

Undergraduate Research Journal

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Senate of College Councils

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The University of Texas at Austin Undergraduate Research Journal

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make the UT Austin Undergraduate
Research Journal possible.*

The 2010-2011 URJ staff is delighted to present the 10th edition of the University of Texas' Undergraduate Research Journal.

The Undergraduate Research Journal is a student-run, multidisciplinary journal that has highlighted exemplary research performed by undergraduates across UT's many disciplines since 2002. Our project is to both publicize outstanding research as well as encourage undergraduates to partake in what we believe to be a highly important area of academia. This year's journal is particularly notable for the strength of submissions from the English department. While every article chosen demonstrates immensely cogent research, we would like to specifically mention Charlotte Mark and Alisa Holahan for winning our first and second place prizes, respectively.

Notable within the URJ staff itself this year was the group cohesiveness that encouraged more open discussion about the journal's progress and potential changes to be made in future years. We will sorely miss two of our long-term, dedicated members who will not be returning next Fall: Tracy Shahan will be entering Baylor Law School and Neima Briggs will be studying in Spain on a Fulbright Scholarship. Tracy and Neima, we wish you both the best of luck in your future studies and thank you for all your hard work on the URJ staff.

And, as always, we would like to extend our gratitude to the UT faculty and staff, as well as to the Office of the Vice President of Research, the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, the University of Texas Co-op, and the Senate of College Councils, all of whom make the publication of this journal possible every year.

We hope you enjoy the journal!

Sincerely,

Monica Ghosh and Michelle M Hayner, co-Editor-in-Chiefs

Contents

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL

2011

- 1** **Charlotte J. Mark**
The Bower and the Garden: Feminine Landscapes in Chaucer and Shakespeare
- 11** **Alisa Holahan**
*Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*: The Challenge of Autobiography for Victorian Women*
- 23** **Ania Upstill**
Community Gardens or Gardening Communities: A Survey of Community gardens on Austin's East Side
- 39** **Kory Zipperer**
A Killer Influence: The Contagion of Homicide
- 50** **Andrew Cockroft**
*A Poet's Stutter: A Critical Analysis of Gertrude Stein's *Rose**

The Bower and the Garden: Feminine Landscapes in Chaucer and Shakespeare

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at Austin*

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Charlotte J. Mark

Gendered Space

We can instinctively say that Shakespeare looked to Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" while creating *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as he implements Chaucer's characters (such as Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate) and setting (Athens) into the play. Rarely, however, do we seem to acknowledge the more complex and sophisticated ways in which Shakespeare responded to Chaucer's work.¹ Both authors investigate feminine desire, opening their works with Theseus' triumph over Hippolyta, then rewriting the same conflict throughout their texts. Though both Chaucer and Shakespeare study and explore feminine desire, they

confront and represent it differently. Shakespeare implements yet simultaneously revises his source as he satisfies feminine desire where his precursor denied it. To liberate feminine desire, Shakespeare spatially reconfigures the formerly rigid constraints of the “Knight’s Tale” into the natural space of the forest. But even more particularly, Shakespeare inverts the terms of Emily’s garden to create Titania’s bower, thereby transforming a scene of feminine oppression into one of empowerment.

From the very beginning of the *Canterbury Tales*, the concept of “space” has been crucial to our understanding of the Knight. Chaucer even defines this character in the General Prologue through the places where he has campaigned. He travels from “Alisaundre, Pruce, Lettow,” and “Ruce,” through “Gernade, Algezir, Belmarye, Lyeys,” and “Satalye,” to the “Grete See, Tramysse, Palatys,” and “Turkey” (51-66).² According to Sylvia Tomasch, this elaborate description of the Knight’s travels “delimit[s] the bounds of the known world,” “These are in the realm of possibility.”³ The Knight’s campaigns imply more than just unfettered movement, but the forcible assertion of his beliefs (namely, Christianity) onto others. As he physically expands the breadth of a social system in his numerous, far-reaching campaigns, the Knight also imposes social systems onto his listeners when creating his narrative world: a chivalric world in which women are inferior.⁴ In the “Knight’s Tale,” the narrator furthers his social agenda by trapping the young Amazonian-turned-Athenian maiden, Emily, in architectural structures. If the Knight’s exploration of Europe, Asia, and Africa flaunts his “realm of possibility” and limitless command, the architecture that restricts Emily’s movement to only “to and fro” conversely represents her restricted existence (1099). It is necessary here to remind ourselves that this treatment of women is created by Chaucer to portray and discuss the Knight and knighthood’s expectations of women (not, necessarily, that Chaucer views women the way he spatially treats them in the tale). Therefore, I will often discuss the Knight as the authority, rather than evoking the name of the author himself.

Shakespeare eliminates this narrator all together, thereby exposing the feminine sexuality which the Knight so anxiously covers. As a result, the Chaucerian boundaries of feminine desire are redrawn, and the Athenian lovers of *Dream* quickly defy these terms by escaping the constraints of Athens’ gates. When set loose in these spaces bereft of architectural constraints and authority, desire is released and satisfied (whether through the death, or marriage and consummation of the play’s characters). While both the Knight and Shakespeare’s Theseus claim power over their feminine subjects through architectural confines, Shakespeare’s Hermia and Helena find a natural space free of these bounds when they flee to the moonlit wood beyond Athens. By rewriting the stark, architectural lines of the Knight’s text into the natural landscape of the wood, Shakespeare liberates Chaucer’s female characters, even if only for one midsummer night.

The “Gappe”

The Knight continually depicts women as the source of conflict in the war against the Amazons and the war on Creon. To Theseus, women must be fought for, and they motivate

male heroism on the battlefield to right the wrongs of unnatural social orders—whether they be “the regne of Femenye” or “the tyraunt,” Creon. Immediately after Nature pricks Emily’s “gentil herte” (1043), calling her to the garden, she strikes Palamon “thurghout [his] yē” (1096), recalling the fine line between love and violence first introduced in Theseus’ conquest of the Amazons. The Knight blurs the bounds of war and marriage in his rush to tell the tale:

How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
 By Theseus, and by his chivalrye;
 And of the grete bataille for the nones
 Betwixen Athenës and Amazones;
 And how asseged was Ipolita,
 The faire hardy quene of Scithia;
 And of the feste that was at hir wedding,
 And the tempest at hir hoomcoming... (877-84)

Intermingling the siege of the Amazons, “the grete bataille,” and the wedding “feste,” the Knight associates Theseus and Hippolyta’s homecoming with a “tempest,” characterizing marital union as an act of violence.⁵ The love/violence collocation defines courting as a war between the sexes and Palamon and Arcite’s sight of Emily serves as the first strike as her beauty causes them to cry out and flinch in pain (1078). Instead of fighting directly against her, like Theseus, the two men fight against each other for her, rewriting the mythical story of defeated femininity to suit the courtly narrative. Though the Knight makes Emily nearly absent from the tale, she drives the conflict. In her comparison of Emily with the “gappe,” or grove, on which Palamon and Arcite fight, Elizabeth Scala states, “As much as the ‘Knight’s Tale’ might celebrate the exploits of Theseus or pay witness to the individuation of Palamon or Arcite, those tales can only be written only in the blank space Emily provides.”⁶ The “Knight’s Tale” requires a “blank space” to play out the conflict of the narrative, and women serve as the grounds.

The Garden

The garden marks Emily’s feminine space though its architectural and social edifices restrict her. “From the time of Adam and Eve,” Marjorie Garber writes, “the image of lovemaking in the garden has been central to culture—and to fantasy.”⁷ The “Merchant’s Tale” appropriates this fantasy when May meets with her young lover in her husband’s walled garden, which he has built for his own pleasure. The metaphorical significance of the garden extends beyond the mere invitation of fantasy. Medieval gardens were usually situated a distance from the manor house “so that part of the appeal... was derived from the effort involved in traveling to them.”⁸ Laura L. Howes explains the metaphor of walking to and within the garden, saying, “various ways of entering or walking through a landscape can signify metaphorically acts of discovery, ways of knowing, or the experience of something new or notable... the garden of love and other metaphorical landscapes often draw heavily on the notion that to walk is to

know or to experience.”⁹ The garden, then, provides an appropriate space for Emily’s sexual awakening and, subsequently, for the kindling of Palamon and Arcite’s desire, in its affiliation with both experiencing “something new” and erotic fantasy.

The Knight emphasizes Emily’s lack of control in the pleasure grounds, indicating both the uncontrollable transition from prepubescence to womanhood and the marital imprisonment this maturation brings. Early in the day Emily:

Was arisen and al redy dight;
 For May wole have no slogardye a-night
 The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
 And maketh him out of his sleep to sterte... (1040-44)

Emily “was arisen” to observe the rite of May, the passive verb making her the object of an unseen and unknown action. May performs all the actions of this passage (“priketh”; “maketh... to sterte”); Emily’s passivity to Nature indicates that she is undergoing a “natural” experience, one that even she is unaware of. But the Knight also seems to suggest that this scene portrays a sexual awakening through his use of “priketh,” a term Chaucer’s readers could remember from the erotically charged opening passage of the General Prologue (“So priketh hem Nature in hir corages” [11]). While “priketh” often signifies “to stab lightly” it was also used figuratively to indicate sexual intercourse.¹⁰ The affiliation of “priketh” with sexual intercourse echoes the blurring of love and conquest with which the tale opens. Emily’s sexually charged observance reveals her fate (sexual intercourse and conception) before she even knows she has experienced the stirrings of sexual awakening.

Emily is controlled not only by Nature but also the architectural bounds of the garden, its rectangular walls restricting her movement to “up and down,” “to and fro” (1069; 1099).¹¹ Emily’s constraints mirror that of her imprisoned onlookers, whose forced restrictions, like her own, keep them roaming “to and fro” (1071).¹² The Knight urges this comparison by creating a parallel between Emily’s garden romp and Palamon’s walk in the prison tower. As Emily “was arisen” by “hir wone,” Palamon “was risen” “as was his wone” (1040). As she “romed up and down,” he “romed in a chambre on heigh” (1069). In drawing these parallels, the Knight connects Palamon’s physical imprisonment with Emily’s societal imprisonment. Even the narrator’s physical depiction of Emily portrays her as immobile and trapped, objectifying her as a “lilie upon his stalke grene,” a cultivated object rooted within Theseus’ soil (1034). Recalling again the General Prologue, Emily, as a lily, relies on male “licour” for survival. As a flower, dependent on male cultivation, Emily is forced into the chivalric ideal.

As Emily’s existence implicitly depends on male dominance in the eyes of the Knight, the garden depends on the phallic prison tower, “thikke and strong,” to orient its bounds (1056). The Knight describes “the grete tour” as “evene joynant to the gardin wal” (1056-60). Chaucer goes beyond his main source, Boccaccio’s *Teseida*, in his creation of the tower to “insist on [the] architectural incongruity” between these two structures, creating a situation that prevents

Emily from seeing her admirers.¹³ The elevation of the tower over the garden dramatizes the men's hierarchical power over Emily, privileging their sight of the surrounding landscape and the oblivious maiden. While natural, the garden is also surveyed and controlled, built into and around Theseus' castle. Again, the narrator shields Emily from the outside world, making her unaware of her landscape, and, more importantly, Palamon and Arcite's gaze. Emily is ignorant to nearly every element of the scene including Palamon and Arcite's conflict and her own awakening maturation. The narrator's construction of the scene, the men in the all-seeing prison tower and Emily oblivious below, reaffirms the men's power over their subject as they both demystify and objectify her. Adhering to Laura Mulvey's analysis of the male gaze, the architectural apparatus sustains the courtly objective of the active male and passive female, the female providing an erotic object for her male aggressors to "cast his eye upon" (1078).¹⁴ In this conventional scheme, Emily's role is to stir desire in the male and, therefore, her reciprocation or even knowledge of the men's gaze is irrelevant and unnecessary to the progression of the narrative. However, Chaucer deviates from the psychoanalytic model and Mulvey's "cinematic masterplot" by creating a heroine who resists Palamon and Arcite's admiration. Through this deviation, Chaucer introduces and emphasizes the conflict of feminine desire while calling attention to the Knight's feminine objectification throughout the tale.

Even though the garden seems to belong to Emily as an icon of "natural" femininity, it (1) lies on Theseus' grounds; (2) restricts her movement; (3) depends on a wall from a phallic tower to close its bounds; (4) is invaded by Palamon and Arcite's lustful eyes; and (5) blinds her to her own fate. Male dominance frames and defines "her" place, a place to which she "naturally" belongs, revealing that she had no place to begin with. While the Knight fails to see, and therefore narrate, anything beyond the terms of courtly love, he replays the issues at stake, such as control and rule, upon the landscape in architectural terms.

Favoring Feminine Desire

Although both the "Knight's Tale" and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* use desire to drive dramatic conflict, the Knight only suggests the complications of female desire while Shakespeare makes it his central argument: indulging his female figures, exploring their desires, and, ultimately, satisfying them. Many critics credit Shakespeare's focus on feminine desire to the play's historical context in Queen Elizabeth's reign. Garber discusses this context in full, explaining that "Elizabeth was frequently compared to an Amazon, and indeed the intermittent threat of a world of Amazons... was a nightmare that haunted much writing in the period."¹⁵ Shakespeare's Elizabeth embodies the Knight's worst fears of women who reject marriage and assert their will as rulers.¹⁶ Elizabeth famously put off marriage to a royal consort, governing England as a lone virgin queen. Following Elizabeth's example, the women in *Dream* rebel against Athens' traditional patriarchy: Hermia refuses to wed Demetrius, Titania refuses to yield to Oberon's wishes, and Helena refuses to accept Demetrius' rejection. In *Dream*, the women escape a restrictive space for one in which they can unleash their desires.

Though Shakespeare possesses a different conception of feminine desire, he retains aspects of the tale such as the relationship between love and violence. Again, female desire ignites battles and distorts the lines between marriage and war. Shakespeare elaborates on the closeness of marriage and war which the Knight creates by introducing a new dichotomous relationship: rape and consensual union. While the suggestion of rape may, to some, seem extreme, Robert N. Watson and Stephen Dickey explain in their controversial essay on *Romeo and Juliet* that “the lover and the rapist are often separated by exactly the kind of reassuring conventional boundary that Shakespearean drama is always threatening to blur.”¹⁷ Shakespeare even directly alludes to rape when Demetrius swears to Helena, “If thou follow me, do not believe / But I shall do thee some mischief in the wood” (2.1.236-37). Jeanne Roberts analyzes Demetrius’ words, explaining that like “a pale shadow of the rapist of the same name in *Titus Andronicus*,” Demetrius “imagines the possibility of raping even his rejected lover.”¹⁸ Only 70 lines later, Lysander repeatedly requests that Hermia lie in the same “bed” with him, suggesting that “one turf” can “serve as pillow for [them] both” (2.2.41). Even if only momentarily, Lysander pushes Hermia’s boundaries of intimacy, reiterating to some extent the scene before it. By interweaving scenes of threatened rape and violence with those of love and romance, Shakespeare creates the intimacy between love and war in his dramatic structure. Froma I. Zeitlin describes the violence of union more generally in ways that underwrite these moments, “Love and war reaches still deeper into a psychology of eros that senses the potential conflict, even paradox, in a union of contraries (male and female).”¹⁹ By blurring the boundaries of consensual sex and rape, Shakespeare exaggerates the paradoxical union of male and female inherent in heterosexual marriage.

The Bower

As we have seen, the garden provides a stark contrast to Shakespeare’s natural space. Through the garden, the Knight creates a synthetic reproduction of natural space, a courtly booby-trap under chivalric rule. Even so, Shakespeare integrates elements of the garden scene into his construction of the wood and, more specifically, Titania’s bower. He thereby rewrites Chaucer’s scene of feminine oppression into one of feminine empowerment by transforming the walled garden into a wild, unmonitored, and unrestricted space.

While the garden creates the illusion of privacy, providing a space which seems like a “feminine” place where Emily can freely roam, the space belongs to Theseus and is surveyed by his prisoners. But Titania’s fairy-minions protect her bower, creating a space where she can seek refuge in her feud with Oberon and do as she pleases. Though the Knight describes Emily as a slave to the seasons, rising early to observe the rites of May, Titania’s actions affect nature, her rebellion causing the “seasons [to] alter... the spring, the summer, / the chiding autumn, angry winter, change / their wonted liveries” (2.2.111-13). Here, Titania asserts her sexual dominance by bringing Bottom almost by force to her private, feminine space. Her “capture” of Bottom even echoes Palamon and Arcite’s first views of Emily in a

parodic perversion of the scene. While the two knights fall in love with Emily as they see her “walketh up and down,” singing “as an aungel hevenysshly” in the garden, Titania sees Bottom “walk[ing] up and down” and “sing[ing]” on the “green plot” (1051-5) (3.1.3, 3.1.123-4). As Palamon and Arcite fall in love through their eyes, Titania’s “eye [is] enthralled to [Bottom’s] shape” (3.1.139). Shakespeare converts the scene of male voyeurism into one of feminine empowerment. However unlike Palamon and Arcite, Titania can actively pursue her love object. She orders her fairies to “lead him to [her] bower... tie up [her] lover’s tongue, bring him silently” (3.1.197-201). As Gail Kern Paster explains “Bottom, whom the fairies are both to ‘wait upon’ and ‘lead,’ to serve and to control, is himself a sexual victim, his body in thrall to Titania.”²⁰ Unlike the garden scene which inspires it, in the bower, the male figure exists at the whim of the female.

