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The Old and the New

The Relationship Between Intertextuality and Originality in Writing

DANIELLA CONLEY

Deftly negotiating the abstract and applied, Daniella Conley's essay achieves what we all strive for in our teaching and our research. In its cogent application of theory to practice, the essay takes up some disparate and complex ideas about intertextuality, audience, and originality articulated by writers and theorists as well known as Charles Bazerman, Walter Ong, and Mark Twain. It is through this social constructionist lens that Daniella considers what it means to be "original," and it is in the nebulous and troublesome concept we know as "style," she argues, that we can find more than the moving yet contiguous parts that make up Twain's kaleidoscope of "new and curious combinations." Even in a context inseparable from those who have already written and those who have yet to read, and as much as the written utterance may be shaped by both, it remains equally true that poets are born as well as made - style may indeed make the writer but, Daniella reminds us, there is no denying that the writer also makes style.

—Dr. Lyn Bennett

"There is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope. We give them a turn and they make new and curious combinations. We keep on turning and making new combinations indefinitely; but they are the same old pieces of colored glass that have been in use through all the ages."

(Mark Twain)

The mere thought that no idea could be considered original is rather jarring. Terrifying, in fact. Mark Twain argues that this lack of originality is true in the depth of an idea, and that while the “same old pieces” are being used differently, these new patterns and constructions do not mean the idea is new. Twain’s argument falls in line with the idea of intertextuality, explained by Charles Bazerman as “the relation each text has to the texts surrounding it” (84) and captured aptly by James E. Porter when he writes that “all texts are interdependent” (34). Whether by conscious choice or not, texts often refer to, rely on, borrow from, and engage with other texts to advance reader understanding, as well as to simply provide further meaning to the present text. Intertextuality captures the concept of a writer building on and weaving together ideas that have been used, washed, and thrifted before they can be incorporated into his or her own writings in a unique, if not original, manner. Twain may be correct in saying that it is impossible to have an idea completely free of influence; no writer can argue that he or she has not been influenced by what each has seen, heard, and read, even if the writer does not intend to use this influence in his or her writing. No matter the intentions, however, intertextuality is inescapable and provides an opportunity within written discourse to rethink and extemporize on ideas already fulfilled.

Twain certainly illuminates the notion that intertextuality is ubiquitous in writing. However, does intertextuality necessarily mean that writing cannot be considered original, fresh, or new? Despite intertextuality’s

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perpetual presence, originality is still within the writer's ability. Originality exists in a writer's style, perspective of his or her audience, and presentation of the work through chosen structure and organization. Style, audience, and structure all require that crucial decisions be made by the individual writer during the writing process, allowing a writer's compositional and rhetorical choices to lend themselves to the creation of an authentic work. Textual interdependence and intertextuality each bring into question the degree to which a written work or idea can be considered original, and we must therefore also consider the writer's choices and impressions that contribute to the work beyond the basic and underlying concept.

Perhaps the most important contributor to originality and authenticity in a writer's work is his or her unique style. Style in writing is about choice. Each writer chooses the ideas they explore, the devices they use, and the manner in which they engage their readers. Style can be found in features as simple as punctuation, diction, and phrasing. However, style also shapes the organization, voice, and tone of a written work. These elements of writing, so often overlooked, are crucial to the creation and construction of good writing. This fact is further exposed by Bazerman, who admits, "Almost every word and phrase we use we have heard or seen before. Our originality and craft as writers come from how we put those words together in new ways to fit our specific situation, needs, and purposes" (83). Without even conscious consideration, every person infuses his or her

personal style into his or her own written work, be it a considerable academic essay or a modest e-mail.

It is interesting to consider that this personal style is constantly shifting and developing along with the writer. Jane R. Walpole states that “twelve persons can write on the same subject to the same audience for the same purpose and come up with twelve highly varying styles” (207). While I certainly agree with her, I argue even further that one person in different points at his or her own life can write on the same subject to the same audience for the same purpose and find that his or her personal style varies as time and perspective changes, enough to display a thread of originality within each new iteration. Evidently a writer develops over time with education and experience, so this should come as no surprise. It is significant, however, to note the subtle changes and developments that occur in the writer’s craft and style between each piece of writing. These nuances allow every individual work to be unique and original.

Let’s develop this idea even further. Since style differs from person to person - or even in one person over time - these personal differences and writing choices imply original thought, an original idea, or, at minimum, an original interpretation of an idea. Walpole further identifies the significance of authentic style in writing by saying that “style in the composition class is the difference between a B paper and an A.... Style, then, encompasses all the alternative choices that make this discussion of X different from that discussion of X” (205-206). Writers may be restricted at times in terms of structure and audience

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depending on what they are writing - as stated previously, style will change between a formal essay and an impersonal e-mail. But a writer's style can still flourish despite fixed form, fixed audience, or fixed intentions. The unavoidable presence of style grants that originality too is not just possible, but almost unavoidable.

This ever-present style is also applicable to the idea of the writer's audience, though again it is not always considered in the writer's conscious thought process. Audience exists - and the writer knows audience exists - but he or she doesn't always write with the audience in mind; it is a given that the written work is intended to be read. The position of the audience to the writer is perhaps best explained by Walter Ong, who states, "For the speaker, the audience is in front of him. For the writer, the audience is simply further away, in time or space or both" (10). Whether the audience is in the forefront of a writer's mind or not, he or she is always aware of the importance of reader understanding. The idea of *who* a writer is writing for contributes to originality; an essay on any given topic being read by three different audiences would require different idea threads, styles, and presentations. While it may be argued that a writer can create *without* an audience specifically in mind, I argue that the audience is always present, even if the audience is only the writer him- or herself.

The significance of audience in terms of originality should not be overlooked. In written discourse, the conversation is driven by the writer and often intended for a specific audience. As Barry M. Kroll states, "...we can

find broad agreement that the writer's consideration of his (or her) audience exerts an important influence on written communication" (172). If a writer aims to construct a written work for a certain audience, his or her ideas, diction, and structure may require modification - slight or significant - which thereby allows the writer to explore his or her ideas even further.

To refer to Twain once more, does audience allow for simply "new and curious combinations" of old ideas or can different audiences allow for fresh ideas? Delving further into how intertextuality manifests in writing, James E. Porter explains that "examining texts 'intertextually' means looking for 'traces,' the bits and pieces of Text which writers or speakers borrow and sew together to create new discourse" (34). Taking these "bits and pieces" and using them in an innovative, original manner requires consideration of the audience. Will the audience understand the allusion, parody, or parallelism? Will the intertextual influence be obvious to the audience? Is it important that the intertextuality is even considered by the audience? The writer selects what to include and how they wish to fashion each written work according to his or her style. Just as important is his or her consideration of audience and how the writer constructs his or her ideas in an original fashion to please the reader.

Each audience may differ in levels of understanding of the writer's ideas. This is where structure, organization, and flow prove significant to originality. In a discussion of interaction between writer and reader, Geoff Thompson states, "One area directly affected by audience awareness

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is the way in which the text is organized and the organization is signaled" (58). There is a specific balance required to entertain readers with the organization of a written work: no reader wants to endure a work that seems thrown together haphazardly, but a reader also doesn't want to be spoon-fed structure. This balance of structure, however, is never set. Depending on the type of written work, the topic, the audience, the writer, and numerous other factors, the structure and organization required to create an understandable and cohesive piece differs in each instance. For this reason, each writer's unique style determines the quality and degree of originality presented in the written work.

Originality within structural composition also derives from the flow of writing, which determines whether the piece reads as fluid or stilted. Of course, no writer aims for a stilted flow. Kathleen Fahy writes that "a good paper will demonstrate the elements of unity, coherence and development" (116). Unity and coherence can be prepared and outlined in an early drafting stage, while development emerges most often during the writing process. Stiff, wooden language can be avoided by plotting a structure and employing component organization, but the opposing concept of natural flow should not be ignored. For example, have you ever practiced forced writing? You make yourself sit down for an indefinite amount of time and you simply write as much as you can. True, the writing may not be elegant or polished, but you may notice that your thoughts and ideas on your chosen topic will develop, evolve, and perhaps wholly change as you

continue in the practice. Not only do your ideas flow naturally, but they can flourish in unstructured writing. I often find that the gradual development of my ideas during the writing process allows for greater originality and authenticity in my exploration of the topic. Writing in order to present the flow of ideas in a conversational, fluid, and progressive manner provides further opportunity for the writer to advance his or her own thoughts and tender an authentic perspective to the audience.

So does the originality offered by structure, audience, and style outweigh the idea that no thought is original, either because of intertextuality or influence? While intertextuality and influence are unavoidable, they cannot claim all the credit of significance in written discourse. The order and flow of an essay, for example, can provide the natural development of thought in a writer. Furthermore, every different structure when read by the audience has the potential to inspire original thought in the reader, particularly if the information order is shifted. Reader thought generates originality in much the same way as writer thought when considering the reader, creating originality through a fictional audience. Writing for a particular audience allows a writer to adapt and build his or her argument to satisfy said audience. New ideas, however, sprout from more than simply structure and audience; the stylistic choices made by the individual writer within the writing process are critical in creating something innovative, fresh, and unique. No two styles are the same, and so every style produces original work, thoughts, and ideas.

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Now perhaps Twain's thoughts on originality are less jarring, less terrifying. Writers can write and readers can read knowing that everything from miniscule detail to significant decisions contribute to the written word's consistent originality. While it is true that ideas are shared, borrowed, and repurposed over and over again, this process of recycling is now standard due to the acceptance of interdependence in text. And as this recycling process is inevitable and infinite, so too is the production of original material. So I say: yes, Mr. Twain, there is such a thing as a new idea.

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EBB and J.S. Mill vs. The Separate Spheres

ALLISON HILL

“Each [sex] has what the other has not,” wrote John Ruskin in his 1865 essay “Of Queen’s Gardens”: each completes the other, and is completed by the other: they are in nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving from the other what the other only can give.” Many Victorians shared this view of men and women’s intrinsic and intractable differences, but as Allison Hill explores in this essay, others vehemently challenged it, including philosopher John Stuart Mill. In his *On the Subjection of Women*, Mill argued that it is impossible to know what is natural for either sex, given the power of education and socialization. Allison’s paper shows that another radical Victorian, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, shared Mill’s view of gender roles as constructions. In her epic verse-novel *Aurora Leigh*, EBB exposes traditional femininity in particular as imposed and artificial, giving us a heroine who resists its constraints and boldly defines her own identity, as both a woman and a poet.

—Dr. Rohan Maitzen

The “Woman Question” as explored in Victorian English writing covers many aspects of gender. One of the dominant ideologies that thinkers and authors had begun to challenge was the notion of separate spheres: that public spaces were “male” and private spaces “female,” and that allowing women to enter male spaces opened them up to moral or spiritual taint. This ideology relies heavily on the perception of a radical difference in temperament, strength and character between the sexes; it was understood that women’s weak natures made them easily corruptible. Thus, challenging femininity and the very basis of these gender differences

undermines the concept of separate spheres as a necessary social policy. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* do just that: both works radically question whether the differences between genders that were understood to be natural are inherent at all. EBB uses her title character, Aurora Leigh, as a narrative tool to test the same limits of gendered behavior and character that Mill questions in his own book. Through Aurora's interactions with both Romney and Marian, we see EBB exploring how femininity is based in interaction with men – an idea that Mill makes explicit in his treatise. These authors present ideas of gender, particularly femininity, as a set of characteristics created and enforced through male-female relationships, not as arising naturally. In both works, gender is a system of opposing traits not natural to either men or women, and traditional femininity is shown to be largely a limiting imposition, undermining the popular separate spheres ideology.

At no point in EBB's verse-novel does Aurora Leigh accept or demonstrate traditional expressions of femininity. As soon as she is "Cut off from the green reconciling earth" of Italy, Aurora expresses displeasure with the constraints she feels being applied to her (I 242). When she arrives in England she wonders, "Was this my father's England? [...] Did Shakespeare and his mates/Absorb the light here?" (I 261). By assigning a male-centered history to her new country, she shows that she understands it in distinctly male terms. In a clear contrast to the freedom encouraged in her homeland, and in a

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description that foreshadows her own impending intellectual limitations, Aurora finds her aunt with “Her somewhat narrow forehead braided tight/As if for taming accidental thoughts/From possible pulses” (I 273). As soon as she arrives, Aurora has already indicated that she will clash with the “cage-bird life” that her English aunt, her only surviving female relative, appears to lead (I 305). Aurora laments that she, “A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage,” aware from the first moment that she is limited in this new environment (I 310). Both her understanding of England in male terms and her aunt’s repressed nature lead Aurora to question what her options will be.

Aurora’s incompatibility with English femininity brings her into conflict with her cousin Romney, and though the basis of their conflict is, on the surface, the nature of poetry, it is often a vehicle for discussions about what constitutes femininity, and thus what is proper behavior for Aurora to engage in. Their first meeting in Book II draws out this point of contention. Romney expresses his gratitude that, in their exchange, he has not seen Aurora play too much at being “Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the rest,/To be a woman also,” presenting explicitly the limitations on Aurora’s gender that she felt upon her arrival to England (II 86). He contends that “Men and women make/The world, as head and heart make human life,” suggesting that intellect is a male quality, while love and tenderness are female traits (II 132). This line of thinking supports the separate spheres ideology that gendered public and private spaces in Victorian England,

and often kept women from pursuing activities like poetry that would put them in the public eye. Aurora responds, though, suggesting that “every creature, female as the male,/Stands single in responsible act and thought” (II 437). She denies both his proposal and his imposed limitations, thus denying his, and society’s, definition of femininity. Here, we see Aurora rejecting traditional notions of gender, which would limit her and define her in opposition to men; as she herself says, Romney “sees a woman as the complement/Of his sex merely” (II 435). Romney becomes the mouthpiece of separate spheres ideology, attempting to domesticate Aurora and remove her from the public spotlight of poetry.

This notion of gender as a set of limitations imposed by men is echoed in J.S. Mill’s *The Subjection of Women*. In a persuasive essay rather than a narrative, Mill makes the implicit arguments in EBB’s work explicit. Just as Aurora’s initial feelings of constraint upon arriving in England and Romney’s arguments suggest, Mill proposes that what we often call women’s nature has in fact been imposed by men, who have “turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose” of turning women into wives (486). Rather, Mill states, as Aurora’s resistance to this “education” suggests, that women have to be “strenuously taught to repress” their intellect, ambition and strength of character (Mill 485). Mill argues that “the opinion in favour of the present system, which entirely subordinates the weaker sex to the stronger, rests upon theory only” (475). There is no significant proof, for Mill, that women deserve the relegation to domestic spaces that the separate spheres

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ideology dictates. Not only is femininity potentially entirely artificial, as “the result of forced repression in some direction, unnatural stimulation in others,” the two sexes “have only been seen in their present relation to one another,” and have never been able to explore alternative expressions of self (493). Romney’s conception of gender is not, for Mill, a natural phenomenon, but a man-made relationship that defines women as men wish them to be.

EBB further questions femininity as a set of inherent traits in Aurora’s relationship with Marian. From Book I, Aurora resists separate-spheres-type feminine behavior. In her relationship with Marian, though, she takes on a distinctly masculine role, further demonstrating the tenuous link between assigned gender and character, and suggesting that masculinity and femininity exist and emerge in relation to one another. Aurora explicitly refers to herself on male terms in interactions with Marian. When she stumbles across Marian in the streets of Paris, she relates the encounter in visceral terms:

My blood swam, my eyes dazzled. Then I sprang ...
It was as if a meditative man
Were dreaming out a summer afternoon
And watching gnats a-prick upon a pond,
When something floats up suddenly, out there,
Turns over ... a dead face, known once alive ...
So old, so new! it would be dreadful now
To lose the sight and keep the doubt of this:
He plunges – ha! He has lost it in the splash.
I plunged – I tore the crowd up, either side,
And rushed on, forward, forward, after her. (VI 234)

Aurora has a very immediate and physical reaction to Marian's presence, described in slightly violent terms, and she compares herself to a man in her pursuit of the other woman. Her expression of gender, both in her narrative and her behavior, becomes distinctly more masculine in her relationship with Marian.

Aurora often expresses her feelings for Marian in romantic terms, seeming to inhabit the role of Marian's suitor. Explicitly, Aurora often refers to Marian as friend and sister, but she complicates her own understanding of the distinction between platonic and romantic love in Book VII, when, in confronting her burgeoning feelings for Romney, she says she will not let Marian's secret out "To agonise the man I love - I mean/The friend I love ... as friends love" (173). Further, Aurora's behavior continues to emulate that of a man pursuing a romantic interest when, rather than let them part again, Aurora worries,

'Marian, Marian!' - face to face -
'Marian! I find you. Shall I let you go?'
I held her two slight wrists with both my hands;
'Ah Marian, Marian, can I let you go?' (VI 441)

She physically restrains Marian in her expression of love, an expression that would not surprise us coming from Romney. In Book VII, Aurora suggests that Marian accompany her to Italy, where they can live together and raise Marian's child - a proposal of sorts. Two pages later, she again compares herself to a man, and in contemplating men and women's relationships she insists on women's capability in male spaces:

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The world's male chivalry has perished out,
But women are knights-errant to the last;
And if Cervantes has been Shakespeare too,
He had made his Don a Donna. (VII 224)

While Aurora never fits a perfect model of femininity, it is through her interactions with Marian that she takes on explicitly masculine traits, and narrates herself as a man. Perhaps the line that best sums up Aurora's interactions with Marian, and indeed the notion of gender as relationally constