Fante, 'The Orgy', in *West of Rome* (New York, NY: Ecco, 2002), pp. 147-188. Although set in 1925, the composition date of 'The Orgy' is uncertain. Unlike many of Fante's other posthumously-collected stories, 'The Orgy' had not previously been published in a magazine; the source for the published text is Fante's original manuscript (now held as part of the Fante papers collection at UCLA) which is, frustratingly, undated.

[6] Ibid., p. 177.

[7] Ibid., p. 147.

[8] Ibid., p. 174.

[9] Ibid, p. 173.

[10] John Fante, 'Charge It', in *The Big Hunger: Stories 1932-1959*, ed. by Stephen Cooper (New York, NY: Ecco, 2002), pp. 41-51. A very similar episode also appears in Fante's 1938 novel *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*. (*Wait Until Spring, Bandini* has latterly been anthologised along with the other three Bandini novels in a single volume (John Fante, *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*, in *The Bandini Quartet* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2004)); all references in

this paper to *Wait Until Spring, Bandini* are to this edition of *The Bandini Quartet*.)

[11] John Fante, 'A Wife for Dino Rossi', in *The Wine of Youth*, pp. 71-110 (p. 76).

[12] Fante, *1933 Was a Bad Year* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001), pp. 8-9.

[13] John Fante, 'Altar Boy', in *The Wine of Youth*, pp. 39-54 (p. 54).

[14] John Fante, 'Bricklayer in the Snow', in *The Wine of Youth*, pp. 21-30 (p. 21). Prior to its inclusion in *Dago Red* and *The Wine of Youth*, this story originally appeared in *The American Mercury* 37 (January 1936).

[15] Fante, *1933*, p. 1.

[16] William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, 2nd edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 269. Note that whilst Whyte's research was conducted around 1937, it focused on young men of precisely the same generation as John Fante and his Colorado boy-protagonists. Moreover, whilst Whyte insists upon the culture of the *Festa* and saint donations as retaining continuing importance in Italian immigrant communities the late thirties, by his own admission these were ideas of greater importance to the generation prior to that of his interviewees, i.e. the generation of Mama and Papa in 'The Orgy', and Fante's other parent characters.

[17] Ibid., pp. 270-271.

[18] Ibid., p. 271.

[19] Ibid., p. 150.

[20] Whyte, p. 269; Primeggia, p. 29.

[21] Ibid., p. 168.

[22] Punningly, the only time a word in the story that sounds reverent – 'like a holy word' – coming from Papa's mouth, it is 'gold' rather than 'God' (Ibid., p. 164). Again his status as figure aligned with a deity of sin (in this instance greed) rather than that of Christianity is made apparent

[23] Ibid., p.169.

[24] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. by Bernard Williams, trans. by Josephine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 155.

[25] Ibid., p. 109, p. 120, p. 199.

[26] Cooper, *Full of Life: A Biography*. 74.

[27] Ibid., p. 173.

[28] Fante, 'The Orgy', p. 177.

[29] Ibid., p. 177

[30] Ibid., p. 177

[31] Ibid., p. 147

[32] Ibid., p. 177

[33] Although avoided by mainstream contemporary Biblical scholars, such imagery regarding Hell's physical location is employed throughout older translations of the Bible, including the Douay-Rheims version (the Challoner revision of which was completed in 1752 but which is likely still to have been the text studied by a young Catholic boy in the United States in the 1920s). See for example 'thou shalt be brought down to Hell, into the depth of the pit' (Isaiah 14.15), 'the lower Hell' (Psalms 85.13), or 'deeper than Hell' (Job 11.8).

[34] Ibid. p. 154.

[35] Fante, 'The Orgy', p. 186.

[36] Ibid., p. 186.

[37] Ibid., p. 186.

[38] Ibid., p. 187.

[39] Ibid., p. 187.

[40] Ibid., p. 187.

[41] John Fante, 'The Road to Hell', in *The Wine of Youth*, pp. 111-117 (p. 114). Prior to its inclusion in *Dago Red* and *The Wine of Youth*, this story originally appeared in *The American Mercury* 42 (October 1937), the eighth and last Fante story to be published by the magazine.

[42] Ibid., p. 112.

[43] Ibid., p. 113.

[44] Ibid., p. 113.

[45] Ibid., pp. 111-12.

[46] Ibid., p. 112.

[47] Ibid., p. 114.

[48] Ibid., p. 115.

[49] Fante, *Bandini Quartet*, p. 84.

[50] Ibid., pp. 86-87.

[51] Ibid., p. 126.

[52] Ibid., p. 40.

[53] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[54] William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) <http://www.bartleby.com/235/253.html> [accessed 2nd March 2016] (para. 33 of 160).

[55] Fante, *Bandini Quartet*, p. 6.

[56] Ibid., p. 128.

[57] Ibid., p. 6.

[58] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[59] Ibid., p. 6.

[60] Primeggia, p. 26.

[61] Matthew 6. 22.

[62] John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1674) <http://www.paradiselost.org/8-Search-All.html> [accessed 12th June 2016] (II. 747-814).

[63] Fante, *Bandini Quartet*, p. 7.

[64] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[65] John Fante, *The Brotherhood of the Grape* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005).

[66] John Fante, *1933*, p. 17.

[67] John Fante, 'A Bad Woman', in *The Big Hunger*, pp. 65-83.

[68] Fante, 'Bricklayer in the Snow', pp. 21-30.

[69] William Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part 1*, in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2006), II. 4. 447.

[70] Philip Roth, *Sabbath's Theater* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995).

[71] John Fante, *Full of Life* (London: HarperCollins, 2010), Chapter 1, Location 352. Kindle eBook edition.

[72] When Fante realised in 1935 that with age he was starting to look more like his father, he wrote that he was not 'such a bad looking devil after all' (see John Fante, *Selected Letters 1932-1981*, ed. by Seamus Cooney (Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1991), p. 93). The choice of idiom here provides a further suggestion that Fante Jr. was certainly alive to the possibilities of

the connection between fathers and devils conjured by the coincidence of his own Old Nick's name.

[73] Fante, *Full of Life*, Chapter 1, Location 352.

[74] Cooper, *Full of Life: A Biography*, p. 31.

Life-changing Events

Rosemary Schadenberg

Medical humanities is a fairly new field that has emerged from a combination of the fields of medicine and literature and the arts in general. When considering the notion of memory, from a literary perspective, the medical side of it will also be taken into consideration. While the medical field can give insight into the activities of the brain, literature can give new insights into how knowledge gained in medical research can be portrayed in such a way that it is available and comprehensible for readers little acquainted with medical research on memory. The critics L. Bezio and A. Reed remind us in their article 'On the Limits of Disciplinarity: Literature, Medicine, Religion' that literature and medicine 'are not agents but parts of a larger assemblage that includes human beings who simply want knowledge of what is real, what matters, and why'[1]. Science researches large amounts of date, but literature can discuss individual cases, allowing for distinct insights into how memory affects an individual rather than looking at merely data. Continuing on this thought, the critic Suzanne Black states in her article 'The Anti-Diagnostics of Julia Dinis and the Medical Hubris of Egas Moniz':

> The [novels] raise crucial questions of medical ethics that [are] relevant in the twenty-first century, including sexual ethics in the doctor-patient relationship, the challenges of medical diagnosis, empathy and proper care for the dying, and the dangers of pathologizing repressed emotion[2]

While Black is referring to the Portuguese physician-writer Júlio Dinis, this quote provides an answer to why literary texts can be of relevance when providing insight and adding value to the

medical field. A literary text can provide a different perspective than medical research can on a medical ailment, considering not just the medical implications, but also the emotions involved and the position of the carers surrounding the patient.

Much literature has been written on the notion of memory. Two examples are the short story 'Funes the Memorious' by J. L. Borges (1942) and the memoir *Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World* by Suzanne Corkin (2013). They are good case studies with regards to memory, because they each emphasize different sides of this notion. In the short story the protagonist Ireneo Funes acquires a superhuman memory after falling off his horse, while the memoir describes the life of Henry Molaison, also known as patient H.M., after he loses his memory as a result of a brain operation. Both the short story and the memoir focus on one person, but in the first Funes has a superfluous memory, while in the second Molaison has a lack thereof. Analyses of the short story and the memoir can provide more awareness into the role that identity plays in people's lives. Identity is closely bound with memory, which plays important part in culture and in personal life. Without any memories to remind us of who we are, our place within a society or a group becomes very difficult to establish. The case studies of Ireneo Funes and Henry Molaison can help in understanding what happens when memory takes on a different form. The question which arises then is: In which way do the short story 'Funes the Memorious' by J. L. Borges and the memoir *Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World* by Suzanne Corkin contribute from a literary perspective to insights on the notion of memory?

Firstly, by giving an account of some literary theories on memory, such as by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Friedrich Nietzsche and Paul Ricoeur, it will become clear what the predominant views on memory are, and how this phenomenon can best be approached. Secondly, taking into account what has been

written on the short story 'Funes the Memorious' by J.L. Borges and the memoir *Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World* by Suzanne Corkin I will elucidate on why they are good case studies to be analysed comparatively. Thirdly, there will be an analysis of the short story 'Funes the Memorious', taking particularly into consideration the way that memory is portrayed in its literary form. Fourthly, an analysis of the memoir *Permanent Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World* will create an understanding of how aspects of the medical field can be treated in a non-fiction book.

Many critics have devoted their attention to memory studies, whereby both individual memory and cultural memory are taken into account. They raise questions on how groups in a society deal with their past, and what role memory plays role in that. While cultural memory does not discuss memory as such in the brain, its starting point is at the level of individual memory. Therefore, considering what has been written on memory, both on an individual level and on a cultural level, it can be of help to understand how memory plays a large role in the identity of people. Three important critics in memory studies are Hans-Georg Gadamer, with his essay 'Truth and Method', Friedrich Nietzsche with his essay 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' and Paul Ricoeur with his essay 'Memory – History – Forgetting'. They have in common the fact that they consider memory not only as a means to remember the past, but also as a way to deal with the present and expectations of the future, which in some cases entails forgetting (parts of) the past.

Ricoeur states that there is a 'triadic relationship of memory, history, and forgetting as they pertain not only to the past but also to both the present and the future'[3]. Tying in with this Gadamer states that:

> Memory is not a special function but our way of being in time, as such, is an ongoing project […] time is no

> longer primarily a gulf to be bridged, because it separates, but it is actually the supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted[4]

These quotes show that the emphasis lies on time as the notion that ties memory and forgetting to the past, present and future. Memory cannot exist alone and needs the notion of forgetting to pertain existence. Gadamer notes that forgetting is not necessarily a negative thing. In fact, it allows for less important memories to fall away and creates more space for what is important[5]. At the same time, when considering one's memories, Ricoeur points out the importance of others in this framework: 'People do not remember in isolation, but only with help from the memories of others: they take narratives heard from others for their own memories, and they preserve their own memories with help from the commemorations'[6]. This refers to the framework of cultural memory, but can also be interpreted at the level of individual memory, whereby it is important to understand that this is never merely individualistic. Everyone makes memories in which others are involved[7]. However, in Ireneo Funes' and Henry Molaison's case this works out a little different; for Funes, having too much memory isolates him from the rest of society[8], and for Molaison, it means that he is unable to create any new memories after his operation[9]. In fact, Ricoeur speaks of '[t]he discrepancy between an excess of memory and a shortage of memory'[10], and states that 'both suffer from the same critical deficiency'[11]. In this way J.L. Borges' short story and Suzanne's Corkin's memoir can be viewed as examples of what Ricoeur is stating, as the first narrative concerns a person with too much memory, and the second concerns a person too little memory.

Nietzsche uses an interesting parallel to portray that humans are too busy with the past, with the unforgotten: 'the man says 'I remember' and envies the animal, who at once forgets and for whom every moment really dies, sinks back into night and fog and is extinguished forever. Thus the animal lives

unhistorically'[12]. He suggests that happiness is only ever defined by being able to forget the past[13]. His argument can be applied to the cases of both Ireneo Funes and Henry Molaison, when he states that: 'If death at last brings the desired forgetting, by that act it at the same time extinguishes the present and all existence'[14]. Molaison was not given the choice to simultaneously die and forget, but had to go on living after he forgot everything that had happened around him. He was unable to function well in society, as he had to be constantly reminded to remember daily routines like eating and drinking[15]. Nietzsche also approaches the other side of memory, when he states: 'Imagine the extremest possible example of a man who did not possess the power of forgetting at all and who was thus condemned to see everywhere a state of becoming'[16]. This could be considered in connection to J.L. Borges' short story of Ireneo Funes. While Nietzsche describes a man who lacks the ability to forget, and Funes is describes as a man with a superfluous memory, these two definitions describe a similar case of one having too much memory.

When considering the body of work written on the short story 'Funes the Memorious' by J.L. Borges and the memoir *Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World* by Suzanne Corkin, it becomes clear that there is still much that can be analysed. The connection between Ireneo Funes and Henry Molaison has been made by the critic Rodrigo Quian Quiroga in his essay 'In Retrospect: In *Funes the Memorious*'. He explains that the short story by Borges can be seen as a precursor of the knowledge on memory acquired with the operation performed on Henry Molaison[17]. However, this article only briefly mentions both cases, and instead focuses on Borges as a writer[18]. While 'Funes the Memorious' has received attention for its capacity to fabricate an intriguing story on unlimited memory, very little research has been conducted on the memoir. The critic Patricia Novillo-Corvalán gives an analysis of the short story 'Funes the

Memorious' by Borges in her article 'Literature and Disability: the Medical Interface in Borges and Beckett', and compares it to Beckett's *Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies and The Unnamable*. She analyses how Funes accomplishes nothing with his hyper memory and how he 'remain[s] imprisoned within [his] cognitive disabilities'[19]. Novillo-Corvalán also signifies the interconnection of the medical humanities: 'It reveals that medical discourses can provide invaluable insights and lead to a deeper understanding of the minds and bodily afflictions of literary characters'[20]. This is important to remember when comparing Borges' short story to Corkin's memoir. In connection with Novillo-Corvalán's article, this article will continue the search for a 'literary network of memory as to the medical contexts'[21].

From the start of the short story 'Funes the Memorious' by J.L. Borges, Ireneo Funes' hyper memory becomes apparent. While the narrator is a version of Borges himself, his use of language says a lot about Funes. It is an unnamed narrator who is not interchangeable with Borges. The story takes place in the late nineteenth century when Borges was not even born. The first paragraph of the story makes at once clear what the story is about. It starts with the words 'I remember'[22]. Interestingly, these two words are repeated six times in the first paragraph[23], but a slight alteration is made to each sentence it starts[24]. In the first case it is simply stated 'I remember him', but then in the second case the narrator gives a more detailed description of Ireneo Funes, stating that 'I remember him, with his face taciturn'[25]. In the third case he varies the words by adding doubt to his words: 'I remember (I think) his angular, leather-braiding hands'[26]. It seems he is not sure anymore of his memory and what Funes exactly looked like, and therefore adds 'I think' in between brackets. In the fourth case, the narrator tries to give a better description of what he has seen, although this time focusses on Funes' surroundings: 'I remember near those hands a mate gourd'[27]. In the fifth case he does something similar, but again insinuates doubt by way of describing the scene: '[I]

remember a yellow screen with a vague lake landscape in the window of his house'[28]. Previously his focus had been on the 'yellow screen'. Now though, the narrator seems to have forgotten exactly what the landscape looks like. However, in the last case in the first paragraph of the use of 'I remember', he iterates without any doubt that: 'I clearly remember his voice'[29]. This exemplifies how a person remembers certain aspects of an event or a place better than others. Certain aspects are vaguer than others. Interestingly, the paragraph ends with the words 'one should *never forget* that he was also a young tough from Fray Bentos, with certain incurable limitations' (my emphasis)[30]. This stands in great contrast with the rest of the paragraph. Note also the paradox underlying Borges's attribution of an infinite memory (and the Western archive) to an illiterate 'tough from Fray Bentos' in the South American hinterlands. It reminds the reader that there are two sides to memory and both are discussed here: being able to reiterate memories and forget memories.

As the narrator continues to explain the first encounter with Ireneo Funes that he remembers, he states that: 'My first memory of Funes is very perspicuous'[31]. This was obviously an important moment to the narrator, because he remembers it very distinctly, calling it his 'first memory'; so it is possible that he might have met Funes at an earlier time, but cannot remember that. As the narrator and his cousin Bernardo Haedo encounter Funes on their way between Fray Bentos and San Francisco, they seem to be running a race, not against each other, but against a power that is uncontrollable: '[the storm] was urged on by a southern wind, the trees were already going wild; I was afraid (I was hopeful) that the elemental rain would overtake us out of in the open'[32]. The storm could be seen as a metaphor for memory. Similarly to the unpredictability of a storm, one cannot foretell how you will remember events, or if you will remember them at all, and how well your memories will stay intact as you get older. There is not much that can be done

to stop the implications of forgetting. The narrator shows through the part 'I was afraid (I was hopeful)' that he is not at all sure what to want. Contradictory to this, Funes does not hesitate to reply directly, exactly, and without any hesitation, to the question of the narrator's cousin to what time it is: 'It's four minutes to eight'[33]. At this point it is unclear if Funes is telling the truth, as '[h]is voice was shrill, mocking', but this is explained in the next paragraph: 'Funes [is] known for certain peculiarities as having little to do with anyone and always knowing what time it was, like a clock'[34]. Already before the accident with the horse, Funes had been regarded as being a bit different than others. As Ricoeur suggests, people remember with the help of others, but Funes keeps himself to himself, and therefore does not fall within the expected category of memory and remembrance[35]. In fact, contradictory to what Ricoeur suggests, Funes does 'remember in isolation'[36]. When the narrator 'tried to remind him of his exact perception of time, his memory for proper names; he paid no attention to [him]'[37]. Funes is not interested in the narrator's memories of him.

Notice should be taken of the enumerated years 'eighty-five [,] eighty-six [and] eighty-seven'[38]. The narrator is giving a very brief overview between encountering Ireneo Funes for the first time, as discussed above, and the period leading up to his next encounter, when it becomes clear that Funes had fallen off a horse. Numbers are important in this story, and the enumerated years portray that. The narrator goes on to explain that 'I asked, as was natural, about all my acquaintances and, finally, about the 'chronometrical' Funes'[39]. There is a contradiction here, namely that between normal people, who are 'natural', and Funes, the 'chronometrical'. So, in order for people to exist within a cultural memory, they must behave and remember in a similar way. When Funes writes the narrator a letter requesting his books, he shows his ability to remember. From that point on in the short story, the focus is on showing Funes' extraordinary talent, portraying the cleverness of his

brain[40]. Funes writes 'on the seventh day of February of the year 1884'[41]. Similar to the first encounter between the narrator and Funes, this shows that Funes has a great talent for numbers and dates. At the same time, the fact that he did something similar before the accident with the horse, shows that he has not changed completely. He has accumulated more memory, but that does not mean that his inner identity has changed with it. Indeed, when the narrator has to leave Fray Bentos because his father was ill, he goes to collect his books from Funes. As he walks in, Funes is described as having a 'high-pitched, mocking voice'[42]. During their first encounter, Funes' voice was described in a similar way, namely as 'shrill, mocking'[43]. In the next paragraph Funes is said to speak '[w]ithout the slightest change of voice'[44], indicating again that with a change in memory, not everything has changed. Consider, however, his disability and also Funes' inability to recognise his own face in the mirror.

The narrator's imperfect memory stands in opposition to Ireneo Funes' too perfect memory. As the story is told by someone who has an imperfect memory, the reader can empathize better with Funes' situation. Every time Funes speaks, it becomes clear that he does not understand why the rest of the human race has such a bad memory, and if he were to narrate the story, it would be difficult for the reader to understand, because he/she would not be able to follow Funes' train of thought. Funes, unable to abstract, would be incapable of writing a narrative, a process that precludes selection and abstraction. Also, his narrative would be infinite. The narrator states '[t]he indirect style is remote and weak; I know I am sacrificing the efficacy of my narrative; my readers should imagine for themselves the hesitant periods which overwhelmed me that night'[45]. This passage creates an understanding to why it is difficult for the narrator to remember everything Funes has said, because, like everyone else except Funes, the narrator has an imperfect memory. The narrator keeps reminding the reader that there is a large difference between Funes and other humans:

'[h]e was, let us *not forget,* almost incapable of ideas of a general, Platonic sort'[46]. Funes said that 'before that rainy afternoon after the blue-grey horse threw him, he had been what all humans are: blind, deaf, addle-brained, absent-minded'[47]. Readers would understand that he is referring to them, and could feel insulted. That is why it works well for the narrator, like most people, to have an imperfect memory.

The narrator describes Ireneo Funes 'as monumental as bronze, more ancient than Egypt, older than the prophecies and the pyramids'[48]. Funes describes himself as 'I alone have more memories than all mankind has probably had since the world has been the world'[49]. The narrator compares Funes to a monument which holds memories for many different people at the same time[50]. Through the fall off the horse, Funes is not part of the usual human population and is given a different place in society. As Yair Neuman states in his article 'Immune Memory, Immune Oblivion: A Lesson from Funes the Memorious': '[Funes] pays a price for his inability to forget […] the ability to think is associated with a guided oblivion'[51]. Funes is not part of society anymore. No one noticed his incredible ability, but by the time the narrator remembers to write down this story, half a century later[52], he realizes that 'it is odd and even incredible that no one ever performed an experiment with Funes'[53]. The story takes place in the late nineteenth century, however, innovating knowledge in brain research did not take place until half way through the twentieth century, with the operation on Henry Molaison[54].

Continuing to the memoir, *Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World* by Suzanne Corkin, it becomes clear that this memoir takes a different approach to describing memory loss than the short story 'Funes the Memorious'. One aspect shows that it is a book which portrays the man behind 'patient H.M.', the human side, while another aspect allows the reader to understand what conducting research on memory can entail. When analysing this memoir it is

necessary to mention the article 'Loss of Recent Memory after Bilateral Hippocampal Lesions' by William Beecher Scoville and Brenda Milner. In this article, written in 1957, the neurosurgeon Scoville who performed the operation on Henry Molaison, and the neuropsychologist Milner who studied Molaison on his loss of memory, describe in purely medical terms what happened to Molaison after his operation[55]. They also discuss other similar cases of people who had an operation on their medial temporal, relating that this happened more often and what the consequences were[56]. Corkin's memoir provides insight into the story of Molaison and not just by stating his medical record, for as Corkin states in the prologue of her memoir: 'This book is a tribute to Henry and his life, but it is also an exploration of the science of memory'[57].

The memoir contains an index at the end, in which the reader can look up any of the (medical) terms and important names used in the memoir[58]. This instantly makes it a different literary book, as it acknowledges that readers might be interested in a particular medical term, and can look it up. The book is divided into thirteen chapters in total. It becomes apparent that Corkin wants to portray both Henry as a human being, but also show the medical issues and results involved with his specific case. It begins and ends with Henry Molaison purely as a person with character and emotions, while in the chapters in between it explains his medical record, while also telling the human story behind it. However, starting and ending with the human side portrays how important it is found that Molaison is seen as more than just a patient, as he is portrayed in the article of Scoville and Milner. It starts off, in the chapter titled 'Prelude to Tragedy', with an account of Molaison's childhood: '[he] was an eight-pound, full-term, healthy baby'[59] and focusses on how ordinary his upbringing was: 'indistinguishable from those of many middle class boys in the 1930s'[60] Interestingly, in the middle of talking about Molaison's upbringing, it makes the step to the reason why he had to be treated. His 'petit mal seizures,

also called absence seizures'[61] and 'grand mal seizures, also called a tonic-clonic seizure after the two physical processes that occur in succession in the body'[62], are well-defined. After a brief history the story continues with Henry's life as it proceeded after such fits[63]. By adding such detailed information on epilepsy, the memoir shows how the medical and human affect one and the same person. At the same time, it does not just refer to his childhood, but also raises an interesting phenomenon from Molaison's later life. At the age of sixty-five Molaison suddenly remember that he had had a brain operation when he was young. What is interesting about this memory is what the psychologist at the time wrote down about Molaison's state of mind:

> He admits to being 'somewhat nervous' because of the impending operation, but expresses the hope that it will help him, *or at least others*, to have it performed. His attitude was co-operative and friendly throughout, and he expressed a pleasant type of sense of humour (my emphasis)[64]

It is most interesting to see that despite Molaison's operation, he still found it important that he could help others through his case. Throughout the memoir Molaison is described as being 'a pleasant, engaging, docile man with a keen sense of humour, who knew that he had a poor memory and accepted his fate'[65]. So, even though he lost his memory, that part of his identity was not lost.

Chapter six is a good example of how the memoir combines the medical research taking place and the individual Henry Molaison. It starts off explaining that he 'seldom shared his introspections with anyone [...] we had to infer his emotional life from observing his behaviour'[66]. Notice how Corkin refers to herself as being present during observations. When his mother goes in to hospital for a minor operation: 'Henry and his father had visited his mother in the hospital that

morning, and by the time he met up with Teuber, Henry had only a vague sense that something was wrong with her'[67]. It becomes apparent that Molaison has somehow realized on an emotional level and vague sense of memory that something is happening with his mother: 'Without a functioning hippocampal circuit, Henry could not preserve the facts about his mother's hospital stay in his long-term memory; but a larger network of brain areas, the limbic system and its connections, helped maintain his anxiety'[68]. This passage portrays extremely well how the memoir conveys a picture of Molaison as someone with memories of his own, but is unable to keep them. It explains through both colloquial and medical terms what is going on, and what was discovered because of this case. It portrays a great loss in Molaison, for not being able to remember. As he does not realize what he cannot remember, he just deals with the uncomfortable sensation that something is not quite right. It does not seem to affect him any more than that. Simultaneously, it portrays how well this memoir connects the medical terms involved with Molaison's case to his own character.

A question that Corkin asks herself at some point is whether Molaison 'ha[s] a sense of who he was'[69]. Her desire to portray Molaison as being the great man he was, despite his life-changing operation, is evident with her trying to prove that despite this operation part of his identity was unchanged. In the prologue she states: 'Henry had a sense of self. But it was skewed, weighted heavily toward his general knowledge of the world, his family, and himself before 1953. After his operation, he was able to acquire only the smallest fragments of self-knowledge'[70]. This shows that among all the tests run on Molaison, trying to discover what still worked in his brain and what did not, the researchers found it important to define his identity. Clearly, identity is not stored merely in memory. Corkin's determination to prove Molaison's sense of identity is strong, which becomes apparent through the next quote:

> Some philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists have argued that without memory, we lack identity. Did Henry have a sense of who he was? There is no doubt in my mind that Henry did have a sense of self, even though it was fragmented. Over the years of working with him, we came to know his personality and the quirks and traits that made him who he was. Henry's beliefs, desires, and values were always present[71]

This memoir contradicts views which connect all parts of one's identity to memory; instead it opens new ways to consider memory, which include portraying an individual's story about memory while also incorporating scientific research and results connected to that person's brain.

Returning to the main question posed at the beginning of this article, namely in which way do the short story 'Funes the Memorious' by J. L. Borges and the memoir *Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World* by Suzanne Corkin contribute from a literary perspective to insights on the notion of memory, a conclusion can be drawn. In both cases the person described is known on a more personal level by the narrator. Borges had a couple of encounters with Funes, while Corkin had many talks with Molaison. Funes is only observed very briefly by the narrator, Molaison had received medical attention for sixty years of his life, and still does after his death. The research conducted on Molaison reveals that to really understand memory, much research needs to be conducted on this subject. Funes' case shows, though a fictional story, that with the little knowledge about his situation, nothing can be done for him. He is isolated, and he cannot be helped out of the situation. Molaison, on the other hand, even though he cannot remember it, is looked after well, and considered important enough to be looked after. At the same time, both the short story and the memoir show that, whether one is dealing with hyper memory or a lack of memory, it does not necessarily mean that one's identity is lost. To finish with a quote from

Nietzsche: 'it is possible to live almost without memory, and to live happily moreover [...] but it is altogether impossible to live at all without forgetting'[72].

Notes

[1] L. Bezio and A. Reed, 'Guest Editors' Introduction: On the Limits of Disciplinarity: Literature, Medicine, Religion,' in Literature and Medicine 32:2 (2014) pp.240-248 (p.242)

[2] Suzanne Black, 'The Anti-Diagnostics of Júlio Dinis and the Medical Hubris of Egas Moniz,' in Latin American and Iberian Perspectives on Literature and Medicine. By Patricia Novillo-Corvalán. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2015) pp.23-44 (p.60).

[3] Paul Ricoeur, 'Memory – History – Forgetting,' in Jeffrey Olick et al., ed. The Collective Memory Reader. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) pp.475-80 (p.475).

[4] Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Truth and Method,' in Jeffrey Olick et al., ed. The Collective Memory Reader. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) pp.180-83 (p.180).

[5] Ibid., p. 182.

[6] Paul Ricoeur, 'Memory – History – Forgetting,' in Jeffrey Olick et al., ed. The Collective Memory Reader. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) pp.475-80 (p.476).

[7] Ibid., p. 467.

[8] Jorge Luis Borges, Donald Alfred Yates, and James E. Irby, 'Funes the Memorious,' Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings. (London: Penguin, 1970) pp.87-95 (p.90).

[9] Suzanne Corkin, Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World. (London: Penguin, 2013) pp. 33.

[10] Paul Ricoeur, 'Memory – History – Forgetting,' in Jeffrey Olick et al., ed. The Collective Memory Reader. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) pp.475-80 (p.477).

[11] Paul Ricoeur, 'Memory – History – Forgetting,' in Jeffrey Olick et al., ed. The Collective Memory Reader. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) pp.475-80 (p.478).

[12] Friedrich Nietzsche. "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life." in Jeffrey Olick et al., ed. The Collective Memory Reader. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) pp.73-79. (p.73).

[13] Ibid., p. 74.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Suzanne Corkin, Permanent Present Tense: The Man with No Memory, and What He Taught the World. (London: Penguin, 2013) pp. 206.

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The Monstrous Feminine in Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf*

Mona Faysal Sahyoun

Introduction

The Gothic originated in the age of enlightenment during which 'the maxims and models of modern culture' were produced.[1] The term Gothic was employed to depict derogatively artistic, literary and architectural works that did not fulfill the standards of neoclassical aesthetic and it denoted the irrationality, immorality and ugliness of feudal beliefs, traditions and oeuvre. Epitomizing a range of elements and meanings which contrasted with the concepts of unity and harmony highly esteemed in the eighteenth century, the Gothic took on its powerful, although negative, connotation in this period in which it indicated a past characterized as 'barbarous', 'medieval', and 'supernatural'.[2] Among the many characteristics used to delineate the Gothic genre, as manifested in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (the first Gothic novel published in 1764 and which introduces many features of this genre of fiction) are 'the feudal historical and architectural setting, the deposed noble heir and the ghostly, supernatural machinations'.[3]

In contrast with earlier Gothic novels usually set in remote places in the distant past and peopled with magical beings, Gothic fiction of the late nineteenth century are set in

modern sites and inhabited by scientists who interfere with forces that are judged better not to fiddle with. Along with 'the modernity of the setting', insistence on the fixedness of identity characterizes fin de siècle Gothic fiction.[4] The worries of late nineteenth century Gothic authors about the instability and fluidity of identity are made evident by the abundance of the shape-shifters which populate their novels and which resist categorization and containment within fixed binary thinking. Like her fellow Gothic authors of the fin de siècle, Clemence Housman presents in her short story *The Were-Wolf* a female shape-shifter that does not fit in either of the binary gender categories. Yet, the concentration on a female were-wolf that evades gender categorization in Housman's Gothic short story raises a question about the relation between horror and the transgression of conventional boundaries. This paper probes into the source of horror in Housman's *The Were-Wolf*. Founding my reading of Housman's *The Were-Wolf* on Kristeva's theory of abjection and horror, I contend that what evokes fear in Housman's Gothic narrative is the female lycanthrope, White Fell, who violates gender and moral boundaries and bring to the fore the attractive and repulsive qualities of the horrific. The examination of the source of fear in Housman's *The Were-Wolf* shows how women who overstepped boundaries were constructed as monstrous and horrific in late nineteenth century Gothic fiction in an attempt on the part of the Gothic authors of that period to maintain the stability of conventional boundaries.

The Female Lycanthrope in Fin de siècle Gothic Fiction

In her Gothic narrative, *The Were-Wolf*, Housman casts her female lycanthrope, White Fell, as a beautiful, yet a dangerous woman and an unnatural mother. She describes her as 'a maiden, tall and very fair' who captivates Sweyn with her beauty.[5] However, as she is beautiful, White Fell is perilous as

well. She delivers a deadly blow to Christian who sacrifices his life while trying to save his brother from a certain death at the hands of charming White-Fell. Also, she lacks the normal qualities of a mother. She makes friends with a little boy who has injured his hand. When she catches sight of the wounded hand and the blood-stained linen, she '[clasps] Rol to her — hard, hard — till he [begins] to struggle' and her face '[lights up] with a most awful glee'.[6] Thereafter, the boy disappears in a mysterious way.

Housman's *The Were-Wolf* emerged in a historical epoch where contentions about gender were instigated by a range of women's groups who fought for social change. Despite the fact that gender roles of the middle class appear to be clearly demarcated during the Victorian period, gender ideology was actually challenged at the fin de siècle, a period characterized, along with the dispute over gender, by the appearance of the New Woman, the androgynous individual and the women's movements. However, these fin de siècle phenomena were not well received, and they induced much worry about sexuality, reproduction and the differences between the masculine and the feminine. The disintegration of conventional gender roles and the indistinctness of gender differences at the fin de siècle were perceived as a sign of cultural decadence and degeneration and a threat to the stability of the family configuration. As a response to the emergence of these fin de siècle phenomena, the Gothic fiction of the late nineteenth century becomes dominated by female lycanthropes or shape-shifters. In an endeavor to stabilize the concept of conventional femininity, 1980s Gothic literature generates the traditional opposition between the good and evil woman, an opposition frequently undermined through the transformation of the good woman into the demonic, and '[identifies] the sexually aggressive female who usurps male strength as something alien and monstrous'.[7] This section exposes how these female lycanthropes are depicted in the Gothic literature of the Victorian fin de siècle.

Like Housman's White Fell, monstrous female figures of the 1980s are usually represented as young, beautiful and perilous women who come from foreign places with the aim of misleading and destroying husbands, lovers and other incredulous men. These women habitually come out of the forest or other wild and uninhabited region in a mysterious way in order to bewitch a man. For instance, Ravina, the female were-wolf of Sir Gilbert Campbell's 'The White Wolf of Kostopchin', emerges from the bush and is 'exquisitely fair'.[8] She enchants Paul and devours his heart at the end of the narrative. Likewise, the female were-wolf in Count Eric Stanislaus Stenbock's 'The Other Side' lives in the forest and has 'long gleaming golden hair' and eyes 'the same color as the strange blue flowers'.[9] Gabriel could not overcome her charm or resist his desire to follow her. As in Campbell's narrative, the female monster in Stenbock's story also destroys the life of a male character; 'once a year for nine days a strange madness comes over [Gabriel]'.[10] In these two Gothic narratives, as in Housman's *The Were-Wolf*, the physical beauty of female monsters is no more than a mask behind which is concealed perverse femininity. The female monsters in these narratives about lycanthropy stand for an 'other' and '[embody] […] the slavery to instinctive drives […] perceived to differentiate the animal world from human civilization'.[11]

However, the feminine threat of female lycanthropes of late nineteenth-century Gothic narratives is not always hidden under attractive masks. Some of these female monsters are portrayed as witches. S. R. Crockett's *The Black Douglas* is a case in point.[12] Crockett's *The Black Douglas*, the only novel from the fin de siècle that addresses the motif of lycanthropy, is set in the fifteenth century and deals with political scheming and black magic. The novel narrates how William, Earl of Douglas, is beguiled by the lady Sibylla, a beautiful noblewoman who is a pawn in de Retz's secret plot to capture William. It also presents an old witch called La Meffraye who is able to metamorphose

into a huge wolf called Astarte and who assists Gilles de Retz along with a group of savage wolves. The werewolf-witch La Meffraye brings lads and children to be sacrificed at the Black Mass, a ritual through which de Retz attempts to be perpetually youthful. She also intimidates her half-natural husband and rips his throat out when she realizes that he intends to betray her. Finally, the witch-woman is killed by members of the Douglas clan while trying to rescue young Scotswomen from meeting the same fate of the children sacrificed at the Black Mass. *The Black Douglas*, along with all other narratives of female lycanthropes, '[contributes] to a discourse that [envisions] women as a threat to the lives and aspirations of men'.[13]

In addition to their depiction as seductresses and destroyers of men, female lycanthropes of the late nineteenth century, as Housman's White Fell, are also portrayed as unnatural mothers. Campbell's Ravina evinces curiosity in Paul's children and is about to eat his daughter when Michal, the faithful servant, interferes and saves her at the last moment. Glimpsing the cross in his hand, she drops the knife she intends to attack him with and says: 'I could not help it; I liked the child well enough, but I was so hungry'.[14] La Meffraye, like Ravina, is also depicted as an aberrant mother who snatches away children. Assuming the shape of a huge wolf, La Meffraye procures the children whom de Retz sacrifices at the Black Mass.

Indeed, pregnancy was associated with lycanthropy in the second half of the nineteenth century as manifested in the arguments of a number of critics such as Sabine Baring-Gould and Andrew Wynter. In *The Book of Were-wolves: Being an Account of a Terrible Superstition*, Baring-Gould dedicates several pages to talk about the savage and ferocious cravings of pregnant women.[15] Similarly, Wynter associates between lycanthrope and pregnancy in his book *Fruit between the Leaves*. He states:

> With women, the most unaccountable motives and conditions lead to the perpetration of murders and

> mutilations. It is well known that the parturient state, for instance, often leads to the most savage fits of madness, in which women will murder their husbands; and history has recorded several cases in which they have partially eaten them in their frenzy.[16]

Kristeva's Theory of Abjection and Horror

Having shown how monstrous female figures are represented at the end of the nineteenth century, I introduce in this section Kristeva's concepts of abjection and horror that she postulates in her book *Powers of Horror* and that could be employed to examine the representation of the monstrous feminine in Housman's Gothic narrative. In this book which deals with psychoanalysis and literature, Kristeva proposes a way of locating the monstrous feminine in connection with 'abjection', a term Kristeva uses to refer to that which shows no respect to 'borders, positions, rules' and which 'disturbs identity, system, order'.[17] Generally speaking, Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* probes into the ways in which abjection functions in human societies, constructing abjection as a means through which the human and the non-human as well as the totally and partially formed subjects are separated from each other. This section presents Kristeva's notions of abjection and horror, fundamental to the interpretation of the monstrous and the horrific in Gothic literature.

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva explains how subjectivity is formed and how the infant, who is born without any borders and who experiences unity with its environment during the semiotic phase of development, begins to perceive itself as a separate being and develop borders between self and other. According to Kristeva, the infant comes to develop these borders through abjection, a process of disposing of things

which appear to be part of the self. The abject, as Kristeva uses it, refers to that which is discarded and ejected from oneself, physically and mentally, such as bodily wastes, curdling milk, vomit, corpses and the mother's overwhelming embrace, yet, without being completely banished from consciousness. Hence, it haunts one's consciousness and continues to threaten, both consciously and unconsciously, one's self, constantly calling into question its weak borders. The abject is that which has no respect to boundaries and which the subject perceives to be alluring and repellent. Being alluring, it threatens the borders of the self. Being repellent, it paradoxically preserves these borders by urging the subject, afraid of the collapse of its self's borders, to remain alert.

According to Kristeva, the mother's body is the first thing that the infant comes to abject. Abjection of the mother begins when the infant is still in the imaginary phase and in a state of oneness with the mother. The infant, to become a subject, has to give up identifying itself with its mother and create borders between itself and its mother. However, the infant finds it difficult to identify the boundaries of the person it was once inside her body and confronts an unresolvable dilemma. On the one hand, the infant desires to be in a state of union with the mother, its first love. On the other hand, it has to relinquish this union to become a subject.

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva also emphasizes the violence and horror embedded in throwing away abject phenomena that threaten and construct the borders of one's selfhood by pointing out how one feels in the presence of such phenomena. Talking about the surface of milk which she loathes, Kristeva says:

> I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to

> perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it.[18]

Since abjection begins in the pre-oedipal phase and since abject phenomena produce feeling of repulsion, horror, according to Kristeva, originates in the pre-oedipal period. The infant, in the pre-oedipal phase, making an exertion to construct boundaries and form its ego identity, has ambivalent feelings towards the mother whom it loves, yet, perceives as horrific because she is overwhelming and contaminated by bodily fluids. As abjection, Kristeva considers horror to be connected to boundaries, the peril of transgressing them and the compulsion to trespass them. Thus, as abjection, the horrific, for Kristeva, has the capacity to both attract and repulse us.

The female Lycanthrope in Housman's *The Were-Wolf*

After presenting Kristeva's concepts of abjection and horror, I move in this section to Housman's *The Were-Wolf* and examine it from the perspectives of Kristeva. First, I give a brief description of Housman's Gothic narrative. *The Were-Wolf*, whose roots lies in Norse mythology, is a short story written by Housman to entertain her fellows at an art school. It was published in 1890 in Atalanta magazine and in 1896 in book form and is often described as 'the greatest story of lycanthropy ever written'.[19] The events of the story take place inside a warm farmhouse and on vast lands covered with ice and snow. The story centers on two conflicting forces: the good characterized by the heroic Christian, who saves his brother by killing the temptress were-wolf, and the evil epitomized by White Fell, the erotic female were-wolf who has the power to destroy those who fell prey to her charm. This section shows how, in agreement with Kristeva's theory of abjection and horror, it is White Fell's violation of gender and moral boundaries that

arouses fear in Housman's *The Were-Wolf* and how the horrific has appealing and repellent attributes.

Housman evokes horror in *The Were-Wolf* by demarcating gender boundaries and singling out White Fell as the only character in the short story that has no respect for gender boundaries. The story opens with a set of men and women engaged in doing conventional male and female work. 'Men were engaged in carving […]; others […] repaired fishing-tackle and harness.'[20] Women were spinning, and 'the finest and swiftest thread of the three [wheels] ran between the fingers of the house-mistress'.[21] Housman again delineates gender boundaries as the story unfolds when she emphasizes the manly qualities of the twins, Sweyn and Christian. They both have the same height and look alike to a striking degree though Sweyn, outdone by his brother only in speed, surpasses Christian in manly beauty, his shoulders are broad, and strength, his arms are muscular. Also, they are both interested in manly activities such as hunting. In contrast to all the characters in *The Were-Wolf* who comply with gender norms and display qualities typical of their gender, White Fell contravenes gender boundaries markedly in her demeanor. She wears a 'half masculine, yet not unwomanly' dress and the 'cross-bound shoes and leggings that a hunter wears' and fastens around her waist an ivory-studded girdle inside which she puts her axe.[22] She travels long distance alone at night without evincing feeling of fear, and she boasts that she is not afraid of either man or beast, that she inspires fear in others and defends herself when attacked and that she lives the life of a bold free huntress. Her physical endurance exceeds that of a man. White Fell is able to endure the strain of speed more than Christian whose running feats are worthy of being registered and related to succeeding generations. Furthermore, when fighting her enemy, she displays physical strength similar to that of a man. With a single blow of her axe, she cuts the shaft of Christian's spear and breaks the bones of his hand. Using her axe with her left hand, she directs a powerful blow to

Christian's right arm and shatters it. Finally, she beats him three times on his neck and ends his life.

Horror is also produced in *The Were-Wolf* through White Fell's trespass of moral boundaries. Housman foregrounds White Fell's breach of moral boundaries by drawing a contrast in her short story between Christian who shows veneration to moral boundaries despite his realization of the true identity of White Fell and White Fell who desecrates these boundaries. Disheartened by the ideas that devious White Fell, when feeling that death is near, might metamorphose to a dreadful beast and attack the farm servants who are blind to her true nature or keep her womanly form and destroy 'his honor of manhood', Christian hesitates to loosen the collar of the dog Tyr, 'the dumb sole sharer of his knowledge', and throw her with the flask of holy water.[23] Also, he keeps distance between him and White Fell when following her and refuses to attack her in her womanly form. On the other hand, White Fell kills little Rol and old Trella and sets her mind to making Sweyn her next prey. By killing her victims, White Fell oversteps moral boundaries not only because she takes the lives of innocent people. She contravenes moral boundaries as well because she is a sensual woman, manifested in the great delight she takes in the sight of the linen stained with blood which Rol unwraps from his hand and which evokes the image of the vaginal blood. In fact, White Fell's destruction of Roy and Trella after kissing them is an act which has sexual connotation and which symbolizes the sexual ravage of the bodies of Roy and Trella by lascivious White Fell in order to satisfy her erotic desire, an act considered to be unacceptable in the Victorian period during which women were supposed to be sexually passive.

In conformity with Kristeva's argument about the attractive and repulsive characteristics of the horrific, Housman constructs the horrific as both alluring and appalling. White Fell enchants little Rol, old Trella and Sweyn who remains infatuated with her till the very last moment when he finds out her real

identity. Little Rol sits happily on the knees of monstrous White Fell, embraces and kisses her. Old Trella kisses the fair face of White Fell who reminds her of her dead daughter. As for Sweyn, his admiration for White Fell is kindled by her beauty, latent strength, high and bold spirit and vigor. Hence, he ignores his brother's conjecture about the real nature of White Fell, tries to prevent him from disclosing White Fell's true identity, beats him and accuses him of madness when he divulges what he knows about her. Towards the end of the story, he even looks eager to kill his brother when he discovers that he spends the night following his beloved White Fell. Only after he perceives the abject corpse of a huge white wolf which is not wounded and which is only stained with blood at the feet does he grasp the reality of White Fell. Only then is his admiration for White Fell transformed into horror and repulsion. The sight of the corpse of the female lycanthrope '[sets] his limbs in a palsy with horror and dread'.[24] However, having allied itself with White Fell, the transgressor of gender and moral boundaries, Sweyn's soul becomes also abject like the white wolf's abject corpse. Holding his dead brother who has loved him to the extent of losing his life for his sake in his arms, Sweyn admits of his mean and callous behavior towards his brother and his unworthiness of his brother's ideal love. As the female monster's corpse, Christian's cadaver also provokes horror. 'The frozen calm of death' on Christian's face appalls Sweyn.[25] However, while the white wolf's corpse, unwounded, yet, stained with blood, incites horror because it is a manifestation of the female lycanthrope's breach of the boundaries between the human and the non-human, the cadaver of Christian rouses horror because it breaks the boundaries between life and death.

In contrast with Sweyn, Christian is appalled by White Fell since he sets eyes on her. He tries desperately to warn Sweyn about her identity, but the latter is so infatuated with her that he is not ready to take Christian's fear into consideration. Christian is the first one who relates between White Fell and the

disappearance of little Rol and becomes aware of the danger concealed beneath her fair face. Therefore, the next time White Fell appears, he runs for two hours to bring holy water from the church to 'cleanse God's world from that supernatural evil Thing'.[26] Having noticed that people vanish after she kisses them and having glimpsed his brother and White Fell kissing each other, he realizes that his brother is her next victim. Hence, he follows her determinedly with the intention of killing her after she returns to her beastly form. Yet, while endeavoring to save the life of his brother, Christian loses his own life though not before he hears the death scream of the feminine monster whom he kills with the blood that gushes out of his neck. By sacrificing himself to rescue his brother, Christian embodies Christ who is crucified to redeem humanity. Even his corpse takes the form of a crucified man and conjures up the image of Christ.

Conclusion

Basing my reading of Housman's *The Were-Wolf* on Kristeva's theory of abjection and horror, I argue in this paper that Housman uses the motif of the monstrous feminine in her short story to produce horror. By disrespecting and trespassing gender and moral boundaries, White Fell stirs up fear in the readers. Also, being both alluring and appalling, White Fell is represented in a way consistent with Kristeva's depiction of the horrific. At the end of her story, Housman purges the horror she creates by killing the female lycanthrope after Christian's pure blood, poured in an act of self-sacrifice, touches her feet. The demise of the female transgressor of conventional boundaries at the hands of Christian has a double function. On the one hand, it serves to foreground how literature, by eradicating the monstrous and horrifying feminine it conjures up, has a purifying function. On the other hand, the killing of White Fell with the pure blood of Christian, who stands for a religious

icon, brings out the role of religion in purging the abject that poses a threat to the social order and normative boundaries and, hence, in maintaining the social order and re-emphasizing the conventional boundaries it acknowledges.

Notes

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[2] Alfred E. Longueil, 'The Word "Gothic" in Eighteenth Century Criticism', *Modern Language Notes*, 38 (1923), 453-560 (p. 453-4).

[3] Fred Botting, p. 14.

[4] Kathleen Spencer, 'Purity and Danger: *Dracula*, the Urban Gothic, and the Late Victorian Degeneracy Crisis', *ELH*, 59 (1992), 197-225 (p. 200).

[5] Clemence Housman, *The Were-Wolf* (London: John Lane; Chicago: Way and Williams, 1896), p. 23.

[6] Ibid., p. 28.

[7] Glennis Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s', in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 186-96 (p. 193).

[8] Sir Gilbert Campbell, 'The White Wolf of Kostopchin', in *The Bibliophile Library of Literature, Art, & Rare Manuscripts*, Vol. XVIII, ed. by Nathan Haskell Dole, Forrest Morgan, and Caroline Ticknor (New York and London: The International Bibliophile Society, 1904), pp. 6064-6093 (p. 6074).

[9] Eric Stanislaus Stenbock, 'The Other Side', in *The Spirit Lamp*, Vol IV, No. 2, ed. by Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas (Oxford: James Thornton, 1893), pp. 52-68 (p. 55).

[10] Ibid., p. 68.

[11] Chantal Bourgault Du Coudray, *The Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror and the Beast Within* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 49.

[12] Samuel R. Crockett, *The Black Douglas* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1899).

[13] Chantal Bourgault Du Coudray, p. 48.

[14] Sir Gilbert Campbell, p. 6089.

[15] Sabine Baring-Gould, *The Book of Were-wolves: Being an Account of a Terrible Superstition*, (London: Smith & Elder, 1865), p. 142-4.

[16] Andrew Wynter, *Fruit between the Leaves*, Vol. I, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1875), p.116-7.

[17] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, tans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.4.

[18] Ibid., p. 2-3.

[19] Charlotte F. Otten, 'The Erotic Werewolf', in *The Literary Werewolf: An Anthology*, ed. by Charlotte F. Otten (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002) pp. 1-52 (p. 3).

[20] Clemence Housman, p. 1-2.

[21] Ibid., p. 2.

[22] Ibid., p 23.

[23] Ibid., p. 66-65.

[24] Ibid., p. 121.

[25] Ibid., p. 122.

[26] Ibid., p. 54.