The Custody Battle

By casting the bower as an inversion of the garden, I assert that in the battle between Oberon and Titania, the fairy queen “wins,” despite her loss of the changeling boy. Oberon desires Titania and her affection. Threatened by her beloved “vot’ress,” he must therefore take the changeling boy, Titania’s last tie to her mortal friend. However, his acquisition of the changeling only comes at the expense of his own dignity and his wife’s love. As Oberon laments, he “did upbraid her, and fall out with her,” sharing her downfall (4.1.50). Critics have provided a vast assortment of contradictory explanations for Oberon’s desire to possess the changeling boy, the object to be obtained by the success of his plan to enrapture Titania with Bottom. Some critics even settle for no explanation whatsoever.²¹ Louis Montrose provides a more elaborate explanation:

Oberon attempts to take the boy from what Puck suggests is an indulgent and infantilizing mother, and this attempt is sanctioned by Theseus’s defeat of the Amazons, a matriarchate that maims and effeminizes its male offspring. Oberon will make a man of the boy by subjecting him to service... What Oberon accomplishes by substituting Bottom for the boy is to break Titania’s solemn vow [with her votress].²²

Montrose reads Oberon’s desire as one that seeks to reunite feminine bonds as strong, patriarchal, masculinizing relations, connecting his actions to those of Shakespeare’s Theseus. Like many other critics, Montrose links the boy with Titania in an afterthought. He asserts that (1) Oberon desires the boy and (2) this has something to do with Titania, making Titania secondary to the changeling. I would propose an inversion of this structure, asserting that Oberon (1) desires Titania and therefore (2) must acquire the boy to regain her undivided attention. This logical inversion makes Titania the immediate object of Oberon’s wrath and allows one to view the changeling as only a tangential outlet through which Oberon expresses possessiveness of his queen.²³

Though he wishes to shame Titania by anointing her eyes with the flower, Oberon is instead shamed by her uninhibited, sexual freedom, as she makes her formerly neglected King a distant memory. Oberon describes Titania, embracing Bottom as “female ivy... enrings the barked fingers of the elm,” with a frustrated, angry, and hurt language, emphasizing words like “hateful” (used twice in the speech) and phrases such as “disgrace bewail” (4.1.44) (4.1.49,63) (4.2.56). He also insults her by using the word “dotage,” which suggests both excessive love and “feebleness or imbecility of mind or understanding.”²⁴ In her coddling of Bottom Titania expresses a maternal impulse, “wind[ing] [him] in [her] arms” until he falls asleep (4.1.40). As he drifts into dreams, she sighs, “O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!” like a mother admiring her child (4.1.45).²⁵ Titania gives herself to Bottom as both erotic and maternal, attributes that she has withheld from Oberon, “[for]swearing] his bed and company” (2.1.62). While “jealous” Oberon aims to make Titania render up the beloved changeling to break the female bond with her votress, she simply replaces the boy with Bottom, heightening his frustration. This replacement explicitly sexualizes what used to be a mere maternal relationship, symbol of female friendship, and service. Shakespeare emphasizes this frustration by creating parallels between Titania’s treatment of the changeling and Bottom. Before, she “[crowned]” the changeling “with flowers” and made him “all her joy”; now she rounds Bottom’s “hairy temples... with coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers” and “dotes” on him (2.1.27) (4.1.45, 4.1.51-52). The basic premise of Oberon’s plan, to win back his Queen’s devotion by making her fall in love with something “vile,” backfires on him.

The subconscious logic behind Oberon’s plan could be explained by Judith Butler’s discussion of desire:

Here it is not simply desire but its inevitable displacement through an Other, or a series of Others, that renders it elusive, contests its ‘apparent’ aim, derails it from intentionality... There is no desire without this triangulation in which displacement works as a threat and incitement.²⁶

Applying Butler’s terms for the complicated displacements of desire, Oberon desires Titania, not the changeling, explaining the changeling’s absence from the play beyond a few basic allusions. He serves only as the “Other” through which Oberon “triangulates” his desire. Therefore, in momentarily losing Titania to an ass, Oberon realizes his fault and must acknowledge “the degree to which men are in fact dependent on women: upon mothers and nurses, for their birth and nurture, upon mistresses and wives, for the validation of their manhood.”²⁷ By doting on Bottom, Titania momentarily conquers Oberon in his own ploy.

A Return to Patriarchy

Throughout the “Knight’s Tale,” Chaucer explores the complicated dualities of courtship—marriage and war, female and male, passion and reason—as the Knight asserts that patriarchal authority is necessary to tame and control these dynamics. Subsequently, many

critics remark on the duality of *Dream*, analyzing the play as a power struggle between “‘masculine’ principles of rationality and order and ‘female’ principles of sexuality and passion,” as male figures try “to repress ‘female’ passion with ‘male’ reason.”²⁸ Though *Dream* ends in the heterosexual, patriarchal norm that the “Knight’s Tale” establishes, Shakespeare assigns spaces where these feminine “principles of sexuality and passion” can be unleashed, duplicated, rewritten, and satisfied. Spaces within the mystical forest, like Titania’s bower, rewrite the rigidity of the garden walls which virtually imprison Emily and her desire. However, even the female characters in *Dream* long for Athens’ bounds after a night of madness in the wood. Helena laments:

O weary night, O long and tedious night,
 Abate thy hours! Shine comforts, from the east,
 That I may back to Athens by daylight,
 From these that my poor company detest. (3.2.431-34)

As Helena waits for daylight, Shakespeare suggests that it takes the subversion of authority to appreciate and respect its restrictions, not challenging the Knight’s bounds, but instead manipulating then reestablishing them.

Endnotes

1. For a brief survey of the critical analyses of the “Knight’s Tale” in *Dream* see Ann Thompson, *Shakespeare’s Chaucer: A Study in Literary Origins* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), 98. Also, E. Talbot Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Mostly, these are line-to-line interpretations. I assert, rather, that Shakespeare looks to Chaucer in more abstract ways—pulling this tale apart, manipulating and contorting it, and rewriting it to fit his agenda.
2. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). 3rd ed. All subsequent quotations to the “Knight’s Tale” cite this edition by line numbers.
3. Sylvia Tomasch, “Mappae Mundi and ‘The Knight’s Tale’: The Geography of Power, the Technology of Control,” in *Chaucer’s Cultural Geography*, ed. Katheryn L. Lynch (New York: Routledge, 2002), 203. It is appropriate to note, however, that the Wife of Bath has also traveled to places of pilgrimage, including “Rome,” “Boloigne,” Galice,” “Seint-Jame,” and “Coloigne” (465-66). Even so, the Knight far exceeds her “realm of possibility.” In addition, the notion of a travelled woman is entirely absent from the Knight’s narrative, and the Wife of Bath serves to contrast women like Emily.
4. J.B. Harley, “Maps, Knowledge, and Power,” in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments*, ed. Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 278-308, 280. Harley uses the theories of Anthony Giddens to discuss maps as “authoritative resources,” through which a nation can facilitate the “geographical expansion of social systems.” Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, Volume 1* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), 5.
5. Laura L. Howes, *Chaucer’s Gardens and the Language of Convention* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 89. As the *Riverside Chaucer* informs us, “Neither Statius nor Boccaccio mentions a storm on Theseus’ homecoming” (360). Chaucer consciously deviates from his source to emphasize the love/war polarity. The tempest “allude[s] to the untold story of stormy early days in Theseus and Hippolyta’s marriage,” while foreshadowing the “presumably tempestuous taming of the wild [women]” and female desire within the tale (218).
6. Elizabeth Scala, *Absent Narratives, Manuscript Textuality, and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 119.
7. Marjorie Garber, *Sex and Real Estate: Why We Love Houses* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000), 106.
8. Howes, *Chaucer’s Gardens*, 5.
9. Howes, *Chaucer’s Gardens*, 6. This metaphor was firmly established by the fourteenth century.
10. See the *Middle English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “priken”: “To pierce, stab; stab lightly” or “fig. to have sexual intercourse.”

11. See V.A. Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), for an elaborate discussion of “to and fro” and its implications in the “Knight’s Tale.”
12. *Ibid.*, 90-91.
13. Kolve, *Imagery of Narrative*, 86. The Riverside Chaucer notes that in the Teseida, Emilia sees the young men.
14. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* ed. 1999 (Oxon: Routledge, 1992).
While the men are initially struck by Emily’s beauty, it is not her that hurts them, but their own desire. She acts solely as the Lacanian mirror, a thing which embodies the imaginary and reflects back the desire which the men initially project.
15. Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 216. See also, Louis Adrian Montrose, “Shaping Fantasies’: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture,” *Representations* 2 (Spring 1983): 77. Montrose writes, “As the female ruler of what was, at least in theory, a patriarchal society, Elizabeth incarnated a contradiction at the very center of the Elizabethan sex/gender system.” See also C.L. Barber, “The Family in Shakespeare’s Development: Tragedy and Sacredness,” in *Representing Shakespeare*, ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppelia Kahn (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 196. Barber discusses the Protestant rejection of the cult of the Virgin Mary, which “meant the loss of ritual resource for dealing with the internal residues in all of us of the once all-powerful and all-inclusive mother.”
16. A female ruler was not simply unfamiliar, but unimaginable in Chaucer’s day. Until Mary I took the crown in 1553, England adhered to the Pauline doctrine of the Church which “suffer[ed] not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (Timothy 2:12-14). In 1554, Parliament passed the Act Concerning the Regal Power, “that what and whensoever statute or law doth limit and appoint that the King of this realm may or shall have, execute, and do anything as king... The same the queen... may by the same authority and power likewise have.” Joseph Tanner, *Tudor Constitutional Documents, A.D. 1485-1603: With an Historical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 124).
17. Robert N. Watson and Stephen Dickey, “Wherefore Art Thou Tereu? Juliet and the Legacy of Rape,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 58.1 (2005): 127-56, at 150.
18. Roberts, *Shakespearean Wild*, 45.
19. Froma I. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 128.
20. Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1993), 139.
21. Walter F. Staton, Jr, “Ovidian Elements in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26:2 (1963): 165-178, at 168. , Stanton claims that “Oberon’s interest in this child is unexplained.” See also William W.E. Slights, “The Changeling in *A Dream*,” in William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 38. Slights attributes the critical discord regarding the changeling boy, who is “so insubstantial in the text and so variously perceived as a source of conflict” to the “indeterminacy that the play postulates as the essential condition of people who love and people who dream.”
22. Louis Adrian Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theater* (1995; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 135-7. Margot Hendricks puts forth a similar interpretation in her essay “Obscured by dreams’: Race, Empire, and Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47, no.1 (Spring 1996): 53. She claims that “Oberon’s interest in the Indian boy is primarily one of dominion: possession is linked to Oberon’s political authority... Furthermore, Oberon’s desire for the boy seems very much connected to desire for dominion over Titania.”
23. Appropriately, the changeling never actually appears on stage.
24. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “dotage”: “The state of one who dotes or has the intellect impaired, now esp. through old age; feebleness or imbecility of mind or understanding; infatuation, folly; second childhood; senility,” also, “a foolish or imbecile thought, word, or deed; a folly or stupidity.”
25. Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 138-140. Paster discusses Titania as a maternal figure, portraying Bottom as an infant.
26. Judith Butler, *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd ed., ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (1990; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 383.
27. Montrose, “Shaping Fantasies,” 66. Here, Montrose writes of Amazonian mythology.
28. David Marshall, “Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” *John Hopkins University Press* 49, no. 3 (Fall 1982): 557.

Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*: The Challenge of Autobiography for Victorian Women

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Charlotte Brontë's 1853 novel *Villette* is not a book about which is it easy to be ambivalent.

George Eliot called *Villette* a "still more wonderful book than *Jane Eyre*" (qtd. in Gordon 255). Matthew Arnold, in contrast, referred to the novel as "one of the most utterly disagreeable books I have ever read" (qtd. in Gordon 283).

One explanation for readers' strong responses to the novel lies in the complex way in which protagonist and narrator Lucy Snowe relates to the reader. *Villette*, by Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855), tells the story of a young woman, Lucy Snowe, who experiences a personal tragedy that leaves her alone and entirely dependent upon her own resources. She

decides to leave England and becomes a teacher at a girls' school in the city of Villette, in a fictionalized Belgium. The vast majority of the novel relates Lucy's experiences at the school over the course of a year. While too many characters in the novel Lucy is a mystery, the reader learns a great deal about her thoughts and feelings. However, although Lucy is more honest with the reader than she is with the novel's characters, a closer look at the narrative suggests that Lucy in fact conceals a great deal from the reader. Throughout the novel she betrays her awareness of the reader's presence and of the fact that the reader, like many of the novel's characters, will try to judge her. Lucy's narrative stance toward the reader can be seen to reflect a complex amalgam of both self-revelation and concealment that mirrors Victorian women autobiographers' desire to connect with their readers without foregoing a deep need for privacy. Thus, the idiosyncratic relationship between the narrator and reader in *Villette* can be perceived as a reflection of and commentary on Victorian women's autobiography.

In *Villette*, protagonist Lucy Snowe tells her story in the form of an autobiography, narrating events that occurred many years before. In the novel, the fictional narrator presents a compelling self-portrait to the reader. Lucy refers not only to her younger self, but also to herself in the present, as a writer recalling earlier life events. The fact that Charlotte Brontë chose to write her novel in the form of an autobiography is significant. Of course, there are important differences between fictional and real-life autobiographies (Sanders 16-17). However, Brontë's appropriation of the mode implies that there was some aspect of autobiography that she believed would help in writing her story. Further, the way in which she puts the form to use in *Villette* suggests that Brontë may have wanted to comment on autobiography itself—particularly as it was used by women.

Like *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë's earlier novel *Jane Eyre* is written as a first-person narrative, and the relationship between the narrator and the reader is an important element of the novel. However, despite the fact that *Jane Eyre* contains the subheading of autobiography while *Villette* does not, in *Villette* Brontë uses the autobiographical form in new and creative ways. In particular, *Villette*'s narrator, while at times trusting, is at other moments more evasive and combative than in *Jane Eyre*. The extant work of literary critics on *Villette* has focused considerable attention on the apparently contradictory stance toward the reader, contributing in important ways to illuminating this complex relationship. However, while a few scholars, such as Janice Carlisle and James O'Rourke, have related the novel to Victorian autobiography, none have discussed the work, and in particular the relationship between the narrator and reader, in the context of Victorian *women's* autobiography. Yet *Villette* fits into and expands upon the tradition of women's autobiography in important ways.

Like the autobiographies of real Victorian women, Lucy Snowe's fictional autobiography differs significantly from male autobiographies of the same period in regard to both subject and style (Sanders 29). In particular, like real Victorian women autobiographers—as well women autobiographers before and after the nineteenth century—Lucy expresses an acute awareness of the reader and the dangers of self-revelation (Sanders 10). The relationship

between the narrator and the reader is a central element of any autobiography (Peterson 168). This sensitivity to the presence of the reader is especially true of Victorian women's autobiographies (Frerichs 176). In *Villette*, Lucy is constantly torn between a desire to garner the reader's sympathy and understanding and the need, as a woman, to protect her private experience from public scrutiny. Sidonie Smith cites this tension as a common problem for the Victorian woman autobiographer (56). Lucy copes with these conflicting desires by vacillating in her stance toward her reading audience, depending on her desire to reveal or conceal.

Lucy's narration is frequently characterized by ambiguity and omission. However, in telling her story, Lucy also displays equally numerous and significant moments of revelation. In many ways, Lucy's narration in *Villette* reflects Victorian women's desire for self-expression. Certainly, nineteenth-century British women felt profoundly uneasy about adopting the autobiographical mode (Sanders 10). Nevertheless, Victorian women exhibited a powerful need to share their thoughts and experiences with others. Many women, while choosing not to write autobiographies, expressed themselves through other types of writing, such as diaries, travel narratives, and autobiographical fiction. For example, Carol MacKay notes that even though Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1837-1919) did not write a traditional autobiography, much of her writing contains autobiographical elements (65). While very few of the most famous female authors of the Victorian era wrote an autobiography, some lesser-known novelists recorded their reminiscences using the autobiographical mode, as did female reformers and philosophers of the period (Sanders 1-2). In addition, Victorian women continued to use forms that had been part of traditional women's autobiography for centuries, such as personal religious histories and autobiographies by wealthy women that focused on the writer's marital contentment (Jelinek 46).

Literary critics who address Lucy's instances of concealment often neglect those occasions when Lucy chooses to reveal information to the reader. For example, Ivan Kreilkamp argues that *Villette* "suggests that emotional 'reward' and cultural value can only be created out of professional speech withheld" (352). However, Lucy's narrative is not, as Kreilkamp argues, always "disembodied and impersonal" (332). Sometimes Lucy's manner toward the reader is both affable and remarkably revealing. In fact, during these instances of self-disclosure, when Lucy divulges some of her most private thoughts and emotions to the reader, she seems to go further in trusting the reader with information about herself than most Victorian women autobiographers. Sanders writes of Victorian women's autobiographies, "Repeatedly in writing by Victorian women, the intimate is marginalised, pushed to the very edge of their text" (15). However, this is not always the case in *Villette*. In this sense, Brontë creates a narrator who sometimes has more in common with the women who wrote "subjective autobiographies" in past centuries (Jelinek 41) than with most nineteenth-century female autobiographers.

The many moments in the novel in which Lucy confides in the reader can be perceived as efforts by both Brontë and her fictional narrator to encourage the reader to sympathize with and understand as meaningful the experience of an easily overlooked individual. Lucy's fictional

autobiography about a young woman forced by financial necessity to seek employment as a teacher mirrors the abundance of autobiographies in the nineteenth century by working women (Jelinek 46). Lucy seems to speak for the many female members of the middle class, and for governesses in particular, who were forced by circumstances to act against the strict gender expectations of the day (Herrera 68). More specifically, Lucy's fictional autobiography argues for the significance of the common woman's experience. Sanders observes that one of the major ways in which Victorian women enriched the autobiographical mode was by "proving that the hidden, or unremarkable life has as much right to be told and understood as the lives of great leaders and statesmen" (19). Lucy appears plain and withdrawn, and she lacks the distinguishing influence of lineage, wealth, or fame. However, through the narration of Lucy Snowe, Brontë argues not only for the importance of women who lack features that, in the eyes of society, make their lives noteworthy; she also makes a case for the significance of women who feel profoundly isolated from the world in which they live.

In *Villette* the reader is privy to what none of the novel's characters are: Lucy's inner thoughts. Lucy's attempt to maintain a façade of stoicism extends to the reader as well. However, she is more revealing about her emotions with the reader, allowing him or her fuller understanding of her inner life. Lucy, writing many years after the events she narrates, reveals impressions and emotions to the reader that she kept hidden from those around her at the time. Thus, while many of the characters in the novel view Lucy as cold and insignificant, Lucy demonstrates to the reader that, despite her reserved appearance and passive behavior, she possesses a rich inner life.

In particular, from knowing something of Lucy's thoughts, the reader finds evidence of her strength and individuality. Lucy tries to conform to feminine ideals of passivity and modesty in the way she behaves, and her timid behavior often causes others to overlook her inner strength. Were Lucy to relate to her reader with the same measure of passivity, her narrative would say little. As Smith notes, if the female autobiographer "pursues a self-representation structured in the fictions of goodness and self-effacement, she remains silenced" (55). The contrast between Lucy's behavior and her thoughts is especially clear in her relationship with Dr. John, a handsome English doctor. He calls Lucy "inoffensive as a shadow" (Brontë 454; ch. 27), but the reader is exposed to a very different Lucy than the one Dr. John sees. Lucy tells the reader what she restrains herself from saying aloud to Dr. John: "His 'quiet Lucy Snowe,' his 'inoffensive shadow,' I gave him back; not with scorn, but with extreme weariness" (Brontë 454; ch. 27). Lucy may allow Dr. John to perceive her as passive and insignificant, but she ensures that the reader does not.

At key moments in the text, Lucy also reveals to the reader a sensitivity that she works hard to hide from the other characters in the novel. Ginevra, a student at the school who befriends Lucy, writes in a letter to Lucy, "[Y]ou have such nerves!—real iron and bend leather! I believe you feel nothing" (Brontë 687; ch. 40). Lucy's reserved manner often gives the impression that she is cold and unemotional. Even her last name, Snowe, suggests an

absence of feeling. However, Lucy displays to the reader her inner warmth, giving voice to the sensitive nature that she only occasionally shows others. In one of the most affecting passages in the book, Lucy explains the reason for her cold demeanor: “Oh, my childhood! I had feelings: passive as I lived, little as I spoke, cold as I looked, when I thought of past days, I *could* feel. About the present, it was better to be stoical; about the future—such a future as mine—to be dead” (Brontë 151-152; ch. 12). Lucy is largely successful at hiding these emotions from others. However, while she never engages in unrestricted revelation with the reader, she does at times tell the reader a great deal about her feelings, affording the reader the opportunity to feel compassion for her suffering.

Lucy’s treatment of the reader sometimes suggests that she considers him or her to be a genuine friend. In fact, as a female autobiographer, it would be reasonable for Lucy to anticipate that a portion of her readers would be amicable, particularly if the reader were another woman writer (Sanders 24). However, Lucy often views the reader as a person who is likely to pass judgment on her. Female Victorian autobiographers were acutely aware of the ways readers might judge them (Smith 50), and Elizabeth Winston explains that female writers prior to the twentieth century “sought primarily to justify their ways of living and the fact of their writing” (111). Lucy demonstrates a similar awareness that the reader might criticize her for not being an ideal Victorian woman. Thus, Lucy also discloses information about herself to encourage the reader to vindicate her for unconventional behavior.

Lucy appears concerned that the reader will find her desire for employment objectionable. Her anxiety reflects that of women autobiographers who were also established writers and in their autobiographies “defended their choice of a career or their deviation from the traditional marital and maternal roles” (Winston 111). While the ideals of womanhood dictated that women marry and have children, in fact many middle-class women were left husbandless and forced to work as governesses (Herrera 68). This is exactly the situation Lucy finds herself in: “Thus, there remained no possibility of dependence on others; to myself alone could I look” (Brontë 47; ch. 4). Lucy explains to the reader that she is necessarily focused on survival rather than propriety. She seems to fear the reader will have the same attitude that rich, privileged characters in the novel like Mr. Home and his daughter Paulina might have to her seeking employment. When Paulina asks why she teaches, Lucy replies, “[F]or the roof of shelter I am thus enabled to keep over my head; and for the comfort of mind it gives me to think that while I can work for myself, I am spared the pain of being a burden to anybody” (Brontë 409; ch. 25). Middle-class Victorian women were supposed to work only for reasons of, as Mr. Home puts it, “pure philanthropy,” and even then it was considered an “eccentricity” (Brontë 409; ch. 25). This being the case, Lucy, though she reveals very little about her past, does tell the reader enough to convey that she is compelled to act as she does by her circumstances.

Lucy also justifies to the reader her desire to live as an independent woman. Sanders relates the perspective of Mrs. Ellis, a nineteenth-century English writer who spread the belief

that “a woman without domestic and family ties is an anomaly....An isolated woman who lives only for herself and her achievements is a hollow woman, living a fruitless existence” (7-8). However, despite the stringent gender expectations of the Victorian era, the circumstances of many women’s lives forced them to act counter to the conventional ideals of womanhood (68). At one point in the novel, in the context of considering the best way to establish her own school, Lucy counsels herself “not to complain that such an object is too selfish, too limited, and lacks interest; be content to labour for independence until you have proved, by winning that prize, your right to look higher” (Brontë 522; ch. 31). Lucy, although speaking to herself, might easily be expressing the concerns of a Victorian reader who believes that women should be selfless and dependent upon others. Lucy’s response is to suggest that she desires independence because it is the most she can hope for. It is not that she does not want more, that she does not wish to “gloriously take up the nobler charge of labouring and living for others” (Brontë 523; ch. 31). It is only that such a calling is not available to her. In this way, Lucy attempts to present her desire for independence in a manner that would be acceptable to nineteenth-century readers.

In fact, at least for a brief time Lucy does manage to have what few women of her time could—both love and independence. Lucy refers to the period when Monsieur Paul, a teacher at the school whom she has grown to love, is away as “the three happiest years of my life” (Brontë 711; ch. 42). She understands that the reader may “scout the paradox,” but she encourages her reader to “Listen” as she goes on to explain the great satisfaction that can come from a life that has a balance of independence and love (Brontë 711; ch. 42). Further, in this way Lucy implicitly justifies to the reader the writing of her autobiography. Sanders explains that nineteenth-century English women in “writing about themselves...were usurping a masculine role and entering a transgressive field of self-expression” (156). Lucy, in both falling in love and running a school, shows that a woman can take on a role typically held by a man and still retain her femininity.

While Lucy sometimes confides in the reader, there are also important moments when she regards the reader in the same way that she does those around her: as an unwelcome intruder into her private life. Thus, in many respects, Lucy’s narration in *Villette* reflects Victorian women autobiographers’ tendency toward reticence. A significant development in autobiography during the Victorian era was an increased awareness, by both male and female autobiographers, of the reader’s implied presence (Landow xxvii). This audience awareness is complicated and amplified in women’s autobiographies. Those women who chose to write autobiographies expressed a powerful concern over the reader’s judgment, which Sanders describes as “a perpetual feeling of awkwardness, a nervous looking over the shoulder at an accusing audience” (10). Many women autobiographers were self-conscious about sharing with the public aspects of themselves that might not readily be accepted, resulting in autobiographies characterized by extreme evasiveness (Saunders 168). Lucy, too, at times carefully conceals many important details of her thoughts and experience from the reader.

Lucy's doubts about the reader's ability to understand her are expressed in the limited information Lucy provides about her imagination. Although Lucy refers to her imagination often enough to indicate its importance in her life, she hides the exact nature of her fantasies from the reader. For example, she refers to the "strange necromantic joys of fancy" that brighten her dull life at Madame Beck's school, but she never gives any indication of what those moments consist of (Brontë 105; ch. 8). Similarly, Lucy at one point implies that she sometimes finds relief in writing, referencing the comfort given by "a pencil-point, the nib of a pen, or tinging the black fluid in that ink-glass" (Brontë 597; ch. 36). However, if Brontë is indeed referencing writing, she never describes its nature to the reader. This reticence may be a reflection of the prevailing belief in nineteenth-century England that imagination prevented women from performing their real duties in life (Bock 3). Another reason Lucy may choose not to emphasize the power of her imagination is that to do so would reduce her credibility as an autobiographer. Women were generally considered to be less rational than men, and thus not meant to produce autobiographies (Winston 95). For Lucy to suggest that she is in possession of a passionate and imaginative nature would further damage her claim to narrative authority. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that the acting of Vashti, whose dramatic performance Lucy witnesses and who is based on the real-life French actress Rachel, is "an important statement about the dangers of the imagination for all women. Vashti's passionate acting causes her to be rejected by proper society" (423). An autobiography that focuses too strongly on the power of imagination would likely be criticized by many Victorians as not only improper, but also unreliable.

As with her method of discussing her imagination, although Lucy lets the reader know she cares for Dr. John, she guards the exact nature and extent of her feelings. Sometimes, Lucy tries to conceal her affection for Dr. John completely. She declares to the reader in regard to Dr. John, "[O]nce, for all, in this parenthesis, I disclaim, with the utmost scorn, every sneaking suspicion of what are called 'warmer feelings'" (Brontë 363; ch. 23). Her behavior, of course, suggests otherwise—as do some of her later comments to the reader on the subject of her feelings for Dr. John. She tells the reader, "I kept a place for him, too—a place of which I never took the measure, either by rule or compass" (Brontë 662; ch. 38). Even in this instance, however, Lucy resorts to the use of metaphor and refuses to address her feelings at length. In trying to conceal the extent of her affection for Dr. John, Lucy may also be expressing a concern over appearing improper by focusing too much on her romantic feelings. Earlier women's autobiographies from the eighteenth century were remarkable for how much their authors revealed about themselves (Jelinek 35). However, they were often derided as scandalous (34). An important element of the ideal Victorian woman was being "sexually and socially passive...and pure in body and mind" (Herrera 67). Thus, one reason Lucy might downplay her longing for romantic love is a wish to avoid having her narrative discounted as improper or unreliable in the way that those of women in earlier centuries were.

Lucy's desire to conform may be in part outer-directed—an effort to be what the typical Victorian reader expected her to be. However, there are also signs that she has internalized

some of society's conventional perceptions of women (Silver 94). Thus, the moments when Lucy hides her true feelings suggest not only that she fears the reader might consider her feelings to be inappropriate, but also that she suspects the same. For example, the contrast between Lucy's low estimation of her own intellect and the ample evidence suggesting that Lucy is in fact quite intelligent points to Lucy's lack of faith in her own abilities. When Lucy is falsely accused of cheating, she is challenged to write an impromptu essay to prove her innocence. She responds by denying her ability to comply with the request: "[A]s you say, I am an idiot" (Brontë 580; ch. 35). Nevertheless, she does manage to write an impressive essay. Lucy's seemingly contradictory alternation between assertion and self-deprecation was a common trait in nineteenth-century women's autobiography (Sanders 166). In fact, repression is an important theme throughout the novel. Lucy declares to the reader at one point, "These struggles with the natural character, the strong native bent of the heart, may seem futile and fruitless, but in the end they do good" (Brontë 255; ch. 17). In effect, at times Lucy's reticence is a self-destructive consequence of a repressive society.

However, while Lucy's reticence toward the reader sometimes represents her attempt to anticipate readers' concerns about her behavior and an effort to conform to social norms, her silence can also be empowering. Lucy describes the school where she lives and teaches in *Villette* as a place in which people's behavior is constantly monitored. In fact, a central theme throughout the novel is that of surveillance. Sally Shuttleworth argues that *Villette* "is dominated by the practice of surveillance....Lucy is subjected to educational, professional, and religious surveillance" (108). Many critics, including Joseph Boone, have noted the parallels between *Villette* and Michel Foucault's study, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1975). Boone argues that the world of *Villette* resembles that of Foucault's "modern disciplinary society," which "maintains its power not by sovereign rule but by making each of its citizens an agent of surveillance and regulation" (20-21). Lucy's affirmation of her right to privacy is not limited to her relationship with the novel's characters. At a number of points in the novel, Lucy also treats the reader as an intruder, purposely denying him or her full access to her thoughts and experiences. A primary reason for Lucy to conceal information from the reader is that such concealment constitutes an assertion of her right to privacy and independence.

A key instance of concealment from the reader occurs later in the narrative, when Lucy is a teacher at Madame Beck's school. While there, Lucy comes into contact with Dr. John, who treats the children at Madame Beck's school. One day, sitting in the room and observing Dr. John while he is at work, Lucy makes a sudden discovery. She describes to the reader how "an idea new, sudden, and startling, riveted my attention with an overmastering strength and power of attraction" (Brontë 136; ch. 10). Dr. John is struck by Lucy's "direct, inquiring gaze" (Brontë 136; ch. 10) and asks her, not without some irritation, about its cause. She responds only with silence. Lucy's refusal to disclose information is not limited to Dr. John; it extends to the reader as well. Except for a few vague hints regarding the significance of her discovery, Lucy responds to the reader's curiosity with silence. At the moment Lucy realizes who Dr.

John is, she directly addresses the reader: “I was confounded, as the reader may suppose” (Brontë 137; ch. 10). Clearly, Lucy has not simply overlooked the reader. She is aware of the reader’s presence, and the moment of direct address to the reader provides an opportunity for Lucy to tell the reader what she has discovered. However, she chooses not to.

After a delay of seven chapters, Lucy finally reveals to the reader that Dr. John is actually a childhood acquaintance, Graham Bretton. The autobiographical, first-person structure of the novel suggests that the reader is in a confidential relationship with a reliable narrator. However, Lucy’s long delay in telling the reader about her recognition of Dr. John’s identity suggests a lack of faith in the reader’s judgment—that perhaps the reader is included in Lucy’s reference to “quarters where we can never be rightly known” (Brontë 137; ch. 10). Additionally, as a woman autobiographer, Lucy’s compromised position in relation to the reader means that she must take any advantage she can to assert her own power. Lucy’s delay in revealing Dr. John’s identity can be read as an assertion of independence over the reader. Andrea Herrera argues, “Lucy repeatedly withholds from the reader important information, such as the identity of Dr. John, thus establishing and maintaining her authorial control over her own narrative and over her audience” (69). Lucy’s refusal to initially identify Dr. John’s true identity acts as a reminder that Lucy is in control of the way in which she represents herself.

Near the end of the novel, Lucy learns that the man she loves, M. Paul, must leave on an extended trip to the West Indies. Lucy alludes to a tragic shipwreck, but never conclusively tells the reader what happens to M. Paul—or whether she herself ever knows for certain. She does make clear the traumatizing effect her anxious anticipation of M. Paul’s return had on her. The metaphorical language of desperation, darkness, and longing that Lucy uses, including the assertion that “when the sun returned, his light was night to some!” strongly suggest that M. Paul died at sea (Brontë 715; ch. 42). The fact that she so strongly conveys the emotional impact of the event makes the factual vagueness of the novel’s final passages all the more confusing. All evidence points to M. Paul’s death, and yet Lucy refuses to confirm it. She says of M. Paul’s fate, “leave sunny imaginations hope” (Brontë 715; ch. 42). This inconclusive ending likely serves to frustrate rather than comfort the reader. Lucy seems to want the reader to know that, like the characters in the story, the reader too can never entirely know her. Lucy gives the reader even fewer details about her life after her time at Madame Beck’s school than she does about her childhood, and the little that Lucy reveals likely only leads to more questions in the mind of the reader. Female Victorian autobiographers tended to focus on “a slice of representative life in a specific period” (Sanders 10-11). This is very much the case with Lucy’s narration in *Villette*. As Herrera notes, Lucy “presents for the reader’s scrutiny only selective incidents in her life and thereby maintains some control over the way she is represented” (69). Thus, Lucy is only willing to tell the reader about herself because she can do so selectively, while maintaining careful control of her self-representation.

Literary critics’ neglect of women’s autobiography when discussing *Villette*’s relationship to the autobiographical mode is a significant oversight because the novel so powerfully reflects

Victorian women's unique form of self-expression. In particular, Lucy's conflicted relationship with her reader closely mirrors that of Victorian women autobiographers with their own readers (Frerichs 176). Scholars of women's autobiography explain that Victorian female autobiographers' evasiveness stemmed from doubts about the nineteenth-century reader's ability to understand untraditional female experience (Sanders 7). There is much evidence that Lucy harbors similar concerns about her reader in *Villette*. However, as autobiography scholars also note, Victorian women possessed a powerful desire to express themselves (Sanders 3)—a need Lucy also conveys in *Villette*. Comparing *Villette* with women's autobiography demonstrates the ways in which the narrative voice of Brontë's protagonist mirrors both Victorian women autobiographers' fear of their audience and their need for self-expression.

Literary critics who have addressed *Villette* can also make a contribution to scholarship on Victorian autobiography. Those who study British nineteenth-century women's autobiography, such as Valerie Sanders and Sidonie Smith, have explained Victorian women autobiographers' evasions as evidence of their conformity to societal norms (Sanders 7; Smith 62). In fact, in *Villette*, there are many moments in which Lucy uses reticence as a means of adhering to the role of an ideal Victorian woman. However, Lucy's evasiveness also serves a rebellious purpose, allowing Lucy a means of asserting herself (Herrera 69; Kreilkamp 352). Many critics of women's autobiography overlook the possibility that Victorian women's evasiveness originates not only from a fear of the reader's judgment, but also from an appreciation of the authority that can be rooted in the act of refusal.

Arguing that Lucy strives to find a balance between self-revelation and concealment in her self-representation by favoring neither does not imply that the autobiographical form that Lucy adopts is without imperfections. Like a Victorian woman autobiographer whose extreme reticence results in a narrative that "withholds those details the reader most wants to know" (Sanders 164), Lucy sometimes frustrates the reader by hiding too much. At other times, Lucy appears to reveal more than she intends, overwhelming the reader with emotional detail. Yet, much of the power of Lucy's narration lies in its imperfections. They highlight the difficulty of representing the female self in Victorian society. If they conceal too much, these writers hazard being overlooked by their readers. If they overly confide in the reader, they not only risk the reader's harsh judgment, but also jeopardize an important source of feminine power. Brontë attempts to solve this conundrum by producing a narrator who provides the reader with only a partial history of her experience. Lucy gives the reader a detailed description of a few years in her life, but refuses to reveal either her past or subsequent experience. She shares with the reader some intimate details of her life in the city of Villette, but promptly conceals others. She reveals to the reader some of her intimate emotions, but at the same time hints that she is concealing her deepest emotional core. In these ways, Brontë creates a complex narrator who is able to share the significance of her experience, while not relinquishing her most private self.

In a moment of despair, Lucy, a devout Protestant, enters a confessional in a Catholic church. In describing her interaction with the local priest, she recounts, “I showed him the mere outline of my experience” (Brontë 226; ch. 15). Lucy relates similarly to the reader. She does tell the reader more about herself than most Victorian women autobiographers revealed to their readers. In this way, Brontë asserts the right and necessity for women to find means of self-expression. In addition, Brontë suggests that in order for a narrative to be significant, writers must risk making themselves vulnerable to their reader. Lucy nevertheless expresses powerful doubts about the reader’s ability to understand her. As a result, she carefully conceals many aspects of her experience. Sometimes, these moments of concealment reflect efforts to conform to societal expectations concerning the behavior and self-representation of women. Yet, at other times, Lucy uses her evasiveness to assert her control over the reader. Through Lucy Snowe’s narrative, Brontë points to the power of silence for women who live in a society that often judges women unfairly and functions to limit their independence. In such a world, Brontë conveys, it does not benefit the female autobiographer to tell all.

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Community Gardens or Gardening Communities: A Survey of Community gardens on Austin's East Side

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Community gardens have historically been used to provide food for communities in times of need. Modern community gardens are descendants of the Victory Gardens that provided urban communities with food during World War II, when agricultural production was directed towards feeding troops and food was scarce in urban areas. In recent years, community gardens have again gained popularity in response to a different sort of urban food scarcity: that of fresh, local and organic food. Recent literature on community gardens in urban areas has found a correlation between participation in these gardens and benefits to the health of gardeners and of their

community, yet it has largely failed to look at *which* members of the community participate. In my study I examined who participates in urban community gardening, and whether these gardens could act as effective catalysts for increased food security and better nutrition in low-income or otherwise disadvantaged communities. To do so, I focused on community gardens in East Austin. Historically, the East Side has been composed primarily of low-income, minority residents with high food insecurity, with food insecurity defined as limited or uncertain access to nutritious, safe foods. For these neighborhoods, community gardens can present a rare opportunity to access and consume healthy, locally grown, organic food.

In recent years a large number of community gardens have been planted on the East side of Austin. At the same time, the population in the area has changed. Older, disadvantaged residents who have lived in the area for a number of years are being replaced by younger, more affluent residents. Thus, with a simultaneous demographic shift and increase in community gardens on the East Side, a question arises: are these gardens used by the disadvantaged residents who stand to gain more from them, or by the newer, more privileged residents?

Food Access

Community gardens offer especially important benefits to East Side residents because of the lack of food access on the East Side of Austin. A 2008 study, *Food for Thought*, found only two supermarkets on the East Side, an HEB on 7th and a Fiesta at 38th St, but fifty convenience stores and thirty-one food pantries that stock limited and often less healthy food options. Located to the far south and far northwest of the East Side, respectively, the supermarkets do little to supply accessible food to much of the East Side, especially as a lack of transportation for many residents on the East Side provides another barrier to food access. According to census data, there is a very strong correlation between low household income and lack of a motorized vehicle. The study *Access Denied* reported that one-third to one-half of taxi calls city-wide involved travel to or from a food store. Taxi rides to and from food stores add additional costs, further threatening the food security of disadvantaged residents.

The other option is to ride the bus. Yet according to the analysis of the neighborhood conducted in *Food for Thought*, four block groups in East Austin have no access to a bus route that goes directly to a supermarket; two of these block groups have median household incomes between ten and thirteen thousand a year (below poverty guidelines). With transportation proving difficult, the residents often resort to the limited and expensive selection at local convenience stores or food pantries. While convenience stores might be plentiful, they rarely provide nutritious food. *Access Denied!* found that among the thirty-eight convenience stores then situated on the East Side, while only five stocked ingredients for a balanced meal, and only eighteen carried milk, all stocked alcohol. Similarly, food pantries provide canned or otherwise pre-prepared foods that keep well, not fresh fruits and vegetables. It is worth noting in addition that all three locations of the Austin Farmers' Market are on the west side of Austin. While an alternative market (the Hope Market) has opened on the East Side, it is

located in a highly gentrified area, has limited produce and is the only market that does not accept Lone Star (food stamps).

Literature on Community Gardens

Perhaps due to the growing interest in and development of community gardens in recent years, academics have increasingly chosen to include community gardens as part of their research agenda, demonstrating particular interest in the positive impacts of urban community gardens. Alaimo et al. showed a correlation between community garden participation and increased fruit and vegetable consumption, and thus improved physical health resulting from participation in a community garden. Another study found that participants identified physical health benefits that included, but also went beyond, increased access to healthy food from their work in a community garden. In the study, 'health' was used to refer not only to physical health, but also to what was referred to as "mental and social wellbeing," and the positive influence of nature to participants in urban environments was particularly stressed. Gardens were also found to increase physical health by promoting both healthy eating and education about food and food systems, including benefits for children.

The community benefits of community gardens has been documented by Knack, who demonstrated how community gardens can function as community development tools, linking together communities and fighting urban blight. In an examination of different case studies, Knack focused on the concept of community gardens as public amenities that should factor into urban development and planning due to their many benefits. Pudup, on the other hand, argued that the emphasis community gardens place on "systems thinking," or seeing natural and social webs of relationships, improves the community-mindedness of participants, and community gardens were also understood as a space for gardeners to express and share their cultural identity, building community around the gardens. Gardens can also offer increased social connectedness and a support network formed through work in the community garden.

Research also suggests that community gardens have the potential to encourage long-term engagement in both the neighborhood and community-based movements. Holland posits that environmental management and other community-based sustainability initiatives will meet with more success due to civilian involvement in community gardens. Since the gardens depend greatly on community investment and involvement, participants may feel more able to connect to larger social movements, particularly the community food security movement. In a synthesis of the potential health and community benefits to community gardens, Kingsley and Townsend not only argue for social capital benefits of community gardening, but they also suggest that those social capital benefits to the community may also produce physical health benefits.

Overall, the findings of recent literature indicate that there are significant health and community benefits gained through participation in community gardens. If the findings are correct, they seem to indicate that there is potential for community gardens to act as the

source of a diversity of benefits to low-income and otherwise disadvantaged communities, such as those on the East Side of Austin. Yet these studies fail to analyze who participates in these gardens, and thus who reaps these benefits.

Methodology

For this project, I propose to collect qualitative data on the use of community gardens on the East Side of Austin. I classified the East Side of Austin as the area North of the Colorado River, East of Interstate-35, West of Airport Boulevard and South of Manor Rd. I chose to do a multi-sited ethnographic study based on interviews with garden coordinators augmented by participant observation. I identified and contacted most interviewees through the contact list for Austin community gardens provided by the Sustainable Food Center in Austin, Texas. Most of these interviews were approximately an hour in length, in a place chosen by the interviewee—often the community garden that they participated in—and audio recorded by myself. I also interviewed the Grow Local program coordinators at the SFC. In order to gather additional information, I attended garden workdays and conducted a spatial analysis of the gardens within the surrounding neighborhoods.

Within the area defined by this study as the East Side of Austin, the contact list for community gardens listed six gardens at the start of this study: Alamo, Blackshear, ElJardin Alegre, Co-Lab, Homewood Heights and Good Soil Community Gardens. I was unable to reach anyone at Alamo Community Garden for an interview, and Co-Lab Community Garden was no longer in operation. During the course of this study a new garden, Festival Beach, opened to the far south of this East Side area, a garden organized and planned by many previous members of El Jardin Alegre Community Garden that ultimately replaced El Jardin. Both of these gardens will be discussed in this study.

Additionally, one more community garden just outside of the selected geographical area was included despite being east rather than west of Airport Blvd. I chose to include this garden, Deloney Street Community Garden, because the neighborhood in which the garden is located retains very similar processes and dynamics to the neighborhoods of the other gardens. Thus Blackshear, Deloney Street, ElJardin Alegre, Festival Beach, Good Soil and Homewood Heights Community Gardens are featured in this study, as shown on the map below.

Defining Community and Garden Ownership

For these ‘community’ gardens I thought it necessary to first ask “how do you define community?.” The American Community Gardening Association defines a community garden broadly as “any piece of land gardened by a group of people.” The community gardeners in East Austin had a range of definitions for ‘community’. The definition of community chosen by the gardeners seemed to indicate who they prefer as participants and welcome into their garden, and implicitly who they exclude.

the old black people that have lived in that neighborhood for a while.” At the same time, while these people are intended to be part of the community of the garden it has been difficult to involve them. According to Daniel, “[the neighbors are] really receptive to us being out there and they love us being out there... but when it comes down to it they don’t have the energy or the desire to personally engage with it as much.” In the case of Blackshear, the definition of ‘community’ was defined both geographically (the neighborhood) and to some extent racially (“black”). However, this chosen ‘community’ did not always choose to participate in the garden, leaving it dependent for maintenance on individuals who were not part of the ‘community’.

El Jardin Alegre was started by members of the surrounding neighborhood, defining its community from one already existent. Although Kathleen wasn’t a part of the founding group,

I talked to the people who own the building and he said that some people from the neighborhood came to them and it was just an empty lot, trashed out and [Austin Community Gardens]... were involved in making it happen... and it ended up being a really amazing, wonderful thing. And when I was there first it was mainly people from the surrounding neighborhood. And people that lived close by, many people that didn’t speak English, it had more of a Hispanic presence than we have now. A lot of the people from the neighborhood aren’t really there anymore. We still have a pretty diverse group, we have about one third Hispanic maybe, or a little less than that... we have a few people from Africa that are there, we have the wonderful sound of Swahili while you’re gardening.

At El Jardin, the ‘community’ of the garden was defined as neighborhood-based at its onset, although the garden’s community then changed over time to incorporate people from other neighborhoods.

At Festival Beach, geographical location also seemed to be the main component in defining community, with an acknowledgment of race, or ethnic identity, as well. According to Kathleen, the neighborhood reception to the garden was positive: “especially all the neighbors, they’re happy about it.” The garden’s coordinators visited a range of groups in the area to talk about the garden and get members of the neighborhood involved. As Kathleen noted, “I think we probably still have more outreach to do, but we’re going to keep doing it. We do everything in English and Spanish, so that we really will get our Spanish speaking neighbors involved. So that’s kind of a goal we have.” Their attempts to reach out to neighbors and groups in the surrounding area defined their sense of ‘community’ as geographically related to the neighborhood in which the garden is located and in which a number of the coordinators lived. Still, the ‘community’ at Festival Beach is also open to those who don’t live nearby but who are still interested in the garden. This is exemplified by the fact that they advertise at the Austin Farmer’s Market, which is not held in the neighborhood.

At Homewood Heights “it is people from the community, [although] we’ve thought about opening it up to people from outside the neighborhood” according to garden contact Greg Hammond. At the same time, the garden was founded through the Neighborhood

Association, which does not represent the full diversity of the neighborhood that he described as approximately 20% Hispanic and 30% Black. Hammond said of the Association,

At our meetings ... we do have some of the black residents, I think there's a little bit of a language barrier with the Hispanic families, but they're not really interested... I think [the older black residents] feel like "this is our neighborhood, we've been here for a long time, why am I going to become involved civically now?" I think for them its passed its apex of being a young, vibrant community... everyone gets along over here great, the older folks and the younger folks, [but] there's not a sense of shared purpose between the two groups, and I think most of that's age, it's not race.

Those who chose to be a part of the garden were almost all already members of the Neighborhood Association. Although Hammond expressed his feelings that "its a shame there's not older, more diverse involvement in the garden," he also noted that its "kind of a young, white hip thing to do right now... not that I think people are doing it because of a trend, I think they're genuinely interested." In this instance, an assumption seems to have been made about desire to participate in the garden based on race, age and participation in the Neighborhood Association. The young, white members of the 'community' were interested in both, while the older, black residents (and younger Hispanic families) were seen as separated from the 'community' of active participants.

At Deloney Street, the neighborhood's residents were again the basis for the garden's definition of 'community'. As Tane himself said, "we can pretty much figure out who has been a part of the community for a long time... so we give preferential attention to those who have been there for a long time and those who will be there for a long time." This "preferential attention" played out both in terms of discussing the garden and its development with these residents—as Tane did, talking to people mostly on Deloney Street itself—and in terms of assigning plots for use.

While community gardens occupy geographical space in a particular neighborhood, the community that uses the garden may be from different geographical areas. Thus, how the coordinators and gardeners of each specific garden define 'community' came to feature prominently in who used the garden. Often, it became a question of who was a part of the community *of the garden* rather than the garden being a part of the community.

The Spatial Presence of Community Gardens

The ways in which these gardens inhabit space also affects how neighborhoods and communities interact with them. There is sense of the ownership of space that has implications for participation. This sense ties into the garden's use of space both inside and outside the garden, and how the garden does or does not feel integrated into the surrounding area. Further, the gardens' use of space—decisions regarding fences, outside garden areas and other practical decisions about the garden—often speaks about the intended use and participation of the garden.

This is particularly true for the message put out by the gardeners—whether intentional or not—about who they want to engage with and have participate in the garden.

A good example of a garden space well integrated into the surrounding area is Homewood Heights. The gardeners at Homewood Heights have only a low fence surrounding the garden, and although there is a gate to the space, it has no lock. The garden has a well-maintained area in front of the garden that stretches all the way down to the street. The area includes a picnic table made of cinder blocks and planks and a barbeque standing under a large oak tree. As Greg puts it, “The picnic table and barbeque area is intended as a place where the community can come and hang out... I encourage people—it doesn’t matter if they’re [part of] the community garden—to come up here, have a beer and hang out; and people do.”

Another example of a garden engaged with its own geographical surroundings is Deloney Street Community Garden. As Tane put it, “People focusing on the food is important, food is important obviously, but *space* is more important to us here than food” (my italics). At Deloney Street, they have made an effort to involve those in the locality of the garden but they also have made the garden a useful space outside of its capacity for food production, such as by organizing a picnic area in the wooded section of the site. The garden itself only has a low fence on one side, functioning more as an organizational enclosure than to keep anyone out. In fact, although Deloney Street has an entire shed full of tools, wood and other goods, they don’t worry about locking anything up. Tane contrasted this to systems at other community gardens, where:

they all have fences around them... we worked a little with the SFC, they’ll sometimes leave woodchips or something at a garden... so they always have to give us the combination of the lock so that we can access the stuff. Its kind of funny, I can’t imagine people going in and wanting to steal dirt, so that it has to be locked up. We have all sorts of things in our garden, and I can’t imagine people doing that sort of thing. Who knows, maybe someday someone will go in and trash it and we’ll be really pissed off, but we’ll never put a fence around it, not with a lock.

Blackshear Community Garden shows an interesting combination of traits. The lot that the garden occupies is long and thin, stretching back from the street. At the front of the garden there is a very low fence with no gate, leaving the garden open to the community at all times. The communal rows are also placed at the front of the garden so anyone entering would be able to partake of anything immediately in front of them. This creates a harmonious sense of inclusion for the community, but, oddly, the garden lacks any official sign that would notify neighbors on what the garden is, or how to become involved in it. There is also a limited amount of seating in the garden in a small, uncovered open area, and no shed for communal tool storage. The garden’s apparent lack of organization yet openness might be indicative of how founder Nathan sees the garden: “informal and neighborly.” At the same time, the small communal area and lack of a proper tool shed might hinder participation in the garden.

On the other extreme, Good Soil Community Garden is a space completely divorced from its geographical location. Set at the back of a parking lot at 12th and Chicon, the small garden is just visible from the street behind a high chainlink fence topped with barbed wire. In order to reach the garden it's necessary to enter through a sliding gate secured with a padlock and chain. According to Brad, none of the gardeners come from the surrounding area, although some of them live close enough to be able to bike. In addition to the fact that the gardeners themselves don't live nearby, Brad didn't seem comfortable in the area, especially as dusk was setting in during the interview. Although Good Soil displays a sign that offers free plots for interested parties, its physical presence is far from welcoming.

The presence of El Jardín Alegre was somewhat in-between the garden spaces discussed above. The space was founded by members of the surrounding community who wanted to rehabilitate what was just "an empty lot, trashed out." The interest in making a community garden was related to improving the neighborhood, and its physical presence and use was of interest to those geographically near the garden. At the time of its closing, the garden was fenced in securely, although with signs on the fence advertising and listing contact numbers for both itself and the Sustainable Food Center. It had a relaxation and picnic area, but those were situated firmly inside the fence and clearly intended for the use of gardeners only. While some of these gardeners might—and were—from the area around the garden, the space was clearly less actively engaged with its surroundings.

Festival Beach, as it develops, also plans to reach out into the community. Kathleen explained in detail their plan for engaging the surrounding community.

What we want to do is think of ways to involve people that don't want to garden. Have fiestas from time to time and invite people in, and have educational programs... where we would have people that aren't gardeners still able to access the food. So yes that is something, the community should still include people that aren't gardeners. But then we have to have a fence with a lock, or we have people lose their watermelons and their tomatoes, so you have to have a good fence. So that kind of keeps people out. So we thought about doing things right outside, keep it real beautiful, like plant perennial beds and have benches and maybe a little garden that would be for anyone to just take stuff, so those are all ideas but it's a continual challenge to try and think of ways to share it with the whole neighborhood.

Kathleen's comments indicate mixed feelings and impulses towards the surrounding community, and how Festival Beach should inhabit space in the neighborhood. While the gardeners want to engage their neighbors, they also feel the need for a fence to separate themselves.

Gentrification: Demographic Shifts and their Effects on Community Gardening

Community gardens are developing just as demographic shifts occur on Austin's East Side. As these shifts occur, the neighborhoods and the communities that surrounds these

gardens are in flux. Thus, community gardeners on the rapidly gentrifying East Side of Austin find themselves perhaps unconsciously negotiating issues of race and gentrification in their garden environment. Gentrification is defined by Merriam-Webster as “the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents.” In East Austin, gardeners chose to engage with gentrification in different ways. Topics concerning gentrification and sometimes implicit discussions of race developed during each interview.

Brad at Good Soil conveyed sympathy for the residents of the area surrounding Good Soil who were the victims of gentrification, describing their actions and anger as completely understandable given how they had been treated. At the same time, Brad did not feel that it was necessary to engage with the neighbors about issues surrounding gentrification in the garden setting. He portrayed discomfort at being in the area, identifying it as their neighborhood, not his, implying that gentrification was their problem and not his own.

In contrast to Brad at Good Soil, Greg at Homewood Heights rejected the idea that the process of gentrification could be problematic for the neighborhood and the garden. Greg acknowledged that the process was occurring, predicting that “this neighborhood, the 02 zipcode, will be gentrified or whatever you want to call it, in the next five years.” His description of neighborhood demographics reflected this trend. In his words,

if there's a hundred homes over here, which is about right, then about fifty of them are young, white first-time home buyers, probably another thirty are elder black residents who have been here most of their lives and probably another twenty are older Hispanic residents, not older but they have kids and families. And actually that number's wrong, add another thirty homes that are just empty.

It is notable that this leaves the percentage of African-American residents in the neighborhood at around 23% (when including the empty homes), while the 2000 census listed the area as 40–60% African American, a significant shift. While Greg acknowledged that there were changes and that African American residents were being replaced, he did not seem to feel that this was entirely a negative experience; for him, gentrification could be renewal and improvement. “I struggled with the whole gentrification thing too, when I moved in four years ago... no, I think of it—its just change... in a completely positive way.” In addition to his comments about the neighborhood as a whole, Greg also seemed to feel that there was a racial component to interest in gardening.

[I think] they don't see it as valuable, in the same sense that they don't see living central as valuable... And its just different cultures, I mean for instance the black pop in this area their kids aren't here... their kids have either moved out of the city or into the Pflugerville area... there's not that sense of being central is important. I think there's just a cultural mindset that the suburbs are a more favorable place to be in. Just as food-wise, that grocery store pre-prepared foods are just as—more desirable than growing it yourself.

It's within this second section that we see a problematic justification of gentrification. By placing gentrification into a context of cultural dissimilarity, it's possible to distance gentrifiers from the victims of gentrification. Greg simply does not acknowledge that the children of "the black population" probably cannot afford to buy homes in the same area and thus are *forced* to leave the neighborhood, making moving away a necessity rather than a choice. Likewise, through attributing to the same population preferences for "pre-prepared foods" he justifies their lack of inclusion in the garden. He denies that gentrification has negative effects by making the process about personal and cultural preferences. As he said of himself, "one of the reasons I wanted to move over to the East Side [is that] there's cool stuff going on... that's why I don't like to talk about gentrification, I don't think it's always a race thing." Cool stuff like, perhaps, community gardens that cater to his ideas of desirable and appropriate food stuffs.

When talking about El Jardin and Festival Beach, Kathleen described gentrification more critically than Greg. A long-time resident of the neighborhood in which Festival Beach is located, she herself has witnessed the changes to the community in recent years. Although the community registered at around 80% Hispanic in the 2000 census,

It's changing so fast, and there's a lot more Anglo people moving in, more affluent people, and a lot of the people of lesser income sometimes they just have to leave to move out, so we're losing some of that group. The young people, you know. I remember years ago we thought that if we get certain kinds of changes in zoning we can build more affordable housing, people can build a little apartment in the back to houses for their children ... [but instead] there's going to be these, you know, condos in the back of people's houses... and some of the changes are good, it just hard to see people get displaced because they can't afford the taxes, the taxes go up and all. And people that are renting have to leave.

Kathleen expressed sadness at losing the diversity in the community. At El Jardin, only about 16 blocks to the North East of Festival Beach, this pattern of gentrification could be seen in garden participation. As Kathleen described, "when I was first there it was mainly people from the surrounding neighborhood... many people that didn't speak English, it had more of the Hispanic presence than we have now. A lot of the people from the neighborhood aren't really there anymore." She also noted participation change in terms of age, which reflects the idea that the neighborhood dynamic is shifting to older people of color—whose younger family members often cannot afford to live in the area—and increasingly younger white people.

Some of the *senoras*—we call them the *senoras*—some of them got more elderly. We never found a way to accommodate that... and we really want that to be part of our garden but many of them are of, you know, the generation ahead of the young people and we want to have that diversity as well as other kinds of diversity.

Kathleen expressed hope that at Festival Beach the gardeners would be able to work to accommodate more elderly gardeners in order to keep a diverse range of gardeners.

At Blackshear Community Garden race and age seemed to affect participation in the garden. In Dan's words,

[Nathan] wants to reach out more to the old black people that have lived in that neighborhood for a while, and ... it's been hard, I mean their whole- I mean a lot of the neighbors are old women... when it comes down to it they don't have the energy or the desire to personally engage with it as much.

Again, the community seems to be comprised of mainly older people of color, signifying the process of gentrification as younger generations of people of color cannot afford access to the neighborhood. Without wanting to blame the neighbors themselves for their lack of participation, the Blackshear gardeners seem frustrated at the lack of response to their efforts, to the point where an expansion of the 'community' to include white apartment dwellers may seem like a feasible option to increase participation.

By contrast, at Deloney Street, gentrification is at the forefront of their vision for developing the garden within the community. When Tane went out to talk to people in the neighborhood, as part of his work,

I've talked to them about gentrification, I've talked to them about the area being taken over, changing, and I've tried to let them know that as best I can that this is not that taking place, that this is a space for them, and there are a lot of different ways that we're trying to make that work... Most people don't want to talk about gentrification. I feel like it has to be at the forefront of any conversation because when you look at a place like East Austin which as a place is being gentrified everything is suspect, from who attends neighborhood association meetings to who is moving into the houses to the houses being built, the houses that aren't being built, how certain types of land just sit there... everything.

Overall, every gardener interviewed acknowledged that race and gentrification plays a role in their experience of gardening in East Austin, often feeding into the levels of participation and success of the garden. At the same time, they negotiated these dynamics in different ways. At Good Soil, gentrification was acknowledged but not addressed; at Homewood Heights gentrification was re-named "change" and attributed to cultural and personal preferences. At Festival Beach, El Jardin and Blackshear the processes of gentrification seemed like more of a force to be factored into recruitment and outreach than one to be addressed. At Deloney Street gentrification was addressed and factored into decisions about the garden, despite the reserve of neighbors themselves. Even in this case, however, it remained difficult to engage residents.

Evaluating Participation

The conclusion most obvious when it comes to evaluating these gardens is that disadvantaged residents of communities on the East Side by and large do not participate in the community gardens in their neighborhoods. Instead, the majority of participants are recent, often white, arrivals or people who do not live in the neighborhoods at all. Although I had

initially hoped that these gardens might provide these communities with access to food that is largely unavailable—or when available, expensive—on the East Side, the majority of the gardens' participants are the very people who *can* afford the high monetary and transportation costs of accessing healthy, locally grown and organic food that community gardens can provide at lower costs. There are multiple potential factors leading to the lack of participation. These include what Grow Local Program Co-Director Sari Alborno described as “lack of awareness of the issues, lack of time and lack of education, and lack of monetary resources too.”

New residents in gentrifying areas are often ‘young adults expressing different values, habits, and living preferences than their parents’ (Ehrenhalt 2008), part of the change of values in housing preferences that contributes to gentrification. This is particularly true in East Austin, where a large number of new residents are relatively young, such as the first-time homebuyers of Homewood Heights and many other community garden participants. The new young, mainly white residents of the East Side see and value the neighborhoods differently than the older residents. As Ehrenhalt (2005) writes,

We can only see spaces as authentic from outside them. Mobility gives us the distance to see a neighborhood in terms of the way it looks, enables us to hold it to an absolute standard of urbanity or cosmopolitanism, and encourages us to judge its character apart from any personal history or intimate social relationships we have there. The more connected we are to its social life, especially if we grew up there, the less likely we are to call a neighborhood authentic.

In East Austin, then, gentrifiers are literally experiencing the places differently from older, long-term residents. Zukin links authenticity and gentrification to the focus on food in urban areas. “The success of the farmers’ market at Union Square is intertwined with the desire to consume a special kind of authenticity: real food, locally grown.” The comparison can easily be made between the farmers’ market in New York City to both farmers’ markets and community gardens in East Austin. The decision to engage in sustainable food consumption for Zukin,

is related to a self-consciousness of distinctiveness that sets these consumers apart. I would call their ethos ‘middle class,’ but it issues more from a common experience of ‘living healthy’ and the ability to articulate the aesthetics of ‘fresh food’... they are based on alternative consumption practices that challenge the mainstream institutions of mass consumption... [becoming] a more exclusive taste.

The choice to participate in community gardens functions as a part of a wider mentality that not only promotes gentrification but also encourages a type of consumption that is only accessible to relatively privileged members of society. Privileged gardeners often seemed to consider themselves as apart from the neighborhood community, perceiving minority residents as the real members of the neighborhood. This resulted in a problematic conflation of race and community, where neighborhood residents became the ethnic “other,” a group needing to be brought into the garden.

The sudden desirability of the East Side is linked to wider consumption patterns and the desire for an urban way of life, just as the development of community gardens has grown along with interest in the Sustainable Food Movement. Unavoidably, community gardens are likely to be structured with the goals and values of the Sustainable Food Movement in mind. Thus, they assume a familiarity with the reasons for community gardening that neighborhood residents may not possess. This is the “lack of awareness” that Sari mentioned. Although gardeners may attempt to address the lack of awareness and familiarity with forms of education, the way that the knowledge is presented may actually be isolating for the other—in this case disadvantaged—members of the community.

How the ‘community’ for these gardens is defined also plays into the ways in which they are used or accessed. At Good Soil, members of the surrounding neighborhoods are almost completely excluded from the garden’s ‘community’. At Homewood Heights, the ‘community’ is local but based on participation in the Neighborhood Association, a group that ends up being self-selecting as primarily young, white first-time homeowners. Even in gardens where the ‘community’ includes surrounding residents, gardeners still utilize friends and other networks to help get garden work done, as seen both in interviews and at garden workdays that I attended. Often the ways in which ‘community’ is defined for gardens determines how the gardens physically inhabit their landscape. Ironically, although gardens are physically a part of neighborhoods, they can be divorced from them in a more meaningful but less substantial way.

Finally, there are fiscal and temporal reasons that disadvantaged community members may not be able to participate in these gardens. Despite the ways in which the SFM frames community gardening as accessible to all, there are serious barriers to participation. One of them is fiscal; although many community gardens have successfully applied for grants, the process is a long one and, as Sari said, “not everyone can kick in a hundred dollars to get together a thousand dollars to get a good starting fund.” More than that, gardens require significant investments of time and effort, investments that privileged members of society can afford to pay in order to participate in projects like community gardens. Although disadvantaged communities might in some ways need community gardens the most, they can afford access to them the least.

I should note that many of the gardeners that I interviewed are working hard to include the disadvantaged members of the neighborhoods in which their community gardens are located. Unfortunately, in a place like East Austin where—as Tane said—“everything is suspect” due to gentrification, it’s hard not to see the gardens as a symptom of gentrification and an expression of white privilege. Perhaps the best path is to engage the issues of gentrification—like at Deloney Street—while being considerate of the fact that neighborhood members may not want to participate in the community garden, or may want to participate in different ways from their white counterparts.

My intention is not to give a sense that the prospect of community gardening in East Austin is hopeless, or that it will never reach any disadvantaged members of the neighborhoods in which community gardens are placed. These gardens demonstrate the possibility of using green space in a way that keeps empty lots filled with productivity. Perhaps the presence of community gardens will inspire more food growing in surrounding areas, although that thought itself betrays my own lack of objectivity towards the success of these gardens.

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A Killer Influence: The Contagion of Homicide

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On March 23, 2010, Zheng Minsheng brought a knife to an elementary school in the Chinese city of Nanping, located in the southeastern province of Fujian. Before being subdued by bystanders, Zheng was able to attack thirteen schoolchildren, ultimately killing eight. Following a brief trial, Zheng was executed on April 28, 2010 (Floracruz, 2010). That day, however, would not mark the end of the bloodshed. Hours following Zheng's execution, Chen Kangbing attacked sixteen students and a teacher at an elementary school in the city of Leizhou, Guangdong (Floracruz, 2010). The next day, Xu Yuyuan wounded thirty-one people, mostly children, at a

kindergarten in Taixing, Jiangsu (Floracruz, 2010). In what would be the fourth such attack in as many days by a middle aged Chinese male, Wang Yonglai opted to deviate from the *modus operandi* and used a hammer to perpetrate his attacks, injuring five in a local school in the rural province of Shandong (“A Fourth Attack,” 2010).

The first two weeks of May offered a period of brief solace for the panic stricken people of China. Then, on May 12, 2010, Wu Huanming continued the chaos when he used a cleaver to hack seven students and two adults to death (Wong, 2010). Eleven others were wounded in the attack (“China Children,” 2010). June and July saw a stop to the killings, as the summer holiday kept most students at home instead of in the classroom. Nevertheless, the string of attacks picked up where they left off on August 4, 2010, when Fang Jiantang killed four people and wounded seven with a knife in a kindergarten in Zibo, Shandong (“Man Held Over,” 2010). As of the time of this writing, this is the last known attack of this nature.

Over a six month period, China experienced six separate, uncoordinated attacks on similar victims, in similar locations, and with similar weapons. Since authorities have been unable to establish relationships between any of the six attackers, they have assumed that the attackers had different reasons for committing their respective crimes. The only possible link among the attackers was their exposure to the news covering the other school assaults or the subsequent execution of Zheng Minsheng or both. Note, however, that during the summer months, no similar attacks occurred in other public areas, such as in libraries or government buildings. If the attacks had continued in non-school settings, one may contend that the attacks on schools were the beginning of a larger sphere of violence sweeping the nation. But no such expansion took place, indicating that a very specific influence was at work. These school attackers had more than a desire to murder and assault; they had a desire to murder and assault a specific target: children.

Crediting these occurrences to coincidence or chance would be illogical. But what would cause such a bizarre string of violent rampages with oddly similar, specific elements? One possibility is that violence can be contagious. Although contagion is traditionally thought of as a component of biology, it has been observed with regards to human behavioral changes. The recent events in China are not the only examples of this psychological effect. Contagion has been observed in numerous cases of mass murder, most notably school shootings. In the eleven years following the 1999 Columbine High School massacre, a worldwide surge in school shootings was observed, with an additional surge taking place following the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007. Examining the number of school shootings prior to Columbine allows one to put the last ten years in perspective. More school shootings occurred between 1999 and 2010 than had occurred in the eighty years prior 1999. This rapid increase in the number of school shootings is a relatively modern phenomenon, perhaps following the increase in media exposure of such events.

The intention of this paper is to show the effect of media exposure on the contagion of violent, criminal behavior. First, the concept of contagion and other fundamental psychological

components will be explained. Second, various forms of media will be discussed, with an emphasis on their general influence over behavior. Third, the motivation of perpetrators influenced by contagion will be examined. Fourth, reasons why media exposure encourages the contagion of violent criminal behavior will be discussed. Fifth, the effect of positive and negative reinforcement will be evaluated, as well as the failure of punishment to prevent contagion. Finally, suggestions will be presented on ways in which the media could reform its coverage policies in order to limit contagion of criminal behavior.

Contagion has been observed for numerous psychological constructs. Research conducted by Le Bon (1896) on crowd psychology laid the ground work for contagion, showing that both emotions and behaviors can transmit from one person or group to another. Research has documented a contagious element in the emotions commonly experienced during social encounters (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1995), with a notable presence in personal relationships (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994) and hatred stemming from religious and ethnic conflicts (Hatfield & Rapson, 2008). Research has also found moods and affect to be contagious, as in Donner and Scholfield's (1975) finding that the affect state of a patient often spreads to young therapists during therapy sessions. Goodman and Shippy (2002) and Gountas, Ewing, and Gountas (2007) reported affect similarity between spouses and a spreading of flight attendants' positive affect to their passengers, respectively. Further research has documented a contagious effect of loneliness (Cacioppo, Fowler, & Christakis, 2009), as well as happiness (Fowler & Christakis, 2009) within social networks. These findings give merit to the claim that an abstract construct can actually be contagious, that is, passed from person to person.

A study by Bandura, *et al.* (1961) examined the contagion of aggressive behavior in children in what is commonly referred to as the 'Bobo Doll Experiment'. Bandura asked multiple nursery school children to observe an adult interacting with a toy doll. The behavior of the adult varied, with some acting cordially towards the doll and others acting aggressively (i.e. striking, kicking, pushing). The children exposed to the aggressive behavior tended to replicate that behavior when given a chance to interact with the doll. Through observation, children were capable of learning how to act aggressively. It is important to note, however, that the 'Bobo Doll Experiment' has received criticism: such as the Bobo Doll is a toy specifically designed to be played with aggressively. The most potent criticism, though, stems from the young age of the children. Some critics argue the children were too young to truly understand the actions they were committing. Despite the critiques of the 'Bobo Doll Experiment', however, contagion of behavior has also been observed in adults, as in a study by Glad and Adesso (1976). In their study, a confederate (an individual working with the experimenters but portrayed as a random experiment participant) was placed in a waiting room with a subject; trials in which the confederate began smoking a cigarette correlated with an increased amount of smoking by the subjects. Research has observed additional contagious effects for smoking (Christakis & Fowler, 2008), cooperation (Fowler & Christakis, 2010), and pregnancy among female co-workers (Hensvik & Nilsoon, 2010).

Although these studies establish contagion in face-to-face interactions, their explanation of the impact of media coverage is limited. In a follow up study, Bandura, *et al.* (1963) modified the methods used in the original 'Bobo Doll Experiment' to address these limitations. Instead of having the children observe the aggressive adult-on-doll behavior in person, they were exposed to a videotaped recording of the interaction. The children were also exposed to a cartoon character acting belligerently. In both situations, children displayed greater aggressive tendencies compared to their documented behavior before exposure.

Using mathematical analysis, Pitcher, *et al.* (1978) and Myers (2000) were able to credit a contagion effect to a variety of aggressive criminal and deviant actions. With a focus on airline hijackings, Pitcher, *et al.* (1978) concluded that media coverage of successful hijackings, such as those conducted for political (communist defectors to Cuba) or monetary reasons (D.B. Cooper) lead to an increase in such criminal acts. Myers (2000), using comparable methods, observed similar results when examining race riots during the American Civil Rights Movement. Finding a link between media coverage of the race riots and the replication of such action, Myers (2000) declared the "mass media [as] absolutely critical for the diffusion of collective violence and protest" (p. 187). Noting that cities with shared media outlets, regardless of distance, tended to experience riots in clusters, Myers (2000) added that "[the media's] influence is limited by its distribution" (p. 187).

Prior to the introduction of 24 hour news networks in the 1980's, national coverage was limited. If a single murder took place in Detroit, people in Dallas did not hear about it. Therefore, if the Chinese school attacks had occurred fifty years ago, technological limitations would have prevented the information from reaching such a broad audience. Today, this restriction is no longer the case. The school attacks in China received national news coverage, making it very likely that a majority of the population was aware of the events, despite living in unaffected areas. The fact that most of the attacks took place in heavily populated areas serves as evidence supporting the contribution of a contagion effect, as media coverage in dense areas would likely be more widespread than that seen in sparsely populated areas.

History is ripe with examples of media, of a variety of forms and distributions, influencing the masses. At the turn of the century, newspaper coverage of the Whitechapel murders in the United Kingdom sparked a public frenzy, the first of its kind over a serial killer (Evans & Skinner, 2001; Cook, 2009). Upton Sinclair's publication of his 1906 novel *The Jungle* created such a large public outcry that it led to reforms in government oversight of the meat industry (Reed, 1994). Orson Welles' famous reading of H.G. Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds* during a 1938 radio broadcast caused considerable panic, after many listeners mistook the story for an actual news report. Many listeners began to barricade their houses and create makeshift gas masks in preparation of what they believed was a Martian-led gas raid on the United States ("Radio Listener's," 1938). Some reports of attempted suicide were also documented in the chaos (Citation).

Specifically, it can be argued that the potency of the television broadcast changed many aspects of American life and society. One particular aspect of society that changed was politics.

When television enabled the general public to see and hear major political candidates, the physical appearance of those seeking office became more influential than before. A famous example of this effect was seen in the 1960 presidential debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, the first debates to be broadcasted on television. While those listening to the debates on the radio felt Nixon came out on top, many television viewers found Kennedy's performance more convincing. This discovery emphasizes the effect television coverage can have on the general public (Webley, 2010). Furthermore, studies have been conducted that support the positive correlation between television exposure and the prevalence of eating disorders in young girls (Moriarty and Harrison, 2008). A study by Becker (2004) examined these effects of television over the three years following the introduction of television programming in a rural community in Fiji. The young females in this community indicated an increase in the amount of behavior believed to be influenced by media figures, such as weight and body shape preoccupations. Additional research (Pinhey & Okinaka, 2004) found similar results, linking both male and female purging behavior with increased exposure to western television programming.

Across cultures, the perpetrators of such violent acts as mass murder tend to share many personality traits and situational circumstances. The prevalence of mental illness in school shooters is a prolific topic, as observed in the high profile cases of Seung-Hui Cho ("Court Found Cho," 2007), Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold (Cullen, 2004), and Matti Saari (Allen, 2008). In China, many cases of mental illness are undiagnosed or untreated, and any of the six elementary school attackers may have suffered from mental illness and been unable to receive the help they needed. A common aspect of mental illness is an inability to properly gauge the threat level within one's environment. Often times, these individuals interpret their surroundings as threatening, even if they have no rational basis to do so. Bullying provides victims with copious environmental and emotional stressors, many of which can result in a violent overreaction towards the bully (or perceived bully) by an individual suffering from mental illness (Danitz, 2000).

Additional circumstances can increase this risk of violence. Cho and Saari both developed an obsession with firearms prior to their rampage. (Allen, 2008). A preoccupation with death has been observed in some shooters, such as Jeffrey Weise and Cho, who both wrote dark and violent literature in their free time. A logical connection can be drawn between these fascinations and a desire to harm others, if placed in a situation where the individual feels his actions are justified. While simply worrisome as standalone traits, these aggravating factors may push an individual towards violence if coupled with a mental illness.

If media exposure can influence a person's behavior and cognitions, as the evidence suggests, why isn't a contagious effect present every time an individual witnesses a news story detailing a school shooting? As discussed above, a potential answer could be pre-existing aggravation. A news story observed by an individual experiencing personal chaos or upheaval is going to have a more forceful effect than it would on an individual not experiencing such

conflicts. This theory is supported by the evidence that all five individuals following Zheng Minsheg's actions in China were not well-adjusted, balanced individuals suddenly turned psychopathic, but rather individuals already suffering from psychological or financial upheaval. Living on the low end of the socioeconomic spectrum, a status highly stigmatized in modern China, was a common link between all six perpetrators. During this time of modernization, many Chinese people are finding themselves unable to properly adjust to the rapid cultural change, causing much distress. Catastrophic life events, such as the loss of a job, also put many in a vulnerable mental state (Breed, 2009).

Evidence gathered during the investigation of Jeffrey Weise following his attack on Red Lake Senior High School in 2005 presents another important component of this contagion. In a computer animation created by Weise before his crime, the main character shoots innocent people and eventually takes his own life (Langman, 2009). This creation mirrors the actions taken by Weise himself, demonstrating a fixation on mass murder. Crimes detailed on the media show potential, motivated perpetrators how to properly execute a certain criminal or violent behavior with the maximum possible results.

In China, a country where private gun ownership is rare, the initial attacker showed the potential damage an individual could inflict by bringing a sharp object onto school grounds. In an area with minimal security and relatively defenseless targets (schoolchildren), the attacker was able to cause an extreme amount of damage using a knife, a common household item. This learning effect is also seen in the United States, where shooters often target locations known to be 'gun free areas', such as universities ('Report of the Virginia', 2007), high schools (Lennard, 2005), middle schools (Ramsland, 2010), and even churches (Perez, 2010). Contrary to common belief, soldiers are not allowed to carry their weapons while off duty, even on an Army base. In 2009, Major Nidal Malik Hasan took advantage of this disarmament when he killed twelve and wounded many others at Fort Hood, furthering the trend of shooters targeting 'gun free areas' ('Foot Hood Suspect', 2009).

Additional factors could contribute to people being susceptible to the contagion effect. When viewing a news report covering the first occurrences of school stabbings in China, those who would later go on to replicate such actions might have derived confidence from seeing someone 'go first'. Similar to children gathering the courage to jump off a high rock, all these individuals needed to see was one person take initiative. Multiple theories arise in an attempt to explain this kind of behavior. First, witnessing such behavior through the media might normalize it. Whenever a properly motivated individual sees a workplace shooting on the evening news, it diminishes the foreignness of committing such an act. Secondly, a bandwagon effect might come into play, usually with regards to the infamy and fear associated with committing such heinous crimes. Witnessing the panic and chaos stemming from the murder of one's classmates may encourage an individual of low social status, such as a victim of bullying, to also engage in that kind of behavior. Potential perpetrators might also be motivated to 'outdo' the actions of other shooters, as a means of achieving greater infamy than their predecessors.

To best understand the underlying forces behind this contagion, one needs to understand the psychological constructs of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and punishment (Myers, 2002). Positive reinforcement triggers an individual's desire to repeat an activity in light of a positive or rewarding return. As an example, a high test score might encourage a student to continue rigorous study. Negative reinforcement refers to an individual's desire to repeat an activity in response to a negative or painful stimuli being removed. For example, a rat might pull a lever to shut off a painful electric current in the floor. In the case of mass murder, positive reinforcement demonstrates the connection between a school shooting and the ability to cause death or serious injury to targets. After a school shooting, news media will often report upon the pain and suffering experienced by the victims, fueling motivated individuals with a desire to commit such acts themselves. Media coverage also displays the effect that violent events have on the population as a whole, which, in the hours and days immediately following the event is usually one of panic or hysteria. In 2010, an elaborate public suicide via a self-inflicted gunshot shut down the entire University of Texas at Austin campus and surrounding area. For many of the individuals who commit these acts, causing this kind of widespread terror and confusion is an objective, and media coverage showcases these successes. The potential for media coverage might persuade an individual to take their own life in a public place, rather than in the privacy of their own home. The importance of pre-existing aggravation is illustrated through positive reinforcement; to reinforce a behavior such as homicide, the individual is shown to usually experience a negative life event or one of the factors mentioned earlier, such as mental illness. If these factors are not present, these individuals will most likely look upon a school shooting like the rest of society does: as a tragedy, not an inspiration.

It is important to note that most individuals will not witness a crime such as a school shooting in person, but will most likely receive all of their exposure through the media. Because the behavior is not being positively or negatively reinforced directly, media exposure is able to influence those watching via vicarious reinforcement. Vicarious reinforcement is essential for behavioral contagion, as it allows observers to witness the outcomes of certain actions without directly experiencing them. This vicariousness is how the perpetrators in the Chinese school attacks were able to experience the positive and negative reinforcement of committing such a crime, while living in a distant part of the country and having no personal connection to the initial perpetrator or victims of the attacks.

Negative reinforcement and punishment are two concepts that are tightly united with regards to contagion. As an example, an individual with proper motivation can interpret the act of murdering Chinese school children as a way to remove negative components from one's life, such as the degradation, humiliation, worthlessness, or feelings of inferiority. Although both the aforementioned reinforcements can be seen as encouraging criminal behavior (i.e. the acquisition of wealth through criminal means brings both positive reward, and lifts one from unfavorable social situations, such as poverty), the imposition of punishment can

prevent a contagious effect within a reasonable realm of criminal behavior. It is important to note that news coverage of most criminal activity will not result in a contagious effect (Greek, 1997). Generally, this effect is most prevalent in cases dealing with homicide ending in suicide. Punishment, in the psychological sense, deals with an individual's desire to discontinue an action in response to a negative imposition. A punishment can involve either the removal of something positive, or the infliction of something negative in response to deviant behavior. Whether the criminal is punished through means of incarceration, or meets his demise at the hands of law enforcement, the end result is one contradictory to his original goals. The prospect of punishment has an influence on many potential criminals who have no desire to go to prison or be killed. Punishment effectively deters most media viewers from replicating a crime, despite their motivations, and greatly reduces the effect of contagion through media exposure.

Most hijacking seen in the 1960's lacked imminent punishment. The absence of exposure to the punishment likely encouraged other motivated individuals to participate in this sort of behavior, because the media coverage incorrectly portrayed hijacking as a crime with high rates of success. This portrayal was inaccurate; most hijackers were eventually brought to justice, usually years after the crime was committed. This gap between the behavior and the punishment minimized its media coverage, giving the false impression that the perpetrators escaped without consequences. A similar effect was seen following the actions of D.B. Cooper, whose infamous act of extortion seemingly went unpunished. It was reported that Cooper jumped from an airplane using a parachute, and was never found by authorities. Many attempted to replicate Cooper's actions, with varying success (Krajicek, 2010). These cases exemplify the effect that lack of punishment can have on the contagion of deviant acts.

When individuals embark on a mass murdering spree, most have previously decided that they will die. This conclusion can be drawn from the high percentage of rampages that end in the killer's suicide. However, those who decide not to end their own life usually do not fare any better than those who do. Zheng Minsheng, the initial perpetrator in the Chinese school killings, was given a speedy trial and was ultimately executed. Despite it being public knowledge that the effectuation of such a crime would end in one's execution, five more individuals went on to replicate the crime. Two of the perpetrators (Wang and Wu) committed suicide immediately after their crimes were committed. The other three are imprisoned, awaiting execution. While death via execution or at the hands of law enforcement may appear to be an effective punishment, both do very little to prevent crimes of this nature. Essentially, these crimes are going unpunished, as the end goal of death is still being reached, regardless of *how* the perpetrators obtain it. This situation presents a predicament for those wishing to prevent such contagion from taking place. If the threat of death is not enough to stop someone from committing mass murder, what is?

At first, the issue of contagion with regards to violent crime might appear to be dealing with an unfortunate combination of circumstances, which have no remedy. However, responsible journalism resulting from self-regulation can help reduce the effects of contagion. This

is by no means a call for government censorship, as such impositions go against the freedom of the press, and could lead to degradation on other aspects of journalism. Self-regulator guidelines are already in place for journalists when dealing with the issue of suicide. Personal correspondence with a reporter from Austin, Texas revealed many reporters intentionally do not cover suicides, as bringing attention to the subject “could encourage others to do the same” (Anonymous, personal communication, October 19, 2010). Other reporters from television and print media expressed similar concerns, also opting not to cover suicides. None of the reporters interviewed worked for companies that had formal policies censoring such topics (personal communication, October 2010). If media figures are willing to self-censor their coverage of suicide, the idea of self-regulating their coverage of a mass murder seems reasonable.

In order to efficiently weaken the effects of contagion for crimes of this nature, journalists should, first, make a strong effort to eliminate picture or video depictions of those traumatized by the crime. As mentioned, images of crying victims could positively reinforce a viewer’s decision to replicate the crime. Selectively choosing what images of the crime scene to show in the news report, as well as who is interviewed to discuss their involvement with the crime, will help remove some of the appealing emotional responses motivated individuals might be craving. Additionally, no depictions of dead bodies, body bags, blood, or even fire should be shown in a news report, as they too might be appealing images for a motivated individual. With regards to reducing cognition via positive reinforcement, the most important self-regulation should be the refusal of news outlets to publish the ‘manifesto’ of the criminal. Following the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre, NBC News infamously chose to broadcast the final videos and pictures taken by Seung-hui Cho prior to his committing the massacre (“High School Classmates,” 2007). Publishing these documents creates sensational journalism and eye-catching headlines, but also sets a dangerous precedent: that mainstream news sources will present your personal frustrations to the world, if you cause enough mayhem.

To best proactively combat the effects of contagion, it is recommended that the names and faces of the victims be broadcast as soon as possible. By giving the victim a name and a face, the media is creating more than just a crime statistic: they are portraying a person. This could force potential killers to acknowledge that those hurt were real people, and not just images projected on a screen. While this responsibility is already fulfilled by most journalist outlets, the release of the personal information of the victims can sometimes take days, and is often treated as a secondary issue in comparison to deciphering the motivation and background of the killer. The information should be obtained and released as soon as possible, before potential perpetrators can decide whether or not to imitate the act.

These suggestions, while not foolproof, could assist in preventing the contagion of violent acts such as mass murder. Many journalists will object to these guidelines, as journalism is undoubtedly a business where success hinges on the ability to attract viewers. However, the intention of this paper is not to discuss the economic effects of self-regulation on the journalism industry. It is to showcase the potency and importance of this contagious effect

to the average person. Countless innocent people have been killed by mass murderers, and many of these killers found their inspiration in the stories of others. While it is essential that these stories are told, responsible journalists must carefully present them to discourage the replication of such behavior. Anyone can be a victim, as many of these killers intentionally target individuals at random. As media outlets become more and more expansive through the use of the internet, the contagion effect will become more and more potent. Therefore, it is important that the media understands the contagion process as completely as possible, so that as journalism ventures into the future, it can properly account for repercussions. To best understand the concept of contagion and how it pertains to criminal behavior, more research is required in the fields of clinical psychology, mental illness awareness, broadcasting, mass communications, and cultural awareness. While media exposure may not create criminals, it can provoke them into acting upon the worst impulses of their nature.

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A Poet's Stutter: A Critical Analysis of Gertrude Stein's Rose

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Given language's significance within politics as well as representation of that politics, the meaning that we attach to words and the importance we give that meaning are fundamental to our every day encounters with each other and the rest of the world. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the methods of the poet Gertrude Stein in her attempt to displace and destabilize meaning as it is commonly understood. In order for us to get a more nuanced understanding of Stein's form of criticism, we will also analyze her work through the lens of three authors: Bertolt Brecht, Jacques Derrida, and Hélène Cixous. These authors will help describe how language is used to create

an image of the world and how said image is simply a web drawn by society throughout history for the purposes of communication and explanation, and not, as this essay will argue, for the purposes of discovering the true essence of reality. The specific text of Stein that I will analyze is a line found in *An Elucidation*, “Suppose, to suppose, suppose a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.” Consequently, I will articulate what her methodology reveals about the structure of our language and how the meaning of that structure can never be truly homogenized at any one time. That is, language and the meanings therein can never have a singular, entirely stable interpretation and therefore no one person or group can fully control meaning.

Gertrude Stein is often misunderstood and misquoted, putting her among the many outcasts that are the subject of Brecht’s work, while at the same time making her familiar with the depth and rigor of Cixous and Derrida. Her poems, to the casual reader, are presented as jumbles of words producing nothing but incoherence and vague references. The line that is the subject of this paper seems more like the repeated utterances of a baby who just discovered a new word without the grammatical tools necessary for communicating its meaning. It will be the task of this paper to prove that this quote is more significant than such juvenile babbling. This essay will discuss Stein’s famous line and, using the criteria proposed by Brecht, Cixous, and Derrida, demonstrate that her work conveys a sophisticated understanding of the inner working of language and how her methodology provides a unique criticism of the words we use within the context of society and politics.

Before giving a more nuanced understanding of her poem, let us first analyze the sentence to give a robust understanding of its meaning. Stein was never one for nouns. She viewed them as giving a very confined view of naming. Traditional poetry, according to Stein, started this fascination with naming because “its mission was to ‘to know how to name earth sea and sky and all that.’”¹ However, by the turn of the century these names had been given such fixity that Stein professes that it became impossible “to feel anything and everything that for [her] was existing so intensely.”² The motivation for her work is embodied in this dilemma. For her, language has become too narrow and too refined such that poetry has lost its original purpose. Where poetry used to give identity to the thing it names, it now only analogizes off of existing identity, i.e. the metaphor. It has lost its creative urge.

This creative urge is fully represented in the subject of this paper, the rose that she gives a name. The beauty of Stein’s writing comes in her use of rose in a tautological manner. The nature of a tautology is that it is always true but never produces content; it is no more than saying that word once more. In repeating the identity ‘rose,’ the content is left to be filled by the reader, but only in its unconscious form. This unconscious form occurs when the reader attempts to conjure an image of a rose, absent of descriptors. As such, the rose that Stein describes is desired fully by the reader for there is no real rose presented in the text itself. Further, Stein bolsters this process by not allowing the reader to treat her utterance of rose as the same as other authors’ attempt at describing the rose.

The alienating aspect of Stein's writing forces the reader to realize they are reading something different from another author simply saying, "she saw the rose in the garden." The reader, then, is not only left to engage with the content of the rose itself but also the need to produce the rose absent any qualifications which would let one fully encapsulate its image. More specifically, the repetition of the 'rose' indicates that the "signifier falls into the signified."³ The signifier is the symbol used in representation, for instance the word 'apple' and the image of 'apple.' The signified is the supposed thing represented; the actual apple you eat. When the words are phrased tautologically "the two terms in [the] tautology are not at the same level: the first occurrence of the term is a signifier, and the second as a signifier within the signified."⁴ When the same term is repeated, this repetition demonstrates a quality of the rose that is beyond words. The paradox of using language to demonstrate a non-symbolic property of our encounter implies a point when "language reaches 'beyond itself,' to the reality of objects and the processes in the world" that are themselves transcendent, lacking in a clear denotative referent.⁵

This is why, when asked about this line in an interview for a Yale newspaper, Stein exclaimed that "this is the first time a rose has really been red in English literature in the last hundred years." Aside from the pun that Stein produces in her answer, she conveys that the redness does not come from attribution, but from the reader who must actually create its redness and thus it's 'rose-ness.' Thus, the audience of the poem must engage to actually enjoy its genius, a genius which is produced by the audience itself. In this regard, Stein provides the audience with the critical knowledge to investigate their desires as truly their own, not the desire presented by a particular ideology (that is, something that composes the rose for them which they are then told to consume). At the same time, Stein leads the audience to affirm the absence of the rose which is not a 'rose' in her attempt to play with it as a concept. Stein's rose, then, can be the only 'rose' in written language that provides a link to its referent; a written rose that has a content.

Now that we have a general conception of what processes are at work in Stein's writing we can now move to our more nuanced interpretation of her method. For clarity the rest of the essay will be broken into three parts. The first will describe how Cixous' call for feminine writing is a rearticulation of Brecht's call for Popular writing and how both attempt to create methods by which the disempowered are able to reject dominating ideology in favor of a free identity. The second will explain how Derrida's critique of inherent, and therefore metaphysical, meaning produces a new level of Brechtian realism. By demonstrating that both meaning and the ability to control meaning is not stable, Derrida argues that language is instead in play. Following each section we will then use standards derived from these critics to analyze Stein's work and demonstrate how her poem and methodology provide a unique understanding of how the hold of ideology within language can be uprooted.

First, before understanding how Cixous rearticulates 'popular writing' we must first understand what popular means according to Brecht. Brecht's "The Popular and the Real-

istic” presents a guide to constructing art such that it can be understood and enable those that understand it to take a critical stance within the work itself. Particularly, he develops a method that requires a constant criticism of the way reality itself is depicted through works of art and literature insofar as the way one understands reality will shape the way people can work with and change this supposed existence. Language, then, is of the utmost importance to Brecht insofar as reality and “its meaning” can only be represented through some notion of meaning, specifically how it is that we come about this reality in the first place.

When discussing how this excerpt demonstrates elements of Brecht’s notion of “popularity” and “realism,” it is first necessary to describe what exactly he means by the terms “Popular” and “Realistic.” While many artists in the past have attempted to be men speaking to men, what has been produced are instead aspects of particularity. Past artists have used rhetoric unknown to these men they seem to be speaking to, talking about things not relevant to these “common men.” For instance, it is difficult for a disenfranchised member of the working class to feel the warmth of basking in the sun the way the Romantics described it. And similarly it is difficult to access a work which references particular lines of texts from hundreds of years past when you are reading at night so as to stop from thinking about your eighteen hour work day. As such, Brecht believes it is necessary when writing to talk to the people and even more necessary “to speak their language.”⁶

This however does not mean “dumbing-down” art. Quite the contrary, if one is not speaking the people’s language one is not “[giving] them truthful representations of life; and truthful representations of life are in fact only of use to the broad working masses, the people; so that they have to be suggestive and intelligible to them.”⁷ The purpose of such writing must be to no longer make the “the people proper” the object of politics, but instead it must “now...become its subject.”⁸ Thus, “Popular” according to Brecht is used to indicate a style of writing that works as understandable as well as provides the perspective of the masses “in such a way that it can take over the leadership.”⁹

It is here that Cixous becomes most relevant. Similar to Brecht, Cixous’ “The Laugh of Medusa” describes the status quo in literature as dominated by a phallic-centered ideology, within which feminine writing is more of a fringe than an opposition to the contemporary power structure within the literary canon. In response to this diagnosis, she articulates the properties of feminine writing and its opposition to phallogocentric writing.

For Cixous, feminine writing demands that women write themselves, that they provide their own unique and individual experience, and that they seize the occasion to speak. In her writings, ‘phallogocentric’ refers to both the phallus in Freudian terms, that of the male appendage, and the phallus in Lacanian terms, the phallus which projects stable meaning within symbols or language. Or in other words, that which makes language more like a predetermined game than a free-playing system. To understand this Lacanian interpretation one could think of a phallic object like a stake in the ground being projected outward. Anything that passes by the object cannot go through it, rather it must be worked around. Thus “the phallus” can

be understood as the thing which grounds meaning and requires that interpretations of this meaning function around this node.

First, Cixous is concerned with women writing themselves as a way to “return to the body which is more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into an uncanny stranger on display.”¹⁰ When she says “the body,” she does not necessarily mean the physical, tangible body. She also implies the body which is not physically represented, namely “women’s imaginary,” a reference to Lacan’s field of the Imaginary which is produced by the Lack or the sense of absence that is the basis of unconscious desire.¹¹ The Imaginary can be understood in this way through an example of the self as it has been understood and debated in philosophy for centuries: In my attempt to produce meaning I am always met with the problem of grounding that meaning because, while there are words and objects I can recognize, there is always a detachment from these words and the things they refer to. Two things are presupposed here: 1.) meaning can be grounded by the word or object and 2.) that one is able to fully perceive this grounding. Both of those presuppositions also assume a ‘self’ which exists independent of these objects which can take a step back from its relationship with them so as to produce meaning outside of the self. To make up for the distance that must be presupposed we imagine the self as having a physical representative, whether it be the body or the brain, such that we can reproduce this literal distance. For Cixous, then, when she says ‘women’s imaginary’ she is talking about a feminized self that exists whether or not the feminized body is attached to it. As such, Cixous, in describing the methods of writing oneself, is more concerned with the writer destabilizing and defamiliarizing the notions of self that have been propagated for the benefit of male, phallic writing.

This necessity of women writing for women and writing themselves is so because, “until now, far more than extensively and repressively than ever is suspected or admitted, writing has been run by libidinal and cultural—hence political, typically masculine—economy.”¹² Cixous thus reveals her Brechtian elements by pointing to the absence of representation of women in writing and literature, and the necessity of liberation that is, as Brecht would say, free from aesthetic restrictions. Remember, Brecht in his reference to the “people,” intends to not objectify or statically define said people, but rather he intends to make them the subject of writing and literature. Making the people the subject of literature necessitates, then, that the oppressed masses not necessarily be a stable set of individuals, only that they fall under the category of the oppressed or the misrepresented.

For Cixous, there could not be a more underrepresented set of people than women in literature. She writes that:

where woman has never *her* turn to speak—this being all the more serious and unpardonable in that writing is precisely the *very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures.¹³

This is Brechtian at its purest. By realizing the effect of language on populations while at the same time recognizing the possibility of actual change within it, Cixous narrows and defines what is most central to the identity of the people, that they be able to define themselves. In response she calls for a “*new insurgent* writing which...will allow [woman] to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history.”¹⁴

This need to self-define and self-endorse is why Cixous is quick to point out that the methods by which women write for women are not entirely definite. Rather she sees such methods as simply in opposition to the phallogocentric model requiring that such a method not be “theorized, enclosed, coded.”¹⁵ For Cixous, “it is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain.”¹⁶ The reason she italicizes ‘define’ is due to the notion of a definition itself being a product of phallic logic, as referenced earlier in the discussion of Lacan, as it is the need to produce stable and therefore powerful means of identity which in their rigidity necessitate the exclusion of those who are not involved in the determination of language’s limits. Insofar as language is the way in which individuals relate to the world and one another, then the limitations and definite character of words is of the most importance.

Similarly, having words and understandings of those words necessitate that they be understood as “this” word and not “that” word and such understanding can only be realized as a result of those words having a stable meaning. Such a stable meaning requires that contrary meanings can be excluded unless the word itself becomes meaningless. In other words, Cixous doesn’t want to project a stable meaning of what feminine writing is. Otherwise, there would be one of two possibilities: First, it would exclude other forms of writing (therefore it would become phallogocentric), or it doesn’t exclude other forms. However, if it doesn’t exclude other forms, then her definition of feminine writing becomes meaningless insofar as everything would qualify as feminine writing. Therefore, Cixous does not want to provide a “definition” of feminine practice because that would take away the agency of feminine persons from deciding on and practicing an understanding of “feminine writing” that is not already made static.

Moreover, given that this form of writing requires a step outside of stable and thus phallic logic, “the impossibility will remain” in defining it, because the particular form of writing Cixous desires is one that is localized within particular bodies and is detached from normal understanding of syntax. It can be concluded, then, that not only would it be unwise to define “feminine writing” but that the difficulty in defining it should constantly reproduce itself: no one should attempt to define it.

Thus, we can conclude our description of Cixous’ feminine writing by stating that it refers to a method of writing by which the writer uniquely attempts to deconstruct the underpinnings of language by displaying its lack of true necessity and stability. For the purpose of this paper, then, we can reinterpret Brecht’s model of “Popular” writing as being the category under which Cixous provides specific populations a methodology by which the population can reveal and empower themselves.

Due to her position among authors, Stein is fully within Cixous' presentation of feminine writing. Cixous values only "the poets—not the novelists, allies of representationalism."¹⁷ Moreover, Stein could be one of very few poets who could simply be identified as 'poet' insofar as she does not fall in line with the categories specified by her contemporaries. She is not like Eliot in her rejection of normal syntax and canonical references. She is not Dada insofar as her poems and this work specifically are not just the random placement of symbols and signs intended to report the vagueness of language. And she is not like the Surrealists since her pursuit is not to destroy capitalism by way of simply defamiliarizing the sign, but rather she intends to simply present the signifier as having lost its signified.

Stein is more than the identity 'poet,' she also exhibits the reason Cixous finds poetry particularly feminine. For Cixous "poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive."¹⁸ Given that Stein's poetry requires an even greater unconscious element than most, she represents a unique strain of feminine writing. Her text specified above is written in order to be awkwardly read insofar as it does not use common forms of syntax in saying, for instance, "suppose, to suppose, suppose." The repetition and lack of normally coherent structure requires that the reader is alienated from their preconceived understanding of language or the Symbolic.

As referenced earlier, the work seems almost foreign to most readers given their quick attempt to dismiss it as child's speak. As such, Stein reveals that the unconscious aspect of her writing is a comment on the forms of understanding that are not produced solely by language, that is, forms which are not entirely shared by the community. This is what is truly Cixousian about Stein. Instead of simply producing an explanatory text that describes why when we suppose, we suppose thrice, she produces it within poetry leaving the syntax in its unconscious form. Such forms of writing are, according to Cixous, "the strength of women that, sweeping away syntax, breaking the famous thread ... which acts for men as a surrogate umbilical cord."¹⁹ In writing in such an alienating way, Stein has taken apart the structures which Cixous views as being the thread by which men have held to writing, and specifically what has been the fortress of phallic and 'logical' writing.

Lastly for Cixous, Stein's poem displays her attempt to oppose the "authority of a signified."²⁰ Her reference to the rose, which is then repeated, never goes beyond the identity 'rose,' there is never an attempt to describe this rose or explain its features. Instead, all that is presented is the word itself, the signifier, while at the same time using the word to mock the notion of a signified. When one reads "is" in the form of an identity, one suspects a quality or feature or a different identity, "Bob is a man; the cow is an animal." Stein instead mocks the notion of identity or even universal categories by saying that the signifier is just a chain within itself, nothing more. It is not tied to a red rose, a thorny rose, or even a big rose, for those would differ entirely. The addition of the adjective would take this rose, the essential, real rose, that is the signifier 'rose' to be a particular and thus signified rose.

As such, Stein heeds Cixous' warning by not reducing her "generative powers."²¹ She recognizes that "common nouns are also proper nouns that disparage [her] singularity by classifying it into a species" by rejecting the notion of species in the first place.²² Thus, Stein's syntax and pursuit represent true feminine writing, and thus true Popular writing, by displaying her uniqueness while at the same time rejecting the tool of oppression that is the phallus.

Second, for Brecht, the depiction of reality necessary to empower the masses must be "broad and political, free from aesthetic restrictions and independent of convention."²³ Such a method must display the causal scheme of society for what it is, so as to bring to bear the underlying tensions which produce the struggle that the masses are so familiar with. Thus, one must remain critical of depictions of reality, for what is produced out of criticism is simply a new mask for "new problems loom up and demand new techniques."²⁴ "Oppressors do not always appear in the same mask" and "the masks cannot always be stripped off in the same way;"²⁵ thus, not only must art present new realities through critique, but it must also demand the same from the audience—those who possess and engage with the criticism.

Derrida's notion of deconstruction and freeplay within the sign is exactly the type of criticism which questions how reality itself is defined, for it questions the stability of definition itself. Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences" provides a criticism of Structuralism in its attempt to find inherent meaning within language as a way to explain the existence of differences, cultural and social, throughout the world. However, his work goes beyond a simple criticism of his contemporaries by criticizing the notion of inherent meaning as presented in all uses of language as well as the attempts to negate meaning all together.

Ironically, central to Derrida's philosophy is the notion of the center. The center, according to Derrida, is "by definition unique, constitute[s] that very thing within a structure which governs the structure, while escaping structurality."²⁶ A good example of this described by Derrida in another work, is the notion of freedom as it pertains to justice and the law. While freedom is necessary for justice, making it the center of the structure that is justice, acting on that freedom, i.e. making an ethic out of justice, requires negating that freedom entirely. If 'act freely' is a tenet of justice, and in attempting to be just one attempts to act freely, one is no longer free insofar as this freedom requires applying the rule 'be free,' making the individual more a laborer for justice than an individual free from any constraint. As such, he posits that "the center also closes off the freeplay it opens up and makes possible."²⁷ In the example then, the attempt to ground justice in freedom, by making justice represented by freedom, justice forces itself into a paradox and thus a limitation. The only way then that one could solve this paradox is to have less stable and definite understandings of justice and freedom.

Moreover, Derrida claims that essential to understanding our relationship to the center is the notion of presence. Presence, according to Derrida, refers to things which are claimed to be manifest. Specifically, he refers to notions of metaphysics, the attempt to describe what it means to exist and therefore what is present, and the terms "essence, existence, substance,

subject” used therein.²⁸ For example, simple statements like “I am a male” introduce a metaphysical claim. First, I posit that there is an ‘I,’ a subject which can be separated from others because they are different subjects. Second, when I say ‘am’ I invoke a present form of this ‘I’ that demarcates it from past or future forms or even from non-temporal forms. Simple claims of identity and the use of verbs presuppose an identity to space and time and thus are metaphysical claims.

Even more essential to this understanding is what happens when one attempts to criticize the notions of presence. “The paradox” according to Derrida, “is that the metaphysical reduction of the sign needed the opposition it was reducing.”²⁹ For example, if I were to say that there is no truth, I would be attempting to make a true claim about the lack of truth. Very similar is the paradox of a sentence like ‘this sentence is false.’ The criticism of the structure therefore needs the structure that it is criticizing which means it does not truly negate that structure. My ability to respond and talk about something requires that I at least linguistically posit the existence of that thing. Thus I cannot fully rid myself of that thing because my criticism requires it already exists for me to criticize. The problem, then, is that there is a limit to any criticism insofar as it must use an understood means to produce the critique. One must use words and commonly understood identities to convey any thought to another person and with those uses comes certain assumptions that are carried along with every word that is spoken or written, namely the assumption that the words are not deceptions and that they have meaning.

As such, Derrida uses this understanding of reality to posit the most valuable methods of freplay, that is, how it is that writers will use the lack of pure negation of presence and the lack of actual presence to construct new realities and criticisms. He introduces his preferred method by first analyzing an opposition that occurs as a result of the lack of true presence. Since presence is always accompanied by a lack of presence, he posits that language is not the play between signifiers and signifieds, but the signifier and other signifiers. The lack of signifieds can be explained this way: imagine you don’t know what an apple is. You could figure it by looking in the dictionary, but when you look in the dictionary you will discover that what is attached to the definition of ‘apple’ are more words that also require definitions and meanings. Even if you already knew the meaning of these descriptor words, it is only because you had gone through a similar process of discovery before. The same goes for images of the apple and the apple you eat. The things you associate with the apple are translatable, meaning that what one associates with the apple are simply more things that are described by words. Thus, eating the apple is just like a sensible dictionary, you learn in eating it and touching it what translatable qualities it has.

For Derrida, there are two ways of “erasing the difference between the signifier and the signified: one...consists in reducing or deriving the signifier...the other... consists in putting into question the system in which the preceding reduction functioned: first and foremost, the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible.”³⁰ As such, the attempt to explain

the lack of signified objects should not be the search for them, but rather it should be an exploration of why one searches for it in the first place. For Derrida this requires “the affirmation of a world of signs, without fault, without truth, without origin, offered to an active interpretation.”³¹ Therefore, a new realism necessary to present critical engagement between the work and the audience requires that the writer present the lack of signifieds, and thus question presence, in a way that affirms its absence, that is, in a way that plays with this lack in order to display it to the audience. This is the truly, Brechtian element of Derrida. Insofar as his notion of presence necessitates its own absence, an affirmative engagement with it is the only process that can reveal the nature of language itself. This is not done in simply rejecting the symbol or capacity to understand the world, one must use this rejection in a way that it does not look past the effects of this understanding. Thus, we can conclude the section describing Derrida’s notion of freeplay and presence.

The Derridean element of Stein’s writing is present within the play of the signifier itself. First, Stein’s mention of “suppose, to suppose, suppose” is a knock on metaphysical and epistemological claims to presence because it asserts that even in our attempt to think we think the thought and so on. The thoughts presented to us only lead infinitely back into a chain of terms which has no real origin or center. The reader should be happy that Stein did not take this point to its absurdity by repeating ‘suppose, to suppose’ for the length of a novel. However, this criticism of supposition does not reject the notion of supposing itself and as such does not display the “negative, nostalgic, and guilty” freeplay which Derrida rejects given that Stein does not simply declare its absence of origin.³² Rather, Stein simply attempts to signify what is thought at the sight of an object because the individual at the same time thinks, thinks that it is thinking, and thinks a thought or, more specifically, recognizes content within that thought. While the signifier ‘suppose’ assumes a singular relationship to the thinker, it is often unrecognized that there is a process contained in it which is revealed by the repetition of the term. For instance, the act of supposing only happens retrospectively. When one supposes, the thought itself happens at the same moment of its declaration because that is how the thought is expressed to us. However, this thought is without insight into the cause of the thought, the real supposition, itself because the only analyzable process we are given is the declared thought which is the conclusion of the supposition. Only when the moment of initial declaration passes can we actively assume the possibility of a cause. The content, then, in supposing can only be recognized once the moment of supposition is lost. Thus, Stein in her reference to supposing displays the absence of center or origin within the act of supposing and therefore requires the reader to confront their own epistemic understanding of reality.

Moreover, this cognitive disconnect, then, frames the next half of the author’s sentence. Stein’s depiction of the rose that is repeatedly uttered points to the absurdity of the stable signified. When Stein says “that a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose” she is asserting the signifier ‘rose’ and referring it back to itself so as to point out the lack produced by the word that attempts to enclose its meaning. Stein’s uniqueness on this front is highlighted because she

is so often misunderstood by academics, media personalities, and politicians, when they say, for instance, “a table is a table is a table.” Her poem does not have such a simple message as ‘this word is the universal symbol for all the particular instances of it.’ Instead of providing all the characteristics of a rose or pin-pointing the particular red she sees when confronted with a rose, she reveals the signifier for what it is, empty. It is because of the repetition of the signifier that one experiences the rose itself, one comes to find that the rose which is the signified rose, escapes signification.

At the heart of the notion of presence is the inability for one to entirely escape it. As explained earlier, the criticism of presence often finds itself reasserting presence in a new form, which is why Derrida claims that presence should not and cannot be purely negated but only played with. Stein’s description of the rose as simply being a rose displays this quality at an optimal level. As opposed to describing the rose by pointing to particulars and then explaining why the word and the thing are not the same, she instead forces the reader to beg the sensibility of the rose when only presented with its intelligible aspects. In reading that “a rose is a rose” you probably conjured the image of the rose itself, trying to picture it perfectly as to figure out what she is trying to depict for you.

Moreover, although misinterpretations are wrong to say that Stein is simply pointing out how we use Universal terms like ‘rose’ to categorize Particular terms like ‘the red rose,’ they do provide an insight into the political implications of Stein’s writing. By not confining herself to attribution or particulars and instead requiring that individuals create the rose in their repetition of it, she presents the reader with the ability to engage with the Universal itself. The problem with Universal categories is that there are, for instance, no roses which are simply ‘rose.’ There are roses which have different petals, different thorns, different shades of red and so on.

For instance, “no leaf ever wholly equals another, and the concept “leaf” is formed through an arbitrary abstraction from these individual differences, through forgetting the distinctions.”³³ The categories that we create attempt to take parts of different items we find and label those parts as essential to those items. From these essential parts we determine what the ideal, say, leaf looks like. But we will never find this leaf because, what we have in nature are different leaves that “have been woven, marked, copied, colored, curled, and painted... so that no copy turned out to be a correct, reliable, and faithful image of the original form.”³⁴ However, what is overlooked is that this original form was only an abstraction from what is actually present; it is, at most, a symbol and not real. Instead of having universal categories of ‘leaf’ for all ‘leaves’ to fall under, there could theoretically be literally millions of different names we assign to each of the leaves that we encounter. The universal, these abstractions or symbols, cannot be found among the objects one engages with, for nature has given simply “an X which remains inaccessible and undefinable for us.”³⁵ What is essential, then, cannot be totally understood by looking for the parts of the object that are shared by all others ‘like it’ because they are, at the most, arbitrary reductions from a non-existing concept.

But this is not just the case with trivial objects like roses or leaves, but with anything that can be described. It has to do with concepts and our conceptual account of what exists. By requiring that the reader read themselves within the work, in that they encounter the element of language that is fully beyond words or description, Stein demonstrates a truly universal understanding of reality; she shows the universal element within language that always fades when one attempts to cite any particular element.

We only confront the universal, then, in the absence of any content to further describe the object we are dealing with because it is this unattainable quality that escapes our signification and in doing so is carried within every signifying relationship. The encounter with the object can only be recognized in the desire to reproduce that object; the rose is a rose in that it is not the textual 'rose' by that it is desired in its production. This is Stein at her Brechtian best. The audience must find themselves experiencing the universal in order to understand the work and, as such, take themselves out of a view of reality that fixes the meaning of the object. By realizing that the content of signification is filled by the observer and not by an inherent, eternal, and stable meaning, Stein demonstrates that notions of conflict, whether political or academic, are grounded on particularity. In being so grounded such conflicts only demonstrate part of the picture insofar as they must be understood and thus represented. What we mean by a term is not something inherent to that term, it is rather something determined by the meaning given to that term. Likewise, the meaning of any event, circumstance, or knowledge is also something given. Only when the audience fully engages with the unspeakable and ineffable can Universality be seen within any presentation of truth or meaning.

In conclusion, Gertrude Stein's line, although simple in its construction, conveys the Brechtian political message without it itself being specifically political. By displaying the lack of stability within language, she demonstrates that the limitations of words are only so because of our particular stance or perspective on them. Instead of simply leaving the reader with jumbles of incoherent phrases, Stein's work sees this gap between the word and its referent as an opportunity for the reader to fully engage with the meaning of both the word and its supposed content by taking them out of the limitations of language itself and instead make them critically produce the content of the language they are confronted with. Thus, not only does Stein reveal the unconscious motivations that go into interpretation, she also reveals that even our notion of reality itself is clouded by all that exists outside of these unconscious motivations and that only when one is forced to collapse the word and its content in on itself does any feeling of reality appear.

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