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Ekamjot Pooni & Ava Ugolini

In your hands is our most beloved bird book. Volume 15 of *The Albatross* would not have been possible without the immense support and hard work from the most dedicated people, for whom we are forever grateful.

With this volume, we would like to acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. As students from many backgrounds and walks of life, we recognize our privilege to work, live and play on their land.

Every year, *The Albatross* is published through the generous financial support of the UVic English Students' Association (ESA). The 2024-25 executive members of the ESA always shared their encouragement and creative ideas, thank you: Will, August Barlund, Kayci Caskey, Alison Dyck, Cedar Flynn, Carly Goodman, Kate Hansen, Jessica Jay, Soren Kim, Faith Lapointe, Alex McLauchlan, Chloe Mee, Oliva O'Leary, Ekamjot Pooni, Becky Turner, Ava Ugolini and Zoe Winn.

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We are eternally grateful to all of the UVic English community who submitted, contributed and edited this year's journal. *The Albatross* is run by students, for students, relying entirely on volunteer power (and caffeine). Their spirit and grind allow us to present eight excellent papers that we are beyond proud to present on paper.

Lastly, we want to thank you, reader. Thank you for picking up our journal. We hope you find yourself inspired by these reflective papers as we have been.

Introduction

Ekamjot Pooni

In literary analysis, there's a common joke about whether "the curtains were just blue"—a playful critique of overanalyzing symbolism. But, as someone who takes things too seriously, I can't stop myself from wondering: *What if they weren't?* What if those curtains reflect sorrow, constraint, or the weight of the world pressing in on a character? What if they reveal something about the author's world, the society they lived in or the systems that shaped them? To me, English has always fundamentally been about language, storytelling, and interpretation—how texts reflect, shape, and challenge our understanding of the world.

With each passing day, we are faced with new and growing challenges of political instability, social unrest, and an uncertain future. In times of upheaval, many of us seek comfort in literature, film, and other forms of storytelling to process the world around us. It is not so surprising then, that in a year where the managing editor of *The Albatross* is a political science student, the eight works featured recognize how power structures are reinforced or subverted, identity is negotiated, and history is remembered or erased. It is only fitting that all eight papers are inherently political. Volume 15 of *The Albatross* explores how literature, film, poetry, and music challenge historical, social, and political structures, through colonial resistance, gender and class critique, or artistic subversion.

Our first two essays embark on how marginalized communities resist oppression through narrative forms, specifically storytelling and poetry, to highlight the power of art in giving voice to those who have been historically marginalized or silenced. Informed by Métis scholar Jo-Ann Episkenew, Nicole Rogers illustrates how Indigenous storytelling resists colonial narratives in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2021). Rogers argues that "Highway challenges the dominant 'victim-only' narrative by portraying

complex, joyful and humorous Indigenous characters," thus asserting creative sovereignty (15). Focusing on cultural resistance and the assertion of Indigenous identity and sovereignty through storytelling techniques and content, Rogers forces the reader to engage in a framework that demonstrates Indigenous peoples as more than the victims the colonial narrative makes them out to be. Conversely, Elise Luik demonstrates how poetic expression serves as a tool of resistance against the dehumanizing practices experienced by refugees. Analyzing Warsan Shire's poetry collection *Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head* (2022), Shire's poetry "evokes the embodied experience of living as a marginalized individual," challenging the state's power to define and classify refugees as less than human (21). Luik emphasizes the resistance against de-humanization and the reclaiming of humanity by refugees through the visceral and personal expression of their corporeal experiences in poetry.

Following similar themes of challenging dominant power structure narratives are our next two essays focusing on how history is constructed and manipulated. Michael Haneke's fictional film *Caché* (2005) and Emad Burnat's documentary *Five Broken Cameras* (2011) are used as examples of "witness resistance" to expose how surveillance challenges state-sanctioned narratives of colonialism. Audrey Mugford analyzes how surveillance, as a form of filmmaking, can be used to contradict and resist dominant, "constructed colonial narrative of history" (30). Mugford ultimately argues that both films employ "transformative resistance" by appropriating the colonial medium of film and surveillance to expose and challenge dominant historical accounts, whether through psycho-logical disruption of a forgotten past or real-time documentation of ongoing oppression (37). Through a different context and method; Alison Dyck examines how Timothy Findley's novel *The Wars* (1977) critiques "official history and historical narratives" of the Canadian experience in the Great War (39). Findley uses Robert Ross's character to debunk myths about the war perpetuated by recruitment propaganda and to chal-

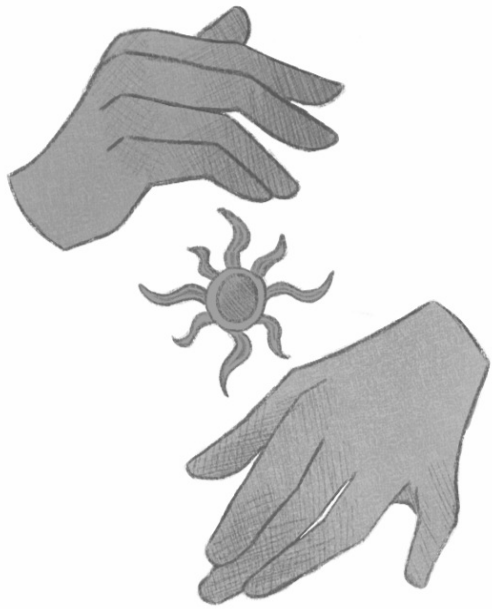
lenge the societal expectations of early 20th century Canadian society that informed these narratives. Dyck exhibits how a literary work can critique already established "official history" and propaganda narratives of past conflicts by presenting an individual experience that contradicts those constructions (40). These papers highlight the ways in which history is not a neutral recounting of events but is actively constructed and can be manipulated to serve particular agendas.

The journal takes a turn with the next two articles, offering critiques of capitalism's impact on morality and human relationships, highlighting how capitalism undermines genuine human connection and ethical behaviour by prioritizing material values. Jessica Jay critiques capitalist greed by exposing how F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (2021) "commodifies [female] selfhood" (51). Femininity is shaped and constrained by the logic of commodification, where identity is fashioned through wealth, appearance, and desirability—often at the cost of authenticity and agency—resulting in a world that is "material without being real," (57). Jay demonstrates how materialism replaces genuine human connection through the character's pursuit of wealth as a means to achieve love and social standing, which ultimately leads to tragedy and emptiness. Alternatively, through Theodor Adorno's social critique, Alexander McLauchlan analyzes Franz Kafka's *Betrachtung* (Meditation) suggesting that late capitalism renders ethical living feasible by fostering alienation and the internalization of bourgeois ideology (59). Drawing on multiple Kafka short stories, McLauchlan explains how relationships are shaped by the assimilation of cultural norms, and how fulfillment is found in transactional relationships and the assumption of power over others, rather than genuine human connection. Using Adorno's lens, Kafka's narratives suggest that capitalism's inherent structure fosters alienation and undermines the possibility of moral living and authentic solidarity.

The final two papers tackle alternative ways of perceiving reality through nature or artistic expression, suggesting that these perspectives can challenge the dominant

norms. Ava Ugolini provides a unique and exciting comparison between William Blake's artistic work and the new wave music movement, arguing that both offer different ways of perceiving reality which challenge orthodox conventions and socio-political norms (66). Blake and new wave music provide alternative ways of understanding and engaging with reality, offering critical perspectives on power structures, societal issues, and human experiences through respective art forms. Shifting from music to text, Sarah Evans explicates how Nan Shepherd's writing and *The Living Mountain* presents the perception of reality through a deep and spiritual connection with nature. Ultimately, Shepherd finds a "new body in the mountain's 'Being'," suggesting a new way of perceiving not only the natural world but also the self in relation to it, advocating for the mountain's preservation by recognizing its intrinsic value (85).

These eight critical works collectively analyze how literature, film, and music serve as powerful mediums, each challenging dominant narratives and reshaping how we understand the world. In a time when uncertainties shape our everyday lives, I encourage you, reader, to engage with these texts that remind us how stories are never just stories. Perhaps, then, the curtains were never just blue, but rather a window into something far greater. Without a further ado: *The Albatross*, Volume 15.



CRITICAL WORKS

Beauty and Violence in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Nicole Rogers

Abstract: This paper explores the interplay of beauty and violence in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2021), emphasizing the novel's role in Indigenous storytelling and resistance to colonial narratives. Highway challenges the "victim-only" narrative by portraying complex, joyful, and humorous Indigenous characters. Highway's poetic prose, juxtaposition, and humor convey Cree resilience amidst trauma, asserting creative sovereignty.

Beauty and violence are atypical counterparts; "beautiful violence" seems oxymoronic. In the context of Indigenous truth and reconciliation, colonial violence is typically recounted in ways that centre the incredible pain, hurt, and victimization of Indigenous peoples. Colonial violence recounted in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2021) does not minimize the pain and the hurt, or suggest that Indigenous peoples in Canada are not victims—but the beauty in Highway's writing demonstrates that they are much more than just victims. Highway's writing resists the reduction of Indigenous identity to victimhood by portraying characters who experience joy, humor, and resilience alongside trauma. Métis scholar Jo-Ann Episkenew says that Indigenous storytelling "is a medicine that can cure the trauma of colonialism by countering the master narrative" (Thom 201). Storytelling itself is an art form that not only preserves history and culture but also fosters healing through its creative reimagining of Indigenous experience. There is healing in art. Highway's writing tells a story of Cree peoples in a shamelessly ornamented heretical Cree storytelling tradition that resists the plain victim narrative by embracing extravagance, vivid embellishment, and the-

atricality, transforming pain into a rich, layered expression of resilience through poetic joy, juxtaposition, and humour.

The novel's opening section is packed full of joy: joyful moments, relationships, and places. It centres around a happy family. The protagonists, Champion and Ooneemeetoo Okimasis (Jeremiah and Gabriel), are introduced within this context of joy, happiness, and love. This introduction effectively gives them life outside of Christian/colonizer control and provides an image of what they will later lose. The boys have a mother whose eyes are "bottomless wells of love" and they sleep snuggled up with their siblings in a family tent that has a spruce bough carpet (Highway 30). It is clear that the Okimasis family does not have much, but it is also clear that they do not need much, so long as they have a warm, safe place to sleep, something to eat, and their community. Beyond the first section, there are moments of joy sprinkled throughout the novel. Many scholars investigate the importance of the inclusion of joy within narratives that centre Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour. Specifically, the commonly explored term "Black joy" is defined as a recentering of narrative which "allows Black people to be more than their struggles and setbacks, and to see Black folx creativity, imagination, healing, and ingenuity as a vital part of antiracism" (Dunn and Love 69). This idea of highlighting simple positivity as an essential part of someone's story within a historically wronged and racialized group can be used as a framework for what Highway is doing with Indigenous joy. Though the Okimasis brothers experience dehumanizing and cruel treatment at the residential school, these experiences do not define them entirely. Jeremiah frequently finds joy in music. Soon after his arrival at the school, with a freshly shaven head and freshly dried tears, Jeremiah is comforted by a song as "pretty as the song of chickadees in spring," and "like a ripe cloudberry in high July, his heart open[s] up" (Highway 56). The description of his body settling into a peaceful, calm state goes well beyond this small excerpt, granting Jeremiah relief from his frightening new environment. He is more than just one

of "a hundred bald-headed Indian boys" (55) in identical uniforms. Jeremiah is his own person. Highway's description of joy in music is also an example of poetic prose, utilizing simile and warm words of spring and summer. By surrounding Jeremiah's moment of happiness with rich, evocative imagery, Highway mirrors how joy itself can be immersive and transformative, offering a sense of freedom even within oppressive circumstances. Such poetic prose emphasizes the character's joy, adding beauty throughout the novel.

Poetic prose is also prevalent in many moments of juxtaposition. Highway juxtaposes particularly horrific scenes in the novel with undeniable beauty, creating elements of shock and occasional discomfort. The descriptions of the physical violence inflicted on Evelyn Rose McCrae and Madeline Jeanette Lavoix are surprisingly poetic. Jeremiah is haunted by Evelyn Rose, a woman "found in a ditch on the city's outskirts," with "a shattered bottle lying gently, like a rose, deep inside her crimson sex" (107). So, Evelyn Rose is brutally assaulted, killed, and carelessly discarded. The violence is clear, and yet so is the unexpected delicacy, which can be read as downplaying what happened. But the bottle is only lying gently; there is no suggestion that it was placed gently. Word choices such as "rose" and "crimson" paint Evelyn Rose as a soft angelic figure, rather than just a brutalized body. Such words give her a sense of beauty, warmth, and vitality, reinforcing that she exists beyond the trauma inflicted upon her. The language preserves her dignity and humanity, allowing space for her to be seen as a full, complex person rather than just a symbol of suffering. Similarly, after Gabriel witnesses Madeline's assault, he discovers that a screwdriver is "lying gently like a rose" (132) inside of her when her body is found. Though the sharp object is different, this imagery mirrors Evelyn Rose's assault. Additionally, at the time of Madeline's assault, Gabriel has a starkly juxtaposing experience. Beautiful description of Gabriel's sexual pleasure, as he tastes "the essence of warm honey" (132), is placed

between descriptions of Madeline's assault, his gentle experiences sharply contrasting the violence of hers and effectively emphasising the brutality of the sexualized violence. Gabriel and Jeremiah are each haunted by the deaths of Evelyn Rose and Madeline. Jeremiah later imagines an angelic figure adorned with snowflakes, with an "ethereal … foetus in her belly full-formed and glowing," but "[d]isengaging from the womb, the child tumble[s] seemingly forever, to a bed of broken beer bottles and screwdrivers filed sharp as nails" (144). The specific image of beer bottles and screwdrivers is a direct reference to the objects found inside of Evelyn Rose and Madeline. Looking through the lens of English scholars Lisa A. Dickson and Maryna Romanets, the continuation of angelic imagery could be an example of beauty being "instrumental in overcoming the aporia and crisis of representation […] as the work of memory can be enriched by aesthetic pleasure, which can act as a survival tool for primary witnesses [of trauma]" (19). So, Jeremiah continuing to imagine Evelyn Rose/Madeline as angelic can help him cope with the pain.

Highway also uses humour to add an additional element of beauty and lightheartedness to the novel. Black-eyed Susan and her physically abusive husband, Happy Doll Magipom, are dubbed with these incredibly ironic nicknames. Black-eyed Susan refers to the name of a flower, but also alludes to the fact that this character likely receives black eyes at the hands of Happy Doll Magipom—someone whose anger problems clearly indicate that he is not very happy. These particular names juxtapose the people to whom they belong and are funny in their irony. Funny names are a recurrent motif in the novel. Though funny, Highway's nicknames are not always clearly explained. Little Seagull Ovary, for instance, is an old woman who is a midwife. The "Ovary" part connects to Little Seagull Ovary working closely with actual ovaries; although, what ovaries have to do with seagulls is a mystery. This element of mystery is also one demonstration of the Indigenous right to opacity. Opacity refers to "the perpetual, active refusal

of complete engagement: to speak with one's own in one's own way; to refuse translation and full explanations [for settlers]" (Garneau 21). Highway chooses not to provide an explanation of Little Seagull Ovary's name. One of the best examples of humour in the novel is young Jeremiah's lesson on evil. Father LaFleur is trying to instill the fear of God and the Devil, but Jeremiah can only focus on how wonderful all things evil seem to be. The scene acts as subversive mimicry, meaning it "encompasses the incorporation of Native-specific language, art forms and concepts and the reversal of the representation of the colonized as 'the Other'" (Thom 205). With Jeremiah as the protagonist who does not understand English or Roman Catholicism, the colonized is presented as an Other, while Jeremiah's Cree language and spirituality is the norm. For him, evil is but a pretty word, especially "the way the *V* [comes] to such an elegant point at the bottom, like a tiny, fleeting kiss" (Highway 62). Evil as a concept is lost in translation, and Father LaFleur's lesson is ironically having the opposite effect on Jeremiah. Hell seems like a fun place to be, and "King Lucy," as in Lucifer, the Devil, is a smiley man having a good time (61). The seriousness of these concepts relative to Roman Catholicism make Jeremiah's response particularly outrageous. His childhood naïveté and pure intentions make such a response lighthearted. Jeremiah is a child who is genuinely doing his best to listen and learn, but he is completely unaware of how much his interpretations would upset antagonist Father LaFleur, who usually gets his way. Highway does a good job of using humour to create beautiful little moments in moments of seriousness.

Throughout *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Highway manages to not only assert creative sovereignty, he also pushes back against colonial/settler norms. In writing the novel in shamelessly ornamented, Cree storytelling-style, Highway adds so many pieces of beauty to an otherwise sad story. His poetic prose sharpens his imagery and amplifies joy. Highway honours himself and his characters by choosing not to follow the standard or predictable narrative. His characters are joyful, thoughtful, funny, well-rounded peo-

ple who demonstrate that Indigenous characters can and should be written as much more than victims of colonial violence in Canada. Art like *Kiss of the Fur Queen* has the potential to change colonial-based attitudes and perspectives, and to change the way that Canada and Canadians view truth and reconciliation.

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Refugee Storytelling: Warsan Shire's *Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head* and Corporeal Experience

Elise Luik

Abstract: This paper examines the politicization of refugees', women's, and racialized bodies represented in Warsan Shire's poetry collection *Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head* (2022). Shire's poetry evokes the embodied experience of living as a marginalized individual to craft a narrative that bridges multiple periods in a refugee's life to explore how personal experiences are inseparable from power dynamics within the state. Thus, her poetry collection reveals how a refugee's experience of reality is perpetually negotiated with the state.

To have a body and to be a body constitutes existence. Individuals live and experience life through their bodies; bodies are not simply biological products but integral sites to identity. The body occupies a dual role: it is both a subject with agency and an object constructed through cultural, political, and social narratives. Higgs and Gilleard state that corporeality describes the "material actions and reactions of bodies that are realized socially" while embodiment "refers to the body as a vehicle or medium of social agency" (ix). In the poetry collection *Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head* (2022), Warsan Shire weaves corporeality and embodiment into a narrative that spans temporal dimensions—shifts between fragments of childhood and adulthood—to represent her experience of simultaneously living as a refugee, a woman, and a racialized individual. Shire's poetry grounds experiences of survival and womanhood in the body to reveal how the body archives trauma, migration, and memory. Her poetry articulates the inability to escape the power relations that construct her body as a political

tool, positioning it as both an instrument of oppression and a site of domination. At the same time, her poetry generates new understandings of refugee experiences as she reclaims her corporeal experiences by foregrounding the illusive dichotomy between the personal and political spheres. Although one might argue that personal experience exists independently from political contexts, Shire's poetry illustrates how politics shape the embodied reality of living as a refugee. Throughout her poems, Shire uses storytelling as a tool of resistance and liberation within an oppressive power dynamic between the state and the refugee. Her refugee story challenges the state's definitions of humanity and language of classification while presenting how personal experience is inextricably tied to state politics.

The experience of embodiment and the power dynamics that exist between the state and refugees intersect in the way refugees' bodies are controlled, monitored, and classified within social and political structures. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the term *refugee* refers to "people who have fled their countries to escape conflict, violence, or persecution and have sought safety in another country;" as such, refugeedom encompasses both a political condition of displacement and an embodied experience of exile and survival. Thus, physicality is integral to refugees' experiences of reality because their bodies tangibly affect their position in political and social reality. Barbara Grabowska argues that the body determines one's political status which is why all political action is significant to personal identity (116). Shire's poem "Assimilation" foregrounds the relationship between refugees, their bodies, and state politics by creating a narrative that deconstructs the state's dehumanizing practices. Shire writes about a corporeal experience, "I can't get the refugee out of my body, / I bolt my body whenever I get the chance" (Shire 21). These lines evoke a visceral image of refugeedom's lasting impacts on an individual's social identity and sense of self. The verb "bolt" denotes a sudden and swift movement, which illustrates that the refugee exists in a constant state of alertness because her social identity per-

petuates an inescapable vulnerability. The refugee aims to secure and protect her body because she is unable to shed her refugee identity. The verse gives a physical essence to the seemingly abstract concept of refugee, embodying her experiences as a refugee through a corporeal dimension.

Refugees exist in a liminal space where they are neither fully included in a host state nor fully belonging to their country of origin, which positions their social and political status precariously. As a political entity, a state holds sovereignty, and this sovereignty authorizes it to determine citizenship and legal personhood within its borders; a state can define who receives rights, protections, and recognition, thus creating the conditions in which refugees are granted or denied asylum and legal status as refugees. The conclusion of "Assimilation" explores the corporeal experience of embodying the social strata of refugees. The poem reveals that the state's language of classification is not abstract but has a physical presence and impact: "At each and every checkpoint the refugee is asked / *Are you human*?" (Shire 22). The checkpoint presents a physical barrier of screening, processing, and restriction that the refugee must cross. It symbolizes the numerous evaluative moments that the refugee must face where the state scrutinizes her humanness. The poem's subsequent question, "*Are you human*?", calls out the asylum processes that reduce the refugee's identity to her circumstances of forced migration and statelessness by evaluating whether she deserves protection. The state's documentation practices politicize the refugee's identity, rendering her as a physical object: "The refugee is sure it's still human but worries that overnight, / While it slept, there may have been a change in classification" (22). Shire's use of "it" as a pronoun exposes the state's dehumanizing language of classification, drawing on the level of power the state exerts through its ability to define who and who is not human within its borders. The refugee's worry about a "change in classification" encapsulates her fear of not only an abstract change in classification but a tangible shift in how society perceives her (22). The poem establishes a paradigm of a refugee's internal struggle to retain a

sense of identity amidst a power dynamic with a state that reduces her identity to a bureaucratic category. The refugee feels this objectification in a profoundly corporeal experience that leads to a particular alienation—a feeling of dehumanization—which the refugee in this poem is acutely aware of when she suggests her worry that her classification has changed. Essentially, the state's classification practices regulate how the refugee experiences physical and social reality.

Shire captures the relationship between the refugee's corporeality and power relations with the state and society in the poem "Bless Your Ugly Daughter" (35). Jennifer Leetsch suggests that in Shire's poetry, the physicality of exile manifests through the female body, which creates a narrative of alienation and dislocation in which female corporeality becomes a material entity manipulated by state powers (89). The poem "Bless Your Ugly Daughter" foregrounds how the speaker's newfound state and former society both perceive and subsequently label the daughter as inherently unclean: "As an infant forced to gargle rosewater / Smoked in uunsi to purify her of whatever / Unclean thing she inherited" (Shire). The daughter carries an uncleanliness that constitutes her essence—her body is unclean and is defined by this uncleanliness—which continually requires purification. The following lines localize the daughter's uncleanliness:

> Your daughter is covered in it.
> Her teeth are small colonies,
> Her stomach is an island,
> Her thighs are borders
> […]
> Your daughter's face is a small riot,
> Her hands are a civil war,
> She has a refugee camp tucked
> Behind each ear, her body is littered
> With ugly things (35).

Her body becomes cartography for the trauma of refugees,

and her body's inherent ugliness holds blame for the pain of refugee experiences. Her face being a "small riot" (35) proposes that she wears a tumultuous expression that reflects a disturbance in her sense of peace. Riot indicates a revolt, which suggests that the daughter's refusal to suppress her authentic emotions is a form of rebellion. Correspondingly, the metaphor of her hands being a civil war deepen the sense of the daughter's internal struggle and the violent circumstances that catalyzed it, illustrating that the conflict that plagues her remains unsettled. The refugee camp tucked behind each ear exposes that she physically carries memories from the camp on her body as she moves through the world. The poem connects emotions and political realities to the girl's experience of embodiment. Through each metaphor, the poem reveals how the physical body is not simply material, but a vessel that bears and expresses human experience. In this poem, the female body simultaneously becomes a political landscape, battleground, and place of refuge.

As the refugee's persona grows older across select poems in Shire's collection, she struggles to exert a level of agency over her social and political status, pursuing conformity in her newfound state as a method to escape the experience of inhabiting a marginalized body. In the poem "The Baby-Sitters Club," the concept of whiteness becomes a tangible essence that the speaker desperately attempts to sew into her body:

> stitching
> My body into the body of Home-
> coming Queen, rising, stretching
> my white body, in my white underwear
> sprawled on white sheets, (Shire)

The enjambment of "home- / Coming" emphasizes the word "home" to highlight the perplexing question of what home represents to a refugee (64). Correspondingly, in a futile effort, the speaker attempts to shift her corporeal experience as a woman of colour to a reality in which she can embody

whiteness and assimilate into the default and unmarked social category in her state. Bourdieu and Eilas argue that the state's dominant structures in society maintain their dominance through the "application of mechanics of stigmatization" that lead to the outsider's "acceptance of their allegedly lesser human worth" (Buschendorf 13). In the context of Shire's "The Baby-Sitters Club," the speaker senses social stigma inscribed onto her racialized body, incentivizing her desire to morph into a white homecoming queen. The body acts as a site of enacting and mediating power relations of exclusion and marginalization; as the speaker attempts to assimilate to her newfound "home," social pressures drive her desire to move through the world with the implicit advantages associated with whiteness by altering her physical appearance. Her physical form embodies these pressures through modification practices because the politicization of racialized bodies negatively shapes the speaker's life. The speaker actively strives to reposition the racialization of her body by "stitching" and "stretching" her physical self to fit her society's white body standards (Shire 64). The speaker's desire and attempt to conform to these standards reveal that she possesses the agency to resist or conform to power structures. Grabowska argues that women's bodies become instruments of oppression when they engage in a "regimen of practices" that transfigure their bodies (199). The speaker's pursuit of whiteness reflects the patriarchal and racist power structures that alienate and stigmatize refugees', women's, and racialized bodies. In desiring and pursuing body modification, the speaker's body becomes a tool through which these structures of power operate to regulate whose bodies are acceptable, valuable, and desirable.

Shire's nonlinear narrative structure—her narrative juxtaposing temporal dimensions—weaves different possibilities of representation and apprehension of refugee experiences, incorporating the corporeality of existing in a particular time, place, and body in each temporal dimension. As Shire's poems move through the temporal dimensions of a new refugee, daughter, and teenager, the narrative seeks to reveal an expansive and corporeal essence of truth in

the refugee experience. Her narrative creates an authentic and deeply subjective knowledge of a refugee's social conditions that resists the state's dehumanizing rhetoric. Lee Anne Bell argues that resistance stories—stories that resist the "status quo" of dominant power structures—"expand our vision of what is possible" (71). Further, Stefania Ciocia suggests that stories "do not rely on the evocation of actual events but on the imaginative re-elaboration of a particularly haunting experience or of something elemental in the human condition" (220). While the state legally classifies the new refugee's body in "Assimilation" (21), societal standards and norms existing within the state shape the speaker's desire to embody whiteness in "The Baby-Sitters Club" (64). In "The Baby-Sitters Club," temporal dimension—the period of adolescence—places the refugee in a stage where peer acceptance is crucial, and thus, conforming to social norms is an attempt to reduce feelings of isolation and rejection (64). At the same time, values from the refugee's former homeland impact the daughter's corporeality in "Bless Your Ugly Daughter," while the newfound state blames the daughter for the ugliness of refugee experiences (35). Shire's narrative evokes corporeal insights that form an understanding of experience that comes through the body. She spins an intersectional web of the essence of refugeedom, invoking the body as a site of experience, memory, and political mediation. Lena Wånggren argues that in the context of social change, narratives create "an opposition to established knowledge" (403). In Shire's poetry collection, her story evokes corporeal experiences that the state's politicization of refugees', women's, and racialized bodies shapes. She presents resistance and opposition to the structures that govern her corporeality by reclaiming the state's dehumanizing rhetoric and presenting their absurdity in her poems.

In Shire's "Assimilation" (21), "Bless Your Ugly Daughter" (35), and "The Baby-Sitters Club" (64), she focalizes the poems through a refugee's subjective perspective while foregrounding the power relations that influence the refugee's corporeality. The poems draw explicit attention

to the state's dehumanization and objectification of refugees, which challenges the absurdity of the state's oppressive practices. At the same time, the poems humanize the ramifications of dehumanization on refugees by presenting the state's classification practices, norms, and societal standards through the lens of a deeply personal and evocative narrative. In this way, her poems contain generative elements that question the dominance of these dehumanizing practices. For example, in "Assimilation," the speaker highlights that "the refugee is sure it's still human" directly after the state asks about her humanity (Shire 21). Despite the state's attempt to strip the refugee of her humanity—to oversimplify her identity and worth through classification—the speaker holds a level of agency in shaping readers' opinions of her humanity by foregrounding the absurdity of the state's dehumanization. Shire's collection, while emphasizing the state's marginalization of refugees, questions the power of the state's practices concerning refugees and challenges the state's dominant rhetoric about refugees.

In Shire's collection of poetry, she represents the state's impact on refugees' experiences of corporeality and embodiment, highlighting the effects of the state's dehumanizing practices. Her poems foreground the power relations that dictate refugees' corporeal experiences, emphasizing how living as a refugee, woman, and racialized person fundamentally shapes one's experience of reality. Her narrative weaves together temporal dimensions to present how temporality alters corporeal experiences as her narrative bridges different periods of life. At the same time, Shire reclaims the state's harmful rhetoric by presenting the impact of documentation practices and harmful social norms. Shire's poetry collection wields words as tools of creation that challenge dominant social norms and practices, expanding the possibilities of apprehension and representation of refugee experiences.

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Witness Resistance: The Role of Surveillance in Emad Burnat's *Five Broken Cameras* and Michael Haneke's *Caché*

Audrey Mugford

Abstract: This essay synthesizes Michael Haneke's psychological thriller *Caché* (2005) and Emad Burnat's documentary *Five Broken Cameras* (2011) to explore how the act of filmmaking—or "surveilling"—contradicts the constructed colonial narrative of history. Although different in context, subject matter, and genre, both films have colonial subjects using surveillance as a tool for anti-colonial resistance. I briefly discuss the Paris massacre of 1961, followed by France's willful amnesia regarding that atrocity, and the peaceful demonstrations that famously take place in Bil'in against encroaching Israeli settlements on Palestinian land to provide context for *Caché* and *Five Broken Cameras* respectively.

Postcolonial cinema often engages in the politics of resistance against imperial and colonial powers. Surveillance—or filmmaking—offers a mode of resistance; unmediated documentation of colonial violence forces retrospection upon events either excluded or downplayed through dominant colonizer lenses. For this essay's argument, surveillance refers to the filmed documentation of a subject, often while the surveilled person engages in clandestine activities. Both Michael Haneke's film *Caché* (2005) and Emad Burnat's documentary *Five Broken Cameras* (2011) use surveillance to resist complicity, amnesia, and violence—elements notably omitted in films from colonial or neocolonial perspectives, either implicitly or explic-

itly. While *Caché* investigates the complicity of its civilian protagonist, Georges, in the colonial violence perpetrated by France against Franco-Algerians during the 17 October 1961 massacre decades after its occurrence, *Five Broken Cameras* documents ongoing violence of colonial-Israeli armed forces in Bil'in, Palestine as it unfolds in real time. Despite their differences temporally and contextually, both films use the act of surveilling the guilty party to refuse convenient colonial forgetfulness—either in the past or the future—of the violence committed. *Caché* queries the guilt of the settler-colonial bystander through the surveillance tapes Georges receives (although he is comfortable with being filmed when he controls the narrative on his talk show) thus resisting his desire to ignore an unscripted, objective account of his guilt. Both films are an intrinsically meta form of resistance against the colonial narrative and obstruct the colonizer's ability to obscure or rewrite parts of history. *Five Broken Cameras* and *Caché* use film and surveillance as a peaceful form of resistance, which both colonial-Israel and Georges Laurent respectively respond to with paranoia and violence.

Five Broken Cameras and *Caché* require viewers to understand the external context of violence from their respective colonial oppressors. Burnat's *Five Broken Cameras* chronicles the unarmed resistance of his native village Bil'in, located on the West Bank in Palestine, as they protest against encroaching Israeli settlements and land divisions. Over the course of the five-year period that Burnat documents, he uses five different cameras. Israeli armed forces retaliate against his peaceful documentation of Palestinian demonstrations by breaking each of his cameras. As Burnat begins filming in the winter of 2005, his fourth son Gibreel is born. Gibreel's birth coincides with the infancy of an ongoing peaceful resistance in Bil'in, and Burnat uses his camera to document each one's growth and life (Hallward 542). While *Five Broken Cameras* documents resistance in real time through actual footage of Palestinian protest and colonial Israeli response, Haneke's film *Caché* takes place some fifty years after the Paris massacre which catalyzes the film's

plot. On 5 October 1961, French police implemented a racially motivated curfew for French-Algerians in retaliation against the National Liberation Front (FLN) activity in Paris. Twelve days later, on 17 October 1961, the FLN brought approximately 20 000 French-Algerians together in peaceful protest against the curfew. The FLN enforced that all protestors were unarmed and accompanied by family to contradict France's representation of Franco-Algerians as barbaric and aggressive. Despite the protest's peaceful nature, French police arrested 10 000, killed at least 200, and assaulted countless Franco-Algerian demonstrators (Brozgal 2–3). Other than one brief mention of 17 October 1961 from Georges to Anne as he explains his relationship to Majid, the massacre is never explicitly referenced in *Caché* (Haneke 00:59:47); the choice to allude to but not discuss the violent massacre that causes the film's plot imitates France's own amnesia through nonrecognition of its harmful past. *Caché* follows the growing unease of protagonist Georges Laurent and his wife, Anne, as they receive surveillance tapes of their home, unsettling illustrations of a figure coughing up blood, and footage leading to the apartment of Majid, a man Georges has not seen since he was a child. After the massacre of 17 October 1961 left Majid an orphan, Georges's parents planned to adopt him. A six-year-old Georges disrupts this plan by fabricating that Majid is exhibiting symptoms of tuberculosis and reporting that Majid beheads a chicken with the intention of intimidating him. Georges's lies result in the Laurents sending Majid away, ultimately erasing his existence from their family's memory. Burnat's *Five Broken Cameras* and Haneke's *Caché* employ distinctive temporal and cinematic approaches to embody resistance of colonial amnesia through filmmaking. Burnat's visceral documentation of active unarmed resistance from the perspective of Palestinians strives to be a preventative measure against ongoing colonial violence and erasure. The use of surveillance in *Caché* serves as a psychological tool to query complicity and responsibility for participants in settings that appear separate from colonial history.

Each of Burnat's cameras simultaneously docu-

ment violence perpetrated by Israel and capture authentic scene compositions which preserve Bil'in on film through each stage of the Israeli settlements. This documentation resists the settler-colonial goal of replacement and invites the viewer to engage with memories of the pre-settlement Palestinian landscape. After the Second Intifada in Palestine, Israel constructed a wall to separate Israel from the rest of the West Bank. This decision impacted Palestinians by greatly reducing their farmland, destroying their olive trees, and forcing them to take longer routes filled with armed checkpoints in order to get to work, school, or to receive medical care. As Palestinians were subjected to these drastic changes, the popularity of unarmed and localized resistance grew (Darweish and Rigby 71). Burnat's footage visually explicates the juxtaposition between the unarmed, land-connected resistance in Bil'in with the stark outline of Israeli settlements, looming on the outskirts of his village. A gas grenade damages and subsequently breaks Burnat's first camera, demonstrating the colonial apprehension regarding surveillance by the colonized "other" (Burnat 0:15:54). The image becomes increasingly pixelated and eventually cuts, marking the temporary end of Burnat's ability to participate in witness resistance. With his second camera, Burnat pans across the Palestinian-inhabited side of the wall, where goats graze on green grass, over to the contrastive, beige, man-made structures that creep over the natural landscape (0:19:41). The placement of the camera in Bil'in positions Israeli settlements in opposition to the landscape, inviting the viewer to resist through the act of witnessing. Burnat immortalizes this landscape by documenting it—an act that resists the colonial goal of erasure.

Similar to Burnat's refusal to allow Israeli settlements to build over and then forget Bil'in, the surveillance footage Georges receives in *Caché* unearths his forgotten complicity and benefits from France's violent colonial history with Algeria. Despite the deaths of between 800 000 and 1.5 million Algerians over its duration, "it is only recently that France has officially recognized the [Algerian] war, [as it] has not always been forthcoming about the torture

committed by the French" (McFadden 114). With *Caché* as a fictional narrative, its representation of unscripted surveillance as aiding in resistance settler-colonial amnesia and complicity crops up in the varied reactions Georges has regarding the various contexts in which he is filmed. While Georges is comfortable performing for the camera on his literary talk show, his reaction to the unknown surveillance suggests his unease at the prospect of losing the ability to properly script himself. The staged and sterile environment of Georges's talk show set—which consists of shelves of fake, titleless books—contrasts with that of his home dining room; while both scenes are blocked in similar ways, his home exists as an intimate, dimly lit space lined with actual books, suggesting that Georges's talk show persona is a carefully curated imprint of his actual self (Haneke 0:12:18; 0:08:08). The act of surveillance forces Georges to confront his true self, resisting the colonial separation between representation and reality, and shifting the spotlight away from the presentation Georges promotes and towards the guilt he desires to forget. After Majid's suicide, Georges retreats into his bedroom where he takes sleeping pills—"cachets" in French, homonymous to the film's title (Ezra and Sillars 220)—and draws the curtains, as he attempts to return to his amnesiac stasis (Haneke 1:48:30–1:50:40). Instead of expressing distress or reflecting on his contribution to Majid's death, Georges seems to appear relieved that the witness to his guilt no longer can hold him accountable, allowing him to return to his metaphorical hibernation. Cybelle McFadden stipulates that "perhaps Georges is more guilty for his continual lack of recognition as an adult of the harm he provoked as a child than the six-year-old Georges" (120). While the culpability of a six-year-old in the greater framework of France's colonial destruction is ambiguous, Georges's choice in adulthood to continually ignore his privilege and complicity becomes his actual fault. With Majid's death, the surveillance tapes cease. Georges is no longer forced to consider the benefits he received from his part—and that of his country—in the colonization of Algeria. Instead of confronting his own contribution to Majid's suicide, Georg-

es returns to bed and chooses to metaphorically hibernate through his guilt or any interrogation. This decision mimics the Laurents, who chose to erase Majid from their memory after giving him up in the 1960s; the French police, who sealed the archives documenting the massacre of 17 October 1961 for 50 years (Brozgal 3); and France's overall refusal turned hesitation to acknowledge the colonization of Algeria.

The intense apprehension to have an uncontrolled source in the role of documenter by both Georges and colonial-Israelis suggests that the documentation itself threatens the colonial agenda. The surveillance of settler-colonial acts by Burnat in *Five Broken Cameras*, which is met by disproportionate and often violent acts of retaliation by colonial Israel, indicate that unscripted documentation inherently contradicts and resists colonial narratives that underplay or obscure the truth of colonial violence. Many of the settler-colonial Israelis who Burnat surveils on Bil'in land express a similar discomfort and anger to Georges's in *Caché*. One Israeli man exclaims "Stop filming!" at Burnat, and then attempts to obscure his camera lens (0:38:31). Although each film makes use of surveillance to draw attention to past and present instances of violence, it is important to note that *Five Broken Cameras* achieves this through the act of filming whereas Georges in *Caché* confronts his surveillance after the filming has already taken place. The temporal distinction between *Caché*, in which surveillance tapes by their subject are viewed after their creation, and *Five Broken Cameras*, where Israeli forces react to Burnat's active surveilling, situates Burnat in the throes of resistance, and the person filming Georges as continuing resistance in a postcolonial setting. *Caché* thus retrospectively revisits colonial France's narrative of history, whereas *Five Broken Cameras* aims to resist it ever being written in the first place.

Through unauthorized surveillance, *Caché* and *Five Broken Cameras* appropriate tools of the dominant colonial power to engage in what Bill Ashcroft describes as "transformative resistance" (19). In his book Post-Colonial Trans-

formation (2001), Ashcroft compares Guatemalan activist Rigoberta Menchú's approach to resistance, where she appropriated and transformed colonial culture for the purpose of decolonization with her father's complete and combative rejection of colonial culture. Menchú's approach results in a subtle form of resistance that becomes harder to stifle than the polar opposition opted for by people like her father (18–19). In *Caché*, the surveillance imposed upon Georges and his family replicates one of the means of oppression used by the French government upon Algerians living in France during the 1960s: "the French, as Algerian migrants came to France, imported surveillance techniques from their colony to the metropolis, techniques aimed at these very 'foreigners'" (Watson 126). Although Haneke never explicitly reveals the person responsible for the surveillance tapes, the tapes invert and transform what France did to Algerian civilians, exposing its harm "with the presumption that the Algerians are now watching their former watchers" (126). Burnat's visceral documentary style in *Five Broken Cameras* uses surveillance in the present against the colonial perpetrator, making his film a real time employment of transformative resistance. The film's Oscar nomination following its release not only meant that the mode of its creation appropriated the colonial tool of surveillance, but also that Burnat's story of resistance in Bil'in had reached a global platform. This nomination was followed by Burnat and his family's detainment in LAX after border security did not believe the purpose of his visit. Only after American film director Michael Moore stepped in was Burnat released, even though border security had already seen proof of Burnat's Oscars invitation (Schuessler 1). This disbelief by American border security of Burnat's Oscar nomination—until verified by an American—seems to embody the assumption that such spaces are reserved for dominant voices. Burnat, as perceived by dominant neocolonial America and Western society, intrudes upon this space through his filmmaking and critical acclaim.

Although *Caché* and *Five Broken Cameras* both employ transformative resistance through surveillance, each

film differs in the desired function of their respective surveillance. The former exposes the psychological guilt of a complicit man who denies any culpability for the consequences of his actions as a child, and the latter exposes the ongoing and blatant colonial violence of Israel. In this way, *Caché* and *Five Broken Cameras* diverge in their objective for how surveillance resists. The unknown filmer makes it their goal to cause psychological unrest and stoke unresolved guilt by sending Georges the surveillance tapes. Georges is only made aware of his surveillance after it occurs, while Burnat openly films in situations which directly place his safety at risk. *Caché* thus resists a psychological amnesia that has already occurred by bringing forth questions of culpability years after Georges or France actively engaged in harmful acts. *Caché* explores how to resist France's inclination in postcolonial society to ignore the history of their oppression of Algerians. As France has been somewhat successful in forgetting, the level of responsibility that the average white French civilian like Georges, who benefits from but has a degree of separation from the actual violence, remains. In *Five Broken Cameras*, however, Burnat films active violence openly. Burnat's documentary exposes colonial hypocrisy as it unfolds. By documenting active colonialism, Burnat provides a clear example of what is occurring on the West Bank and implicates the viewer in participating in his resistance.

Analyzing the use of surveillance in *Caché* and *Five Broken Cameras* demonstrates one of the many different modes which colonial and postcolonial resistance can take. While psychological and physical violence followed by amnesia or a rewriting of history tend to be the trajectory of the colonial agenda, postcolonial cinema can resist this by using surveillance to force reflection on the colonizer's culpability. The transformative resistance argued for by Ashcroft manifests in the use of film and surveillance; film, a traditionally colonial medium, is used to disrupt the colonial agenda. In the comparison of these two films, the use of surveillance as resistance presents in different styles. *Caché* resists the notion that the France of today bears no culpability—or can

forget their culpability—in the Algerian War and the 17 October 1961 massacre by exposing Georges's discomfort as his actions are surveilled. *Five Broken Cameras* uses surveillance to expose the brutality of Israeli colonialism on a global stage to achieve support for the plight of Bil'in. As both Haneke and Burnet expose the colonial beneficiary and colonizing power's paranoid, violent response to their subject's peaceful surveillance of their actions, they expose how colonialism thrives when no objective recording exists. Little physical action is taken by the surveyors in either film: in *Caché*, Haneke leaves their identity ambiguous, and Burnat films rather than actively protests. The disproportionate violent reaction of the filmed colonial perpetrator implies their guilt more than the action of the subjugated persons.

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Debunking Official History and Historical Narratives: *The Wars*, Canadian Great War Recruitment Propaganda, and Social Expectations

Alison Dyck

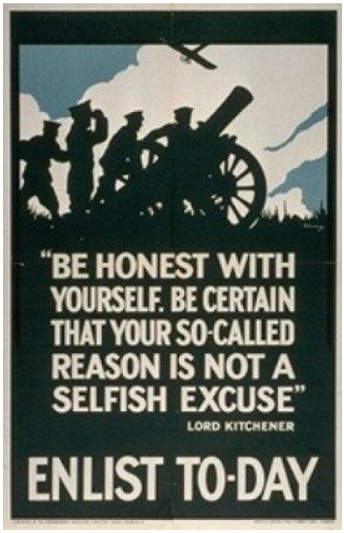
Abstract: This paper examines the historical moment and complex ideologies of early 20th century Canadian society to facilitate a deepened understanding of *The Wars* (1977) by Timothy Findley and its historical foundations. I argue that the novel's depiction of Robert Ross critiques official history and historical narratives by illustrating how Robert's character interacts with real societal expectations before and during the Great War. I situate the novel in its historical moment by demonstrating how Robert engages with constructs of gender, nationalism, and imperialism that are presented in recruitment propaganda for the Great War.

The Wars (1977) by Timothy Findley examines collective memory and official history by telling the story of Robert Ross, a fictional soldier in the Great War. His story is constructed through the efforts of a biographer who uncovers that the realities of Robert's lived experience conflict with collective memory and official history (Grace 51). Thus, the text presents a neglected historical account of an individual's experience in the Great War. I will examine the novel's historical moment and the complex ideologies of early 20th century Canadian society to facilitate a deepened understanding of the text's historical foundations. At the start of the 20th century, complex ideologies of gender, nationalism, and imperialism informed Canadian societal expectations produced by anti-modernism, the dominant ideology of the historical moment. Anti-modernist

rhetoric responded to industrialization and permeated Canadian society with the encouragement of British imperialism: "the basic premise being that the dull, unhealthy nature of modern life could be remedied only by a twentieth-century revival of chivalric ideals" (Maroney 79). The restoration of traditional attitudes and ways of living drew intimate connections between masculinity, guns, sports, and athleticism, and promoted nationalism, imperialism, and a sense of duty to society. Great War recruitment propaganda engaged with these anti-modernist ideologies and provoked shame in hesitant enlisters. Robert interacts with the themes in recruitment propaganda by failing to meet the social expectations they expound. His failures and wartime experiences jointly undermine and debunk the myths of war and the expectations of early 20th century Canadian society. Consequently, Robert's story critiques how official history and historical narratives during and after the Great War depicted the conflict as a glorious battle between good and evil.

This paper examines three propaganda posters in conjunction with Robert's character and his wartime experiences to argue that Robert provides a criticism of the novel's historical moment. Recruitment propaganda appealed strongly to social and cultural expectations of early 20th century Canadian society, establishing their usefulness as documents that depict the pressure dominant ideologies placed on prospective soldiers like Robert. I use historical scholarship to construct the historical background of the propaganda posters, literary criticism of *The Wars* to supplement my analysis, and close reading to establish the relevance of my paper's historical contextualization of the novel.

Debunking Enlistment as a Self-Sacrificial, Glorious, and National Duty



"Be Honest With Yourself. Be Certain That Your So-Called Reason Is Not A Selfish Excuse, Lord Kitchener Enlist Today"
CWM 19880069-829 - Canadian War Museum

Robert's reasons for enlisting in the army, heavily influenced by his relationship with his sister Rowena, fail to meet the imperialist and nationalist expectation of self-sacrifice. The responsibility and shame that Robert feels towards Rowena's death shares an underlying theme of selfishness with a recrui ment poster containing nationalist and imperialist motifs. The poster quotes the British war minister Lord Kitchener: "Be honest with yourself. Be certain that your so-called reason is not a selfish excuse […] Enlist Today" ("Be honest with yourself"). The imperialist and nationalist duty to serve one's country circulated as a primary reason for enlisting in the Canadian Army. The essential message of these calls to arms asserted that men "owe it to Canada to uphold her honour and defend her from the Germans" (Maroney 81). Canadian and British propaganda glorified self-sacrifice by idolizing imperialist figures such as Lord Kitchener (81). Nationalist propaganda placed duty to one's country above all else, even family. Rev. H.F. Woodcock, a recruiter at the outset of the Great War, voiced the nationalist sentiment permeating Canadian society, saying, "[L]ove of home and family was not to stand in the way of duty to one's country" (86). Critics of *The Wars*, such as

Sherrill Grace, have asserted that "social and family pressure leads [Robert] to volunteer for Canada's citizen army," establishing the relevance of constructing an ideological backdrop to the novel's setting (Grace 50).

Robert's sense of duty to his country is lacking, seemingly replaced by his loyalty to his sister and reinforced by an aversion to violence. Robert fails to fulfill his duty of protecting his sister. When Rowena falls from her wheelchair and dies, Robert is nowhere to be found. A passage recounting the day of Rowena's fall presents the "selfish excuse" that Robert has for neglecting his brotherly duty of protecting her from harm ("Be honest with yourself"): "It was Robert's fault. Robert was her guardian and he was locked in his bedroom. Making love to his pillows" (Findley 18). The guilt and selfishness Robert feels are established by the word "fault" (18); the incomplete sentence, "Making love to his pillows" (18); and the indirect responsibility Robert associates between his self-indulgent pleasure-chasing and his sister's death. In the aftermath of Rowena's death, Robert lacks purpose: Robert's "hands felt empty. In his mind, they kept reaching out for the back of Rowena's chair" (21). Literary critic Anna Branach-Kallas discusses Robert's imperative for enlisting, saying, "He does not share his nation's enthusiasm for the war and enlists for reasons that remain unclear to the reader" (276). However, when reading Robert's actions in the context of the social expectations of his time and with an awareness of his inability to meet such standards, Robert's implicit and explicit reasons for going to war are ascertained. Ultimately, Rowena's death gives Robert a subconscious reason to enlist as a soldier: to fill the emptiness that his sister left. Robert's inability to kill Rowena's rabbits after she dies provides him with a conscious reason to join the army: to learn how to "kill as an exercise of will" (Findley 26). Robert's enlistment is not born from allegiance to his country, as the referenced propaganda poster expects and insists. Instead, his enlistment is motivated by his severed bond with his sister and a self-indulgent goal, anticipating Robert's failure to meet

societal expectations.

Robert's inability to meet the social expectations of the Great War period enables his character to undermine the glory and self-sacrifice of war. Robert's reasons for enlisting are self-serving. Thus, his motivations refute the pre- and post-war historical narratives that uphold an "idealized image of […] collective sacrifice" (Branach-Kallas 274). Robert's decision to enlist, prompted by his sister's death, demotes the importance of defending one's country to a secondary obligation. This contrasts recruitment rhetorics like Rev. H.F. Woodcock's proclamation "that love of home and family [is] not to stand in the way of duty to one's country" (Maroney 86). Additionally, Robert's stated reason for becoming a soldier—to kill as an act of will—is not achieved, as is shown in the scene where Robert involuntarily fires his gun, killing a German soldier (Findley 132). The story's narrative describes the gunshot as "sudden" to Robert, prompting Robert's frantic response to his own misfire (132). The description of Robert's reaction to the event associates his character's agency with a sense of helplessness due to his inability to control his body. His involuntary firing establishes his failure to achieve his conscious reason for enlisting. War did not teach Robert to kill as an act of will; instead, he killed accidentally due to the chaos of war. Robert's shame, his felt selfishness, and his involuntary killing of an enemy soldier refute the characterization of soldiers as glorious, self-sacrificing, and dutiful. Rather than being glorified, Robert is presented as pathetic and ashamed, as a figure who does not always have agency over his actions. Therefore, Robert's story subverts the Canadian government's historical depictions of soldiers in the Great War.

Debunking Athleticism and Sport as Preparatory for the Game of War

"Why Don't They Come? Why Be a Mere Spectator Here When You Should Play a Man's Part in The Real Game Overseas?"
CWM 19880262-001 - Canadian War Museum

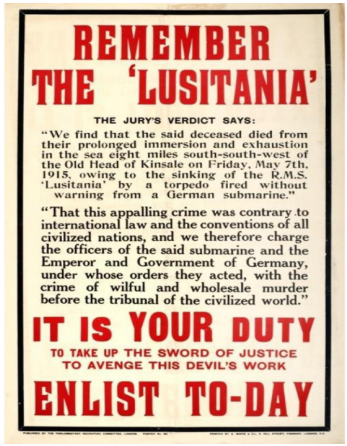
Robert's athleticism, detailed in the chapters before he reaches the front lines, contradicts the conception of war as a game saturated in the masculine social expectations. The theme of athleticism that Robert interacts with appears in a propaganda poster appealing to the masculinity heavily associated with sports. The poster, depicting a soldier looking at an image of a hockey rink that appears within his gun smoke, says, "'Why don't they come?' Why be a mere spectator here when you should play a mans [sic] part in the real game overseas?" ("'Why don't they come?'"). The poster's idea of a "real game" alludes to anti-modernist ideologies, which promoted "[m]ilitary drill and rifle shooting, like hunting, … [as a response] to concerns that modern urban life threatened the masculinity of men and youth" (Brown 203). Anti-modernists believed that "[e]xercise and participation in martial activities could stem moral and physical decay and encourage good character" (203). Consequently, governments encouraged school-aged children to train in shooting due to the perceived value of guns as tools to rekindle traditional masculinity (198). Many schools encour-

aged boys to participate in organized sports, adhering to a tradition of associating athleticism with the social project of British and Canadian public schools that aimed to shape boys into men (Bennett 255). While Robert adheres to the expectation of athleticism in some ways, demonstrated by his idolization of marathon winner Tom Longboat and Robert's solitary runs outside his training compound in Lethbridge, he fails to meet societal expectations in other ways (Findley 20, 27). Despite how heavily guns permeated masculine culture in English Canadian youth (Brown 197), "Robert had never aimed a gun at anything. It was a foreign state of mind" (Findley 26). Therefore, Robert's failure to meet societal expectations is demonstrated by his lack of knowledge on how to operate a gun in a society where shooting saturates masculine life.

Robert's battlefield experiences debunk the idea of war being a "game" by establishing war's unglorified and dangerous nature. Additionally, the futility of athleticism to a soldier's survival undermines social ideologies advocating for the use of sport in preparing for war. During Robert's trek to the front line, the narrator notes that "[s]ometimes the roads were shelled," but "[r]unning was pointless … here in the open any attempt to run in darkness led to drowning" (Findley 72). The undignified death of drowning in war—dying before even reaching the front line—argues against the battlefield being a game. The futility of athleticism to aid one's survival refutes the idea that sport was "'ideal training for the manly game of war'" (Brown 201). Running cannot help one escape death on the trek to the front lines—it may even lead to premature death. The dangerous and unglorified nature of war, which rejects its characterization as a game, is exemplified by the gas attack that Robert and his comrades experience. Lacking gas masks, Robert instructs his companions to urinate on torn pieces of cloth to save them from the chlorine gas (Findley 126). The imagery of men "fumbl[ing] with [their] flies" discredits any rhetoric of glory in war (127). Holding urine-soaked cloths to their faces, some of which are soaked with the fluids of another man, establishes the indignity of war. The revelation that life or

death relies on the ability to urinate on command rather than athletic prowess defames the idealized depiction of war as a game. Robert's experiences in war undermine and debunk the period's social expectations of masculine athleticism and the rhetoric of war being a game, critiquing official history and historical narratives that are propagandized by recruitment posters.

Debunking War as Fighting Evil and Enacting Justice



Remember The 'Lusitania' Enlist To-Day
CWM 19670086-007 - Canadian War Museum

The revenge-seeking narrative in *The Wars*, which relates to Rowena's death, shares with a recruitment poster the theme of upholding justice. The poster implores readers to "Remember the 'Lusitania'" ("Recruitment Posters - Remember the 'Lusitania.'"). The poster's extensive text describes the Allied jury's verdict on the German's act of sinking the British ocean liner Lusitania, and includes comments that vilify the Germans for the "crime of wilful and wholesale murder." ("Recruitment Posters - Remember the 'Lusitania.'"). At the bottom of the page, the poster states in a large, red font, "It is YOUR duty to take up the sword of justice to avenge this devil's work […] Enlist today." ("Remember the 'Lusitania.'"). As a dominion of the United Kingdom, Canada felt allegiance to the mother nation, which imperialists viewed as "the 'highest secular instrument' for freedom, justice, and peace that the world had ever known" (Maroney 86). Therefore, to protect all that is good, Canadian men were encouraged, if

not expected, to do their part in fighting evil by enlisting. Neglecting the national duty of enlistment was not only a slight against the mother nation but was a show of immorality. Idealistic propaganda posited that the Great War "was not simply a war between nations; it was a war between right and wrong" (84–85). In this war, the allies of the United Kingdom were good, and the allies of the Germans were evil. The theme of revenge in Robert's story is established when his mother insists that Robert kill Rowena's rabbits after her death. After the rabbits' execution, which Robert refused to enact, he explains, "All these actors were obeying some kind of fate we call 'revenge.' Because a girl had died—and her rabbits had survived her" (Findley 23). The innocence of the rabbits, whose deaths were merely acts of retribution, introduces the concept of killing individuals tangentially associated with the tragedy at hand: the rabbits had to die because their owner, Rowena, had died. Robert's refusal to partake in the meaningless deaths of innocent beings to satisfy a need for revenge establishes his failure to meet social ideologies that characterize violence as justice against evil.

Robert's encounter with a German soldier debunks the myth that all Germans are evil by displaying the enemy soldier's humanity. Additionally, Robert's wartime experiences reject the Lusitania poster's proposal that a soldier can wield the "sword of justice" on the battlefields of the Great War. After surviving a gas attack that hit Robert and his comrades while in a crater on the front lines, he noticed "a German soldier with a pair of binoculars staring right at him" (Findley 130). In response to Robert and his comrades moving to escape the crater, the German nodded in approval, as if "to say: *get up*" (131). Robert soon understood that "the German obviously intended them to go free" (131). Just before Robert escaped the crater, the German made a sudden movement and "[w]hat happened next was all so jumbled and fast that Robert was never to sort it out" (132). Robert's involuntary act of shooting the German was in response to their sudden movement, which had only been the German

soldier reaching for his binoculars. Upon escaping the crater, Robert was shocked to discover that "[l]ying beside the German was a modified Mauser rifle of the kind used by snipers. He could have killed them all. Surely that had been his intention. But he'd relented" (133). Robert had originally thought the German soldier was not armed, which explains Robert's shock (131). On the contrary, the German had the exact tool to eradicate Robert's entire squad. His act of humanity, having the option to kill but deciding against it, opposes the propagandized depiction of Germans as "devils." The civil interaction between enemies demonstrates how "[t]he army functions in *The Wars* as a structure of organized murder and violence, which disrupts the bases of civilized coexistence" (Branach-Kallas 277). In the aftermath of the German's death, a haunting reality sinks in for Robert that the Germans are people fighting and dying for their country in a battle far removed from the conflict's origin, and that they are no different than Robert and his comrades. Robert's experience in war exhibits that, like Rowena's rabbits, soldiers are merely innocent figures dying because of their tangential relationship with the main forces in the conflict, discrediting the generalized view of the Great War as a fight between good and evil.

Contextualizing the social and cultural expectations leading up to the Great War helps to place *The Wars* within its historical backdrop, facilitating a deeper understanding of the ideological constructs interacting with Robert character. Examining Great War recruitment propaganda posters that interact with the ideological themes in the novel—masculinity, nationalism, and imperialism—grants insight into a historical narrative that this novel attempts to critique. Robert's wartime experiences and failure to meet these ideological ideals enable his character to subvert the societal expectations of early 20th century Canadian society, the myths about war perpetuated by recruitment posters, and constructions of the war in official history and traditional historical narratives. Robert's story and the criticism that his character advances against the ideologically constructed social expectations of the book's setting accu-

rately depict an individual experience within the Great War, one that had been forgotten due to the Canadian government's official historical account of the event. While present audiences may be well acquainted with commentary that is critical of war and violence, *The Wars* was one of the first Canadian novels to oppose the Canadian government's construction of a pro-war historical narrative of the Great War. The novel recognizes the reality many soldiers faced in the trenches and on the battlefield, which often is lost to the generalized picture of the Great War and the pro-war sentiments that epitomized the early 20th century.

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From Idealization to Emptiness: Female Self-Commodification in *The Great Gatsby*

Jessica Jay

Abstract: This essay examines the portrayal of female sexuality in *The Great Gatsby* (2021 as a local of both allure and moral corruption, reflecting the conflicting societal attitudes towards love, attraction, and female autonomy in the 1920s. In this essay, I argue that F. Scott Fitzgerald critiques capitalist greed by exposing the dissonance between culturally idealized femininities and his female characters's manipulative, materialistic tendencies. In this way, female characters come to embody and symbolize capitalist decay.

In *The Great Gatsby* (2021), the portrayal of female sexuality as a source of both glamour and corruption reflects the conflicting societal attitudes towards love, attraction, and female autonomy during the 1920s. I argue that by illustrating the dissonance between culturally idealized femininities and the real, manipulative, and materialistic nature of his female characters, F. Scott Fitzgerald critiques capitalist greed as a force that commodifies selfhood. This portrayal of lust and seduction as superficial and manipulative forces displays a deeper fear of female independence within American capitalist society.

During the lead up to the 19th Amendment, and in the period that followed—which is generally understood by historians as the era of first-wave feminism—female independence became more accepted in mainstream American culture, and the "New Woman" emerged as a symbol of shifting economic, political, and social roles (Dumenil). According to Emin Tunc, the New Woman embodied American values of "self-actualization and liberation" by actively engaging with education, political advocacy, and contracep-

tion, while rejecting the restrictive norms of the Victorian era (187). However, the 1920s also saw a shift towards "lifestyle feminism," or commodification of female fashion and behaviour, where "various discourses of mass culture co-opted the rhetoric of feminism" (Sanderson 3). Many social critics worried that the New Woman had developed a strong attachment to personal comfort and an increasing desire for luxury, reflecting a growing sense of self-indulgence and materialistic aspirations (Tunc 185). Sanderson contends that Fitzgerald was "both fascinated and disturbed" by these shifting gender dynamics in the context of the hedonistic decadence he perceived within American society (1). Indeed, in his 1931 reflection "Echoes of the Jazz Age," Fitzgerald writes that "this was the generation whose girls dramatized themselves as flappers, the generation that corrupted its elders and eventually overreached itself less through lack of morals than through lack of taste" (253). In any case, such conceptions influenced Fitzgerald's depictions of female sexuality, which, in *The Great Gatsby*, he portrays as both alluring and corrosive. In a novel where desires—both sexual and material—are a driving force behind the central narrative tragedies, women's sexuality becomes emblematic of a pervasive, yet ambiguous, corrupting force. Through the continual association of femininity with superficiality and excess in this novel, moral and social decay is linked to the gendered consumerism which took charge of American culture in the 20th century.

Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker are seductive, elegant, and often enigmatic female characters. Their personas are erotically idealized, and they come to represent abstractions such as fulfillment and self-sufficiency, respectively. This differs from the depiction of female sexuality in a lower class context, where Tom Buchanan, Myrtle's upper class lover, treats her poorly and makes it clear that he desires her merely physically. However, upper class femininity is shown to be superficial as well. Introduced amidst the "white palaces of fashionable East Egg," where Nick first visits the Buchanans in their Georgian colonial mansion, Daisy and Jordan appear integrated with their luxurious en-

vironment (59). Nick finds the two young women clothed in flowing white dresses, "buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon," ensconced in a serene setting of "gleaming white" French windows, billowing curtains, and a view of "fresh grass" (60). With its pristine white setting, this image evokes a sense of angelic purity and thus establishes upper class domesticity as an ethereal feminine ideal. In this context, Nick's eroticization of both women highlights their value and attractiveness within their wealth: "slenderly, languidly, their hands on their hips" (63). This easeful, confident posturing is also evident in Jordan's aloof, self-possessed attitude—"if she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it"—as well as in Daisy's iconic "low, thrilling" voice (61). The initial connection between wealth and desirability, reinforced by the serene imagery of the Buchanan mansion, constructs an illusion of superior value attached to Daisy and Jordan. As the novel unfolds, the gap between these idealized portrayals and the reality of the women they depict becomes increasingly apparent.

Daisy, in particular, epitomizes capitalism's envisioned rewards, reflecting the upper class feminine ideal that was increasingly constructed through advertising in the 1920s. The association between Daisy and perfection is frequently symbolized by the colour white. Daisy's tendency to dress in white (107), her self-proclaimed "white girlhood" (69), and her "white roadster" (108) reinforce this image. To Gatsby especially, Daisy represents more than just romantic satisfaction: her selfhood signifies an almost transcendent possibility. Nick, our narrator, often adopts Gatsby's perceptions of Daisy as a luxurious love object, and describes her as being elevated "high in a white palace" as "the king's daughter, the golden girl," with a voice "full of money" (139). These comparisons simultaneously exalt Daisy as a mystical figure but also reduce her value to superficial and material markers of identity, mirroring a logic of commodification seen in advertisements. During this period, advertisements increasingly moved towards selling "a state of mind, a lifestyle, a worldview, and constitutive reflection of the consumer for whom the product was intend-

ed" (Rabinovitch-Fox). Daisy's character functions similarly to a commodity insofar as she is an object of desire whom Gatsby hopes to "purchase" through his wealth. Indeed, Gatsby's desired lifestyle was acquired through money, and Daisy's love for Tom Buchanan was shaped by the "practicality" of his money and class (161). In this context, Daisy is a perfect "reflection of the consumer" for Gatsby because she represents not only the embodiment of societal validation but also an achievement that will transport him back to "some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy" when he was young (133).

The idealized image of Daisy is ultimately subverted. As the novel progresses, Daisy's true morals and emptiness become increasingly apparent. While Daisy's association with white is not virginal, it is deeply tied to the conceptual states of youth, purity, and perfection: Gatsby's fantasy relies on the premise that Daisy will renounce her love for Tom and be solely and purely committed to him. In reality, she remains faithful to her superior social class and indirectly causes Gatsby's death. This moral descent coincides with what A.E. Elmore describes as an "ironic use of colour imagery and symbolism," wherein whiteness "begins as a symbol of beauty, goodness, and truth" which devolves into something with "an ugly and markedly evil character" as the Buchanan's moral corruption becomes undeniable (440). This inversion is effective not only because it reverses traditional connotations of the colour white but also because it reveals a glaring absence within Daisy's character. After Gatsby's death, Nick speaks with Tom and Jordan but has no further contact with Daisy. As a result, Nick is unable to construct a narrative for Daisy that reflects on her guilt or lack thereof: "She vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing" (159). Daisy's complete absence of emotion leaves her white and empty, bereft of the idealistic significance initially associated with her character. The symbolic transformation from idealization to emptiness shows how Daisy's allure as a romantic object was primarily based on a superficial image of wealth and masculine self-fulfillment.

While Daisy's status as the "golden girl" is in many ways projected onto her by desiring men, it is also an image that she herself maintains and uses to her advantage. Despite socializing with a "fast" and "wild" crowd in her youth, she emerged with an "absolutely perfect reputation" and maintained her popularity with both men and women (110). While wealth protects Daisy from being seriously condemned for promiscuity, it is Daisy's carefully constructed charisma and command over her own sexualization that makes her so alluring. This power of charm is most vividly located within her voice. Some critics have likened it to the "seductive attractiveness in the voices of the Sirens" who paradoxically embody "female preciousness" at the same time as "deadly danger" (Settle 165). From this analytical standpoint, Daisy's voice can be seen as an intentional affectation that, like an accent, signifies social class. Certainly, it is a form of social and sexual currency that reinforces her value within a materialistic, patriarchal framework. Nick notes that people have criticized Daisy for using her murmur "only to make people lean towards her," but he dismisses this as an "irrelevant criticism that makes it no less charming" (61). This aspect of manufactured intimacy, present in many of Daisy's behaviours, subtly frames her interlocutor as an admirer. Her self-sexualization is further complicated by her interactions with Nick, where she flirtatiously asks, "Are you in love with me?" (115) and offers, "If you want to kiss me any time during the evening […] just let me know and I'll be glad to arrange it for you" (129). These moments, even in the context of offhand jokes, suggest that Daisy is not only comfortable being an object of desire but actively positions herself within the sexualized gaze of men. This deliberate self-sexualization reflects Daisy's understanding of her desirability as a key aspect of her selfhood, and a form of currency in the social economy of wealth, beauty, and desire.

Jordan's behaviour towards men is also portrayed as intentional. In both her career and social life, Jordan establishes a dynamic in which she is never "at a disadvantage" (96). Her careful choice of romantic partners, which is

based on the avoidance of "clever, shrewd men," ultimately allows her more leeway for manipulation (96). Jordan manipulates her image to avoid responsibility for her "insolent" actions, such as leaving a borrowed car's top down in the rain and her golf cheating scandal (96). This behavior—which Nick calls "dealing in subterfuges"—is also linked to more intimate desires, as it allows her to "satisfy the demands of her hard jaunty body" while remaining innocent (96). This characterization links Jordan's selfish manipulation in both realms to her underlying sexual desire, which is a conception amplified by her association with the aesthetic of the New Woman. While Jordan's athletic, masculine body and "self-sufficiency" (61) are qualities that Nick is initially attracted to, her independence outside of this context is not so positively portrayed. Tom comments that Jordan's family should not let her "run around the country" as she does, because she is a "nice girl" (68). Similarly, a "persistent undergraduate" at one of Gatsby's parties believes that "sooner or later Jordan was going to yield him up her person to a greater or lesser degree." (85) This perception likely stems from the assumption that, unlike the married women around her, Jordan embodies the sexually liberated "modern woman" often depicted in fashion media. These instances display Jordan as someone who is perceived as promiscuous, perhaps to a greater degree than she is, simply based on her independent appearance in terms of marriage and career. Fitzgerald himself viewed the "loosening of binary gender distinctions" as a troubling shift, fearing it encouraged men and women to adopt each other's worst traits (Sanderson 12). In Jordan's case, her competitiveness and recklessness—traits historically encoded as masculine—are portrayed as signs of moral decay, reinforcing the notion that excessive freedom leads to indulgence and decadence.

Myrtle is the most overtly sexualized female character in *The Great Gatsby*, and her self-commodification is the most obvious. Her physicality is described in sensual terms, with Nick noting that she "carried her surplus flesh sensuously" and had a "perceptible vitality" (72). Although her overt fixation on sexual pleasure and materialism posi-

tions her in an unsympathetic light, the abuse she endures contextualizes her desires within the oppressed position she occupies as a woman of the lower class. Myrtle uses her sexuality to gain, or at least simulate, the agency that she lacks. Myrtle's sexual and material desires are evident from the moment she meets Tom: "She smiled slowly and walked through her husband as if he were a ghost and shook hands with Tom, looking him flush in the eye" (72). The contrast between her husband as an immaterial ghost and Tom's distinctly "hulking" material presence emphasizes Myrtle's corporeal and material desires as being entwined with one another (14). Similarly, in her attempts to mimic upper class femininity, she depicts both a lack (her inability to rival Daisy's elegance) and an excess (a desperate overcompensation). Her repeated changes of dress—shifting from "dark blue crepe de chine" to a "brown figured muslin" and finally to an "elaborate afternoon dress of cream-coloured chiffon" (76)—show her transition from Wilson's wife to Tom's mistress, through which she displays an increasing effort to embody a wealthy persona. Nick observes that "with the influence of dress her personality had also undergone a change" (76). This comment suggests that in the presence of Tom especially, Myrtle's identity becomes malleable, shaped by her outward presentation. Myrtle's gory death, in the context of her superficiality, lower class status, and promiscuity as a character, comes to symbolize a form of punishment.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald portrays female sexuality and independence as intricately tied to materialism and commodification, reflecting broader societal anxieties about gender and morality during the 1920s. By illustrating the dissonance between culturally idealized femininities and the manipulative, materialistic realities of his female characters, Fitzgerald critiques the ways in which capitalist greed distorts selfhood and relationships. His depictions of Daisy, Jordan, and Myrtle reveal how femininity is shaped and constrained by the logic of commodification—wherein identity is fashioned through wealth, appearance, and desirability, often at the cost of authenticity and agency. What emerges is a world that is "material without being real"

much like Gatsby's world without the hope he constructed within Daisy (169).

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"Only Seeming": Locating Adorno's Bourgeois Society in Franz Kafka's *Meditation*

Alexander McLauchlan

Abstract: This essay applies aspects of philosopher Theodor Adorno's work to stories from Franz Kafka's work Betrachtung (*Meditation*) to elucidate how the short story collection indicts late capitalist society. I first explore how Adorno's conception of bourgeois ideology is located and developed in the childhood imagery of "Children on The Highway." I then analyze how this concept is developed further via Kafka's adult narrators from "The Way Home," "Unmasking a Confidence Man," and "The Small Businessman," all stories that confront Adorno's assertion that a moral life under capitalism is unfeasible.

> *It is the sufferings of men that should be shared: the smallest step towards their pleasures is one towards the hardening of their pains.*
>
> — Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia: *Reflections on a Damaged Life*

In his introduction to *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, Ritchie Robertson notes that "isolation is a recurrent theme" in the sixteen short pieces that comprise Franz Kafka's *Betrachtung (Meditation)* (Kafka xiv). These brief, impressionistic stories "begin with the relative happiness of childhood and end with the unhappiness of an adult persona" (xiii). This passage from youth to adulthood is marked by two key aspects of what philosopher Theodor Adorno called "bourgeois society," or the conditions of life under late capitalism: the assimilation of dominant cultural norms as a method of self-formation, and the inability to live a moral life in an evil world (Pickford and Zuidervaart). This essay will apply

aspects of Adorno's work to stories from *Meditation* to elucidate how Kafka's collection indicts late capitalist society. I will first explore how Adorno's conception of bourgeois ideology is located and developed in the childhood imagery of "Children on The Highway." I then analyze how this concept is expanded upon in Kafka's adult narrators from "The Way Home," "Unmasking a Confidence Man," and "The Small Businessman," all stories that confront Adorno's assertion that a moral life under capitalism is unfeasible. Finally, I note how two of *Meditation*'s shorter pieces, "Wish to Become a Red Indian" and "Trees," reveal a desire to emancipate oneself from such an immoral existence, and to find immaterial freedom from the isolation of capitalist society. Contra Adorno's own assertion that Kafka's oeuvre rejects interpretation, (Robertson xii), *Meditation* can be seen as a collection of parables warning the reader of both late capitalism's capacity to isolate, and of the difficult task of imagining freedom from said isolation.

I

For Adorno, an emblematic feature of self-development under capitalism is the formation of personality through the assimilation of cultural norms reinforced by peers, i.e. "the other kids at school or the kids in the block," rather than by parental relationships (Johnson 121). Further, Adorno highlights that these cultural norms are the product of a society whose scale is under the total control of financial interests, what he calls the "totally administered society" (121). Thus, "the bourgeois individual [is] the bearer of a private will," meaning that individuals living under late capitalism (i.e. that which encompasses contemporary society) unconsciously internalize the ideology of the bourgeois (121). Nowhere in *Meditation* is this understanding of identity construction more apparent than the opening piece, "Children on The Highway." Through fragmented prose, the reader sees the narrator—a child from a village—engage in escapist play with a group of peers. The narrator's parents are a non-presence, mentioned only in passing, and Kafka sets the children's play in opposition to "the grown-ups [who]

were still awake in the village, mothers making the beds ready for the night" (Kafka 5). By distancing the narrator from the spectre of their parents, Kafka allows the reader to see how bourgeois ideology has attached itself to the former's thoughts.

Kafka then provides clues that reveal the young narrator's bourgeois personality early in "Children on The Highway." From their fenced garden, the narrator notes "workmen … coming from the fields, laughing quite disgracefully" (3). That the narrator deems the workmen's laughter disgraceful is conspicuous, and suggests a sanctimonious conception of labour as something not to be enjoyed, but performed rigorously and without respite. Announcing this disdain from the comfort of their private property, the narrator unwittingly adopts the role of a supervisor reprimanding their subjects, isolating themself from others through an imagined hierarchy. This relationship is repeated in miniature when the narrator states that, if a man asked them something from outside their window, "I would look at him as if I were gazing at the mountains or into the empty air—and a reply from me wouldn't matter very much to him either" (3). Again, the narrator's possession of private space allows them to construct an imagined hierarchy between themselves and those outside it. Conceding that their answer would not matter anyhow, the narrator implies that this feeling of bourgeois individualism is pervasive and intersubjective. Both examples illustrate Adorno's description of alienation in *Introduction to Sociology*, "where the totality of society maintains itself not on the basis of solidarity … but only through the antagonistic interests of human beings" (Adorno 43). When the narrator does decide to leave the house and play with other children, the degree to which their peers generate this alienation becomes apparent: One of the children chides the narrator for using the term "No quarter," exclaiming "What a way to talk!" (Kafka 4). That the narrator's pompous diction is chastised as they join the other children does not signify that they are entering a more communal environment, but instead demonstrates how readily children will impose dominant cultural norms

upon one another. Kafka reinforces this point when the narrator compares the act of singing with other children to "being drawn along by a fish-hook" (5). However, the narrator still describes themselves as "be[ing] alone", because this is a community of alienated individuals (4). The children are not described as playing cooperatively, but instead begin a game where some "[stand] like strangers … looking down" and pushing others into a ditch (4). Again, Kafka shows the reader an inherent desire for conflict and hierarchical control, and the narrator expresses a certain comfort in the arrangement, eventually wanting "to fall into a deeper ditch" (4). This comfort signals a desire to maintain hierarchical relationships, and by extension, an internalization of bourgeois ideology. In opening *Meditation* with "Children on The Highway," Kafka locates bourgeois ideology in the realm of childhood. It is in "The Way Home," "Unmasking a Confidence Man," and "The Small Businessman" that Kafka explores how—for his adult narrators—this worldview makes living a moral life impossible. Kafka's shorter pieces, "Wish to Become a Red Indian" and "Trees," play on the possibility of freedom from such a life.

II

The narrator in "The Way Home" describes themselves as "responsible, and rightly so," for surveying a variety of scenes and sensations common to life in their modern town, from "the toasts drunk" to "all the loving couples in their beds" (Kafka 11). Considering their past and future, this narrator finds the only injustice in their life to be that of "Fate, which has favoured [them] so greatly" (11). The story ends with a reversal: In their private life at home, the narrator remains pensive, but for nothing "worth being thoughtful about" (11). That is, the narrator's personal fulfillment extends only to professional affairs. The ennui afflicting Kafka's narrator is comparable to a description of life under late capitalism outlined by Adorno in his work Minima Moralia: "What the philosophers once knew as life has become the sphere of private existence and now of mere consumption … without autonomy or substance of its own" (Adorno and

Jephcott 15). Fabian Freyenhagen expands on how this type of life—also absorbing the description of alienation seen in "Children on The Highway", notably—precludes the possibility of living morally:

> One way to describe [Adorno's] conception [of life] is to say that the modern social world … is radically evil. This is not to invoke theology, where talk of "radical evil" traditionally had its place, but to ex press this twofold claim: (1) late capitalism is evil to the root (evil is not accidental to it, or only a sur face phenomenon); and (2) this evil is particularly grave (it does not get more evil than this) … Adorno says that right living is not possible because, in a radically evil social setting, whatever we do short of changing this setting will probably implicate us in its evil (100).

The narrator in "The Way Home" knows that they are implicated in an evil world of bourgeois ideology, and the restlessness they experience outside of their work suggests a futile desire to escape the very evil that their labour represents. The reader sees this dynamic again in "Unmasking a Confidence Man." Here, the narrator laments how experiences with con men introduced them to "a ruthlessness which now [they] cannot imagine the earth to be without, so much so that [they were] already beginning to feel it" (Kafka, 8). Just as in "The Way Home," the narrator in "Unmasking a Confidence Man" demonstrates an awareness of how drastically bourgeois ideology has shaped their environment. However, by existing in this "radically evil social setting," they cannot avoid reinforcing the dominant ideology from which this society arises. Like the children in "Children on The Highway," this narrator also finds fulfillment in the assumption of power over others: The story ends with their arrival at a social gathering, where they admit that "the blind loyalty on the faces of the servants gave [them] as much pleasure as a delightful surprise" (7). With regards to "The Small Businessman," Robertson notes that "the speak-

er … feels his isolation with particular acuteness. Living in a world of abstract commercial dealings, he is linked only by monetary transactions to the people who buy his wares" (xiv). In other words, this speaker experiences a more pronounced form of the same dejection described in the prior examples by "serving and maintaining a social system that often relies on people acting in [their own self-interest]" (Freyenhagen 102). In each example, the reader observes how a pervasive bourgeois ideology has created an "evil," self-perpetuating social structure that forces its subjects to behave in "evil" ways, regardless of whether or not they recognize this. It is in two of Kafka's shorter pieces that a desire to escape this evil is communicated.

Describing Kafka's "Trees" as an "aphorism" (xiv), Robertson asserts that when the short work is read in the context of isolation, it "looks … like a reflection on the individual's relation to society: superficially one seems unconnected to society; on a closer look, one is rooted there; but even that is an illusion compared to the undisclosed ultimate truth" (xiv). To place this analysis within the context of Adorno's evil society, Kafka's titular plants are "rooted" in bourgeois ideology. However, like the narrators in "The Way Home" or "The Small Businessman," this rootedness is "only seeming"; trees and humans alike are tethered to greater structures—physical and social, respectively—yet cannot escape the "ultimate truth" that these structures come at the cost of potential freedoms (15; xiv). For the small businessman, imagining a life devoid of bourgeois ideology is tantamount to imagining a tree uprooting itself. To envision such a freedom is to construct an unrealizable fantasy, as Kafka does in "Wish to Become a Red Indian." Robertson states that the speaker in this piece "combines the strength of the adult male with the freedom of the child and the appeal of the exotic, transforming them into pure onward movement" (xv). To expand on this point, the "onward movement" sublates the bourgeois ideology infecting children's play and adult's work into something immaterial, without "any reins" attaching it to an evil reality (15). Otherwise said, the individual's material conditions generate

evil, and thus only in the realm of the immaterial, the space behind "seeming" reality, can freedom be imagined (15).

Themes of isolation in Kafka's *Meditation* are often inextricable from the markers of bourgeois society. Attempting to play, the figures in Kafka's "Children on The Highway" reproduce the hierarchical ideology that shapes their community. The speakers in "The Way Home," "Unmasking a Confidence Man," and "The Small Businessman" each confront the moral decay inherent to a society that has so thoroughly attached itself to such an ideology. "Trees" and "Wish to Become a Red Indian" are Kafka's attempts to identify and realize an immaterial world free of this decay. Thus, when Robertson describes "Trees"—and by extension "Wish to Become a Red Indian"—as an aphorism, he identifies Meditation as a Minima Moralia avant la lettre: Meditation is a collection of aphoristic works concerning the contradictions of life under late capitalism, and Kafka's style transforms the general truths contained in these aphorisms into fictions.

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"Life During Wartime": How New Wave Music Echoed William Blake

Ava Ugolini

Abstract: This paper explores the unforeseen parallels between the artistry of William Blake and the new wave music movement. Both Blake and new wave artists like Talking Heads, Blondie, and New Order rejected orthodox conventions, emphasizing radical independence and experimental approaches. Through a discussion of Blake's illuminated poetry and his critique of socio-political systems alongside new wave's subversion of consumerism and popular sound, the present essay reveals how both composers used unique artistry and similar lyrical themes to create in a post-insurrectionary climate. Subsequently, Blake's enduring influence on contemporary art and cultural critique is illuminated.

In *Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes from the American Indie Underground 1981–1991*, Michael Azerrad begins with the following quote: "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's" (3). Hailing from William Blake's *Jerusalem: The Emanation of The Giant Albion,* Azerrad's use of the quote perfectly summarizes the punk and subsequent new wave mentalities the book covers: one must D.I.Y., do-it-yourself, or die; one must create the art they desire, or live regretfully under someone else's. Sometimes referred to as "the original punk" by critics such as Neil McCormick, Blake not only invented a unique acid-resistant ink mixture to create his copper relief etchings, but he was also incredibly progressive for the late 1700s: he criticized the church and king, endorsed and then denounced the French Revolution, and protested slavery ("Archive Exhibition: Biography"). Emerging from a similar mindset to Blake—breaking tradition, taking unconventional approaches, and emphasizing

the person and their creativity—new wave music evolved from the punk movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s. As Simon Firth describes, bands such as Talking Heads, Blondie, Gang of Four, Elvis Costello & The Attractions, and New Order were anti-consumerism, unconventional, and awkward—focusing on humanistic inclinations and emotions rather than the prevailing "cock-rock" machismo (27). The new wave surged music evolution ahead with unique techniques—just as Blake did with his acid-etched poetry—and surrounded audiences in an authentic sound impossible to ignore or define. By discussing their respective revolutionary inspiration, unique artistry, and lyrical content, the present paper will highlight the parallels between Blake and new wave music in a fashion not yet written upon.

To understand Blake's influence, one must first understand the degree of which the French Revolution inspired him. Blake's only poem intended for traditional publication was *The French Revolution* in 1791 wherein his ideas upon the resistance became clear. The text sees Blake welcoming the overthrow of monarchy and the emergence of democracy; King Louis XVI stands for an ageing, collapsing monarchy. The dying king is losing power: "From my window I see the old mountains of France, like aged men, fading away" (286, line 9). As István Rácz describes, "[for] Blake and many of his contemporaries the revolution was an event that put their intellectual revolt into practice" (42). *The French Revolution* was not only a means for Blake to establish revolutionary sympathies and watch his imagined revolt come to fruition, but it also helped him further his complex system of mythology and find the aesthetic qualities that harmonized with his radical ideas (39). Additionally, *The French Revolution* includes similar ideas to another Blake text, T*he Marriage of Heaven and Hell* from 1790. Acting as the voice of the "Devil," Blake satirizes and attacks the beliefs of Emanuel Swedenborg, a philosopher who published a book on what he believed the afterlife would bring, titled Heaven and Hell. Blake also critiques the Bible's history and the church and state's ideas of moral superiority ("The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"). Moreover, Blake

characterizes traditionally Christian restraint as a barrier to spiritual intuition and individualism. The concluding three plates of the text even announce the coming revolution: "Empire is no more! and now the lion and wolf shall cease" (Blake 45). Blake's biographer David Erdman decreed that *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* "mocks those who can accept a spiritual apocalypse but are terrified at a resurrection of the body of society itself" (163). With the knowledge that *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* preceded *The French Revolution*, a new context can be applied to the latter text: *The French Revolution* represents a social apocalypse coming to fruition (Rácz 44). By referencing his own oeuvre, as he commonly did, Blake connected with the French Revolution by harmonizing myth and history, creating a fuller apocalyptic vision. Because of this fusion, Blake's composition held a solid moral basis, and therefore remained ripe with inspiration for the picking—or for the instruments of the new wave, for the plucking.

Blake's mockery of those terrified by genuine revolt suffered an ironic reversal despite his initial support. Now far from its glorious actualization in 1789, the French Revolution raged onwards, and writers close to Blake faced state persecution for their radical views. Joseph Johnson, the man slated to publish Blake's *The French Revolution*, was placed in prison for issuing materials that condemned political authorities ("The French Revolution"). Moreover, the Reign of Terror—a series of vicious massacres beginning as early as September 1792—initiated Blake's fearful opposition to the revolution (Fairfax-Cholmeley 8). Blake's support came to a head when he was indicted for treason after allegedly exclaiming, "Damn the king. The soldiers are all slaves," to a British soldier trespassing on his property in August 1803 (West Sussex Record Office). Intimidation by the government coupled with growing needless violence finalized Blake's withdrawal of support for the French Revolution. However, despite his disapproval, his later work remained deeply inspired by what he witnessed in the early 1790s. Texts like Europe a Prophecy (1794–1821), *The Song of Los (1795), and Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*

(1804–1820) explore themes of revolution by intertwining mysticism and history—something Blake produced clearest in *The French Revolution.*

Similar to how the French Revolution inspired Blake, new wave music was highly inspired by an insurrectionary movement that preceded it: the punk revolution. Like the monarch of Blake's *The French Revolution,* who was "fading away" as the French working class rebelled against him (286, line 9), the punk movement also defied the upper classes who wished to keep "impoverished, violent conditions […] hidden away" (*Are We Not New Wave* 22). Punk awakened a resurgence of care and anger for the fellow man, specifically the conditions endured under Republican or Conservative rule. As Dick Hebdige notes in *Subculture*, "Punk reproduced the entire sartorial history of post-war working class youth cultures in 'cut up' form," hilariously describing the birth of punk as "safety-pinned together" (26). Additionally, akin to Blake's critique of Christian sexual repression in texts like *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* the names of punk bands and artists such as the Sex Pistols and their bassist Sid Vicious revolted against popular music discourse that had historically used sanitized language to censor themes of sexuality and violence that reflected working class realities (*Are We Not New Wave* 22). Former drummer for the post-punk band Mission of Burma, Peter Prescott, described the 1980s as "'sort of a conservative era, money conscious, politically nasty, and Republican […] And usually that means there's going to be a good underground […] There's something to get pissed off with communally'" (qtd. in Azerrad 9). The underground that Prescott mentions did indeed spawn from frustrations with conservatism, financial greed, and political resistance—quite similar to the conditions that impregnate Blake's *The French Revolution.*

Born under punches, the new wave movement took shape, deviating from punk's aggressive reputation in its offbeat dedication to experiment with lyric and genre. Radio programmers discovered that they could easily mix album-oriented rock classics with Elvis Costello, Blondie, and Talking Heads, all of whom were firmly rooted in the new

wave by the end of 1978; as Hebdige remarks, punk was facing a death by incorporation (96). Punk's demise ultimately spawned the new wave. The corrosion of one style demands the emergence of a new one: whether it be aggressive punk morphing into quirky new wave in the late 1970s, or soured supporters of the French Revolution indelibly inspired by its rebellion in the 1790s. This theory can be applied even on a band-to-band basis. New Order, a classic new wave group, were literally born from the death of Joy Division's lead singer Ian Curtis in May 1980. Out of respect for their late bandmate, the remaining members of Joy Division changed the band's name to New Order and began to experiment musically with new wave synth and song structures.

Since such music could first only thrive outside of the major labels' control, the youth created a do-it-yourself mentality that saw bands booking their own performances as well as recording, mixing, mastering, and distributing their art entirely by themselves (*Are We Not New Wave* 22). This newfound thought—a very Blakean dedication to create, comprehend, and consume independently—"flew in the face of the burgeoning complacency, ignorance, and conformism that engulfed [America] like a spreading stain throughout the Eighties" (Azerrad 10). With the knowledge that the music industry is among the most recognizable examples of cultural influence to young Americans, their rebelling against the major labels meant rebelling against the whole system in general (9).

Similarly, by dedicating himself to creating his own unique acid etchings and poetry, Blake rebelled against the tedious etchings of others that he was forced to reproduce for work from 1772 onwards as an apprentice under engraver James Besire ("Archive Exhibition: Biography"). According to *The William Blake Archive*, Blake's career began as a "journeyman copy engraver, making his living by working on projects for London book and print publishers" ("Archive Exhibition: Biography"). Blake's work in copy engraving continued throughout his artistic career in order to support himself and his wife, Catherine. Around 1788, Blake's deceased younger brother Robert, whom Blake was

incredibly close with in life and death, appeared to him in a vision wherein he taught the older Blake how to use "illuminated writing"—that is, drawing with a special impermeable liquid to create embossed poetry and art upon copper plates, a technique new to Blake and engraving at large ("Archive Exhibition: Biography"). After drawing with the liquid, the plate was soaked in acid, which kept only the letters and patterns drawn with the impermeable liquid embossed ("Illuminated Printing"). The drawing and poems were then hand-coloured, often by Catherine, after the plate was stamped onto paper ("Illuminated Printing"). Moreover, on the topic of illuminated printing, Morris Eaves argues that Blake's Jerusalem: *The Emanation of The Giant Albion* is a "considered reply to English-school discourse," which arrives at the "Human Form Divine as [a] figurative alternative to the mechanistic naturalism of orthodox aesthetic harmony" (271). Blake, who detested having to engrave the art of others for work, also disliked those who were the epitome of his trade, much like how new wave bands hated, and created against the grain of, the rock chauvinism that was extremely popular in bands such as Led Zeppelin and The Who in the 1970s. The new wave was rebelling against an identical "orthodox aesthetic harmony" within their own age: "cock-rock" machismo. Catchy quirky melodies, upbeat irregular rhythms, and a variety of instruments not often used in popular music at the time—like tambourines—defined new wave music. The new genre often incorporated electronic effects, drum machines, and synthesizers to produce a futuristic and avant-garde sound. The cultural and political context of the era is reflected in the lyrics of new wave songs, which frequently examine topics of love, relationships, and societal issues.

Upon examining the parallels of their unique artistry, one must also note the lyrical similarities between Blake and new wave music. Talking Heads's 1980 hit "Born Under Punches (The Heat Goes On)" and Blake's "London" are incredibly alike. David Bowman—Talking Heads's biographer—claims David Byrne, the band's lead singer, wrote the song following the Watergate scandal (179). As Michael

Schudson explains, the debacle occurred after U.S. President Richard Nixon vehemently denied his government's placing of illegal listening devices in Democratic National Committee offices, something of which they were indeed guilty of (1232). Byrne sings of the power that a government has and often violates, like Nixon:

> Take a look at these hands
> The hand speaks
> The hand of a government man
> Well, I'm a tumbler
> Born under punches
> I'm so thin (Talking Heads)

The hands stand for oppression by the government. Byrne, or the speaker, is a *tumbler* because he is intimidated and beaten down by those in positions of authority. He is weak compared to the government's power, and he has little hope of resisting his authoritarian superiors; he is "so thin," so meek (Talking Heads). Byrne attempted to incorporate the Watergate testimony of John Dean, former White House attorney, into the song (Bowman 179). The allusion is audible near the conclusion of "Born Under Punches" as Byrne rambles passionately in layered lyrics. In reference to Nixon and the lies he created to conceal the Watergate scandal, Byrne sings, "Drowning cannot hurt a man / fire cannot hurt a man / Not the government man." Byrne declares that the "drowning" pressure, and the heat felt by wrongdoing, cannot affect the ever-superior "government man." Finishing the song, Byrne sings: "And the heat goes on" in a coda layered over other voices and instruments (Talking Heads). "The heat" or the issues caused by the government, will go on; there is no real resolution to abuses of power. The song is full of paranoia and fear, and an open-ended, uncertain closing suits it perfectly.

Identical to the bleak critique of authoritarian control in "Born Under Punches," Blake closes the first stanza of his 1794 poem "London" writing, "And mark in every face I meet / Marks of weakness, marks of woe" (26, lines 3–4).

These lines come after an allusion to England's government by reference to the English Charter: "I wander thro' each charter'd street, / Near where the charter'd Thames does flow," emphasizing the wide-spread issues London faced in the 1790s (lines 1–2). The marks on every face is potentially an allusion to the Mark of the Beast, a symbol of disobedience in the face of God and a rejection of Jesus's faith. Although Blake may not have meant this in a purely Christian form, the reference signals a loss of faith within Londoners; every face was marked with hopelessness so evil it was ungodlike. Blake follows these lines with "In every cry of every Man, / In every Infants cry of fear, / In every voice: in every ban," again highlighting the widespread fear of London's future, even in a legislative sense as seen in his use of "ban" (27, lines 5–7). Still, the "hapless Soldiers" in Blake's poem cannot help but "sigh," perhaps in pain, dying from a war-caused wound, or in pure despair for their country (line 11). Even in the warm embrace of romance, Blake's Londoners are not safe: They infect one another with "plagues"—an allusion to sexually transmitted infection or disease—and reside in subsequent "Marriage hearse[s]" as ending to Blake's bleak poem (line 16). "London" features similar issues to Talking Heads's "Born Under Punches," even using a similarly uncertain closing. Both pieces leave readers, or listeners, pensive of their governments and futures: encouraging audiences to create, or, at minimum, ponder against the current state of their socio-political morals and structures.

The Blakean nature of the new wave genre spans beyond politics. Blondie's 1978 "Hanging On The Telephone," a song that centralizes sexual frustration, employs the same erotic undertones as Blake does in "The Garden of Love," a poem detailing sexual repression under the guise of natural simplicity (Ostriker 156). Blake opens the poem by describing how a chapel had been built over the plain green garden he once remembered, one where "many sweet flowers bore" (26, line 8). Although it begins inconspicuously enough, Blake speaks of priests "in black gowns" who were "walking their rounds, / And binding with briars, my joys & desires" (lines 11–12). Blake notes that "the gates of this

Chapel were shut" (line 5), potentially using the chapel as a symbol of female genitalia (Ostriker 156). Moreover, Blake's plate design for "The Garden of Love" depicts a priest and two children kneeling at an open grave beside a church ("The Garden of Love"), perhaps representing that his garden of love had been "filled with graves, / And tombstones, where flowers should be" (26, lines 9–10). Blake's flower, or sexuality, has been pronounced dead, surrounded by priests in funeral garb. Blake's sensual desires must remain repressed, as acting on his true sexual feelings will result in disapproval from the Church. "Hanging On The Telephone," covered by Blondie for their 1978 album *Parallel Lines*, suffers through similar sexual repression to "The Garden of Love." Rather than "binding [joys & desires] with briars" (lines 11–12), Blondie's speaker is bound by the telephone wire, forced to submit to their lover's ignorance of their phone calls, joys, and desires. Debbie Harry, Blondie's lead singer, chants, "If I don't get your calls, then everything goes wrong / I want to tell you something you've known all along / Don't leave me hanging on the telephone" (Blondie). Blake's and Blondie's speakers are incredibly desperate to have their repressed sexuality freed from their bounds. Harry thrice cries out, "Oh, why can't we talk again" (Blondie) over the bridge of the song, asking in anguish why her love—so "play[ful]" and "green," just as Blake's was—has died (Blake 26, line 4). By placing their sexuality behind a thin veil, both speakers can express their otherwise socially unacceptable desire. Both instances of repression are vulnerable yet deceptive—hiding the speakers under a guise of Romantic imagery, like Blake, or power-pop double backbeat drumming, like Blondie (*Are We Not New Wave 141*).

The current paper has shown the similarities between Blake and new wave music by examining their radical motivations, original artistic styles, and similar lyrical substance. William Blake himself was a musician; G.E. Bentley, Jr., writes of evidence in *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* that Blake sung his early poems to his friends, the Mathews, which could explain why his work is felt so strongly in music, specifically that of new wave (1). Blake's words and draw-

ings are pertinent to both the new wave era and contemporary socio-political life; even today, his ideas are still fresh. In a conversation about the political climate of America after the 2016 election, David Byrne refers to Blake's most-cited poem, "And did those feet in ancient time," commonly known as the hymn "Jerusalem." Byrne says, "This is a poem that's talking about the 'dark Satanic Mills,' [...] It's very much looking to the dark side of industrialized England, but at the same time saying, 'What if? Don't we long for something better?'" (qtd. in Pappademas). To "long for something better" not only gave those under the "dark Satanic Mill" hope, but it drove Blake to create unprecedented material on both personal and social issues, just as the new wave recited two hundred years later.

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From Renunciation to Mysticism: Nature Writing's Residual Religiosity in Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain*

Sarah Evans

Abstract: Nature writing historically carries religious elements or experiences despite proclaiming a secular genre. Scottish modernist Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain* (2014) engages eco-spirituality from a mystic perspective which this paper analyzes following her Christian renunciation. In contemporary environmentalism, emotional and spiritual connections recur through nature writers and activists despite the genre's proclamation of secularity. Shepherd's biography and post-Christian context directly engage these tensions between secularity and religiosity in the nature writing genre. This paper argues for the necessity of the religious-like qualities to the genre through Shepherd's interaction with the Scottish Cairngorm mountains.

> "Walking thus, hour after hour, the sense keyed, one walks the flesh transparent."
>
> —Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain*

An emphasis on physical and emotional embodiment imbues the nature writing genre with religious-like qualities. Nature writing circulates themes of reverence and spirituality, which position the writer ambiguously between a secular genre and a religious approach. Scottish modernist Nan Shepherd uses mysticism to mediate this tension in her elegy to the Scottish Cairngorm mountains, *The Living Mountain.* After renouncing her Christian faith, Shepherd demonstrates a residual religiosity in *The Living Mountain,* which illustrates both her personal tensions and the genre's tensions more broadly. After rejecting Christianity for its intangible abstractions, *The Living Mountain*

is Shepherd's post-Christian text that tracks her spiritual journey from the ineffable to the tangible embodiment that she finds in nature. Beginning with Ernst Conradie's "ecotheology" (1), this paper uses eco-spirituality to frame Shepherd's residual religiosity and transition to mysticism. Shepherd's reverential yet secular approach illuminates how mysticism can mediate boundaries between spirituality and secularity in the nature writing genre.

Shepherd's *The Living Mountain* integrates environmentalism and spirituality into literature but received little recognition as a literary text until Canongate's 2014 republication. Before Canongate's republication, the text had fallen from the press for nearly 50 years. Despite providing significant contributions to environmental writing, Shepherd has yet to receive substantial academic treatment. Expanding from theories of eco-spirituality, this paper recognizes Shepherd and her mysticism to analyze the transitional stage "when people increasingly speak of spirituality rather than religion when trying to describe what moves them deeply" in nature writing (Bron 3). Shepherd draws on motifs of embodiment and eroticism, which connects her with mysticism, particularly Christian women mystics like Julian of Norwich and Bridget of Sweden. This paper understands mysticism as an ambiguous spirituality that moves in the fluid space between secularity and religiosity. Moving from Shepherd's mystic approach to the Cairngorms, I argue that *The Living Mountain* demonstrates how "re-positioning the body helps open up new ways to perceive this interconnected world" (Walton 79).

Eco-Spirituality

Theology professor at the University of Edinburgh, Rachel Muers, suggests that nature writers and activists engage "prophetic voices of nonhuman nature" to advocate for the environment (323). In this framework, the nature writer takes on a prophetic quality, albeit from a secular stance. However, residual religiosity gestures toward the presence of eco-spirituality within the genre.

Eco-spirituality presents a secular alternative that allows religious experience in nature without the religious institution. Contemporary theologians trace eco-spirituality to Celtic and Franciscan strains of Christianity and notably to mystics of the Middle Ages like Julian of Norwich and Bridget of Sweden (Conradie 5). Eco-spirituality maintains "a quest to deepen, renew, or tap into the most profound insights of traditional religions" but enjoys the freedom from an overarching religion (Bron 3).

Geographic relativism is a key aspect of eco-spirituality that influences personal interactions with nature. BeldenLane develops the habitus to describe how spiritual interaction emerges from the physical landscape (25). Often in a "process of reading cultural meaning back onto the natural world," the habitus shapes how cultures interpret the divine through their landscape (33). To demonstrate this pattern, Lane discusses how monotheism is more common in desert or mountainous cultures, while he observes more polytheistic tendencies in forested or oceanic cultures (24). Shepherd's position in the mountainous Cairngorms appears when she invokes images of the sublime to describe the awe-inspiring mountains. Shepherd draws on the mountain's fearsome qualities, like snowstorms and jagged peaks, which echoes in the rawness of her accounts. Her singular "Being" which she finds in the mountains demonstrates an encompassing monotheistic approach to the oneness of the mountain. For writers who are intimate with their landscape, the spirituality begins to fuse with their attitude toward the land.

As theologians observe eco-spirituality continuing to grow in nature writing, land interactions become like liturgical practices for nature writers and enthusiasts (Lester and Böhm 57). In Shepherd's writing, we see this practice as she elegizes and sings praise to the Cairngorms. As humans write poetries about the earth, "humans join in this universal praise [to nature] that is voiced by all creatures" (Gschwandtner 191). What Gschwandtner calls universal praise becomes a secularized form of liturgical practice through the invocation of psalmist and hymnic

language. In Shepherd, this praise is specifically directed to the Cairngorms because the mountains become her spiritual focus. Before her renunciation, her spirituality was directed towards God. Now, her spirituality directs toward the Cairngorms. This transfer of a god-like treatment to the Cairngorms affirms Lane's observation that "talk about God cannot easily be separated from discussions of place" (22)—particularly in the context of nature writing. In works like Shepherd's, this transference process demonstrates how the relationship to land begins to assume a spiritual position for the writer.

Renunciation and Reverence

Often beginning from a place of dissatisfaction with traditional religions' incomprehensible deities, eco-spirituality seeks "a religion of pure experience [which] is typically a modern phenomenon" (Lane 29). Contrasted to traditional religions where the spiritual experience is abstract or mediated by a priest, eco-spirituality is tangible. Like Shepherd, Ralph Waldo Emerson sought an experiential divinity found in nature. After growing frustrated with Christianity's intangible abstractions, Emerson renounced Christianity "to find the ways divinity could be experienced directly" (Robinson 93). Emerson's Christian renunciation and subsequent turn to nature echoes Nan Shepherd's later spiritual pivot. As a formative text in the nature writing genre, Emerson's Nature embeds religious frustration into the genre. In *The Living Mountain*, Shepherd exhibits the same religious pattern as Emerson. Both writers seek a tangible spiritual experience, which they cannot find in cathedrals or catechism. Instead, they turn to mountains and rivers where they find a physically embodied divine in the natural world.

Willingly or unwillingly, the spirituality of the nature writer's experience positions them in a contested place between renunciation and reverence. For writers who overtly renounce religiosity, mysticism acknowledges the genre's religious origins while maintaining spiritual nuance. More complex than straight renunciation, Bron questions if this

pattern simply transitions classical religion to be "engaged in nature religion" (4). In cases like Emerson and Shepherd, frustrations with traditional religions' abstractions led writers to the mystic practice of seeking "the embodiment of the sacred in human experience" (Milad and Taheri 611). From this experience, the mystic directly interacts with spiritual dimensions without directly ascribing to a religion. Relying on tangible experiences, mysticism negotiates the desire to experience spirituality but ambiguously directs the spirituality to an unspecified divine.

Contextualized by her own post-Christian biography, Shepherd uses mysticism to engage with nature spiritually yet secularly. Rather than complete renunciation, her residual religiosity positions *The Living Mountain* in tense conversations between science and creation. While not wholly in agreeance, she praises "the scientists [that] have the humility to acknowledge that they don't know how [nature] has been done" (Shepherd 59). However, while she respects the acknowledged absent logic, she continues to gesture at the ambiguous spirituality in the mountains. "God or no god," (7), Shepherd's mysticism addresses the physical world's spiritual aspects rather than its religiously ascribed traits. Shepherd's rejection of God did not result from absent spirituality, but from her desire for tangibility. This entangled desire moves through *The Living Mountain*, but Shepherd uses mysticism to negotiate a halfway point between nature and religiosity.

Women Mystics and Embodied Spirituality

Women mystics's use of spiritual ravishment and embodiment set the historical precedent for nature mysticism like Shepherd's. Through *The Living Mountain*, "we see [Shepherd] weighing up the merits of scientific and religious explanations," often as she walks and physically engages with the landscape (Walton 60). Women mystics sought a direct experience with the divine mediated through their physical bodies. When Shepherd engages her body in sensual manners, the experience emulates a mystic experience in a

modernist setting. While Ruiz de Alegria Puig argues that Shepherd's physicality eroticizes the feminine body (170), her post-secular context positions Shepherd's body as the focal point for her spirituality. In "The Senses," Shepherd declares: "I am an image in a ball of glass" (96). This echoes Emerson's infamous transparent eyeball from *Nature*. Rather than dealing in religious abstraction, Shepherd meets the divine in her physical senses. Again, drawing on the desire to be the direct experiencer of the divine, Shepherd uses her embodied physicality to meet the landscape. As she runs her hand through wet heathers and feels glacial water on her body, physicality becomes the catalyst for her mystic experience.

Through her body, Shepherd demonstrates a "certain kind of consciousness [that] interacts with the mountain-forms" (Shepherd 102). Consciousness manifests through the physical nature and "touch, [which] is the most intimate sense of all" (102), intimates her to the landscape. Early on, Shepherd dives into a glacial lake and describes how "[her] spirit was as naked as [her] body" (13). The erotic tones of her spiritual exposure only amplify with "the joy of the wet drops trickling over the palm" (102) or the heather's "wetness on [her] naked legs" (102). Ruiz de Alegria Puig suggests that this intimacy is an erotic connection to the Cairngorms, but more than pleasure, the eroticism becomes the link to divinity. In what is referred to as spiritual ravishment, women mystics often use violent, erotic bodily imagery to physically experience religious ecstasy. Mystic Julian of Norwich considered "the body's suffering [to be] for spiritual transformation" (Godfrey 62), but Shepherd achieves a similar transformation from pleasure. Shepherd's exposures link her to the tradition that positions eroticism in embodiment.

The glacial lakes, the wet heathers, and the heavy rains verge to the erotic experience that Ruiz de Alegria Puig identifies, but mysticism allows "the feminine body [to] be seen as a metaphor/metonym for God" (Milad and Taheri 615). As if signifying her renunciation, Shepherd demonstrates mysticism embedded in her body rather than

a divine or religious body. In this sense, Shepherd's feminine body both experiences and becomes part of the religious experience in nature. Waters observes that women mystics are often framed as "[God's] bride and [His] channel" in the sense that they completely submit their desires to God (135). Shepherd subverts this tradition by indulging her own physical pleasures through physical experience in the mountains. "From that hour [she] belonged to the Cairngorms," she echoes marital rites but subverts them for her individualized spirituality (Shepherd 107). Rather than the self-sacrificial tones common to women mystics, "the body is not made negligible, but paramount" for Shepherd (106). Simultaneously engaging and rejecting the women's mystic tradition, Shepherd's renunciation originates from a posture of religiosity.

Nature Mysticism

Whether walkers, wanderers, or mountaineers "give it conscious thought or not, [they] are touching life, and something within [them] knows it" (82). Eco-spirituality seems to be aware of a life within the earth or the mountains that we can somehow touch. Mysticism bridges spiritual senses through physical senses as a "connective medium between humanity and God" (Walton 71). Shepherd describes experiencing this connectivity as "running to the ends of the body" (104) to achieve a form of annihilation. Somewhat paradoxically, Shepherd uses physical experiences to nullify the physical body and replace physicality with spirituality. As she plunges into the glacial lakes, the water seems "to disintegrate the very self" until she is "lost: stricken: annihilated" (104). This process of annihilation occurs when Shepherd lapses her physical body to touch the environment. She has reached the end of her physical senses and must experience with her spiritual senses. As she "walks the flesh transparent" (106), Shepherd experiences spiritual connectivity unfettered by the physical body. Her body is the vessel for her mystic encounter, but what Shepherd describes are the limits of the body in spirituality.

Mysticism's ambiguity unravels the boundaries between the human and nature. By pursuing "the 'still centre' of being" (106) rather than a specific religion, Shepherd expands senses beyond the physical to touch the spiritual. Like how Bratton (281) identifies the common desire for spirituality in a wilderness experience, Shepherd sees this desire and reaches it. She addresses interaction with nature as a constant expansion of the senses. The abstractions that her Christian faith offered her were insufficient, but in this spiritual seeking, Shepherd experiences the divine that religion could not offer. She knows the mountain more tangibly than the ethereal religious figures she renounced. The process of growing into a relationship with the mountain grounds Shepherd's mystic relationship with nature. Through her annihilation of the physical body, Shepherd explains that she is "not bodiless, but essential body" (108). In one sense, the body disappears, but the essential body which remains is more akin to a spiritual soul. By disavowing religious limitations and abstractions, Shepherd frees herself from bodily and religious confines.

While Shepherd does not use the term "mysticism," she describes "bodily lightness, [which] then in the rarefied combines with the liberation of space to give mountain feyness" (8). What Shepherd calls "mountain feyness" becomes the signifier of her mystic experience. She returns from her spiritual journey changed. Intriguingly, people notice this change and describe it as her "fey" demeanor (8). This feyness, regardless of its source, marks the nature mystic's experience. Like the contemporary spread of eco-spirituality, Shepherd's "mountain feyness attacks" (84) and lures people into nature. Hillmen, sawmillers, and mountaineers all become affected by this feyness from their time on the mountain. Even though *The Living Mountain* has just passed its fiftieth anniversary since publication, the mountains' feyness continues to draw new spiritualists into the wilderness.

"Being" in Ecological Crisis

In the final chapter of *The Living Mountain*, Shepherd refers to her mysticism's centre as "Being" (108). Throughout her lifetime, she "began to discover the mountain in itself" (108) rather than as the resource that industry had treated it as. The text channels a "manifestation of [the Cairngorms'] total life" (106). From "the starry saxifrage or the white-winged ptarmigan" (106), the mountain's ecology takes on a total life which Shepherd calls "Being." The mountain's Being serves as the focus of Shepherd's mysticism. The total life and ecology form the full pantheon of the Cairngorms, which Shepherd reveres in her meanderings and in *The Living Mountain*. Following the ecological degradation in the Cairngorms, Shepherd steps into a prophetic role to cultivate respect for the natural environment through the text. If the mountain is spiritually revered, it is far more challenging to justify extractivist sentiments. Rather than approaching the mountain as a resource, Shepherd invites people to "be with the mountain as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him" (15).

Muers theorizes that advocacy's appearance in nature writing emerges "as the work of the [Christian Holy] Spirit [which] both reveals and realizes God's history with creation" (323). In this process, nature finds "new ways to speak theologically to the environmental crisis" (324). Whether nature writers call it God or not, the "cry of the earth" (329) resounds in Shepherd and Emerson. The religious or secular status is less relevant than a spiritual movement spurring each writer to speak about nature. Despite her renunciation, Shepherd's mysticism addresses the "nonhuman nature [that] speaks out in the power of the Spirit" (333) or the ambiguous *Being* which she addresses. Amidst ecological degradation, Shepherd begins *The Living Mountain* by defending "the mountain itself, its substance, its strength, its structure" (xxxvi). Regardless of spiritual interpretation, she speaks for the Cairngorms.

"Spirituality is intertwined with environmental concern" (Bron 4), which nature writers evoke. Speaking from

their cultural contexts, nature writers draw on spirituality to restore people's respect and value of natural spaces. Even in her highly poetic prose, Shepherd challenges the "human economy that covers this mountain mass" (Shepherd 80). As "the spirit carries [her] up" (7), she engages mysticism to imbue spiritual value into landscapes. The physical embodiment is paramount, not because of personal experience, but because of the physical landscape. Every aspect in *The Living Mountain* engages a way to create intimacy between people and the environment. Drawing on mysticism, Shepherd's embodied experience demonstrates a connective process that fosters respect for the Cairngorms. Whether there is "God or no god" (7), Shepherd conjures respect for the living world.

Conclusion

Across *The Living Mountain*, Shepherd asserts the power of renewing one's relationship to nature, wherein "flesh is not annihilated but fulfilled" (106). While Shepherd's post-Christian writing illuminates a central paradox in the religious and secular tensions within the nature writing genre, she demonstrates how mysticism forms an intimate connection to land and cultivates environmental respect. Rather than drawing a line against religiosity with her renunciation, Shepherd uses mysticism to negotiate religiosity and eco-spirituality to develop "a modern expression of perennial wisdom" (Andrews 29). *The Living Mountain* acknowledges knowledge boundaries between humans and nature and seeks to reconcile them because "we cannot know [it] because we have no way to know [nature]" (Shepherd 105).

By walking to the edge of "ambiguous borders between spirit and substance" (Gifford 425), Shepherd leaves her spirituality in mysticism's ambiguity. Even in tensions between religiosity and spirituality, nature writers echo the "cry of the earth" to advocate for environmental protection (Muers 323). As she navigates her renunciation, Shepherd's work creates an intimate spiritual relationship between

herself and the Cairngorms. Rather than definitively secular or spiritual, Shepherd's mysticism is nuanced. This tension reflects the genre's and her position within eco-spirituality. By leaving this position open-ended, Shepherd shares her mystic experience in *The Living Mountain* to show readers "how the earth must see itself" (Shepherd 11) and how they can learn to see it in this way. *The Living Mountain* demonstrates that regardless of the spirituality's form, nature writing seeks to create respect for the environment through knowing it intimately. All through her ode to the Cairngorms, Shepherd adamants that "to know Being, this is the final grace accorded from the mountains" (108).

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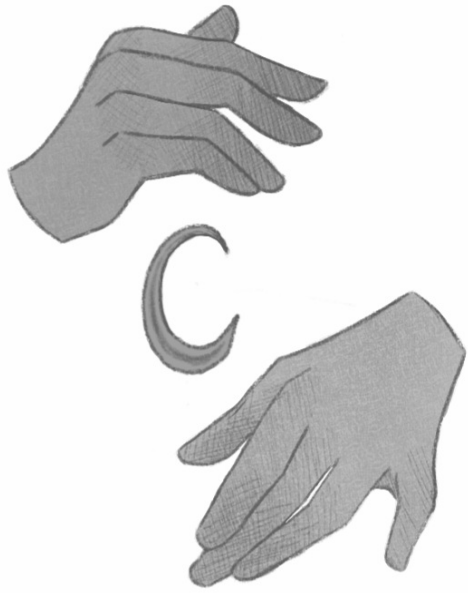

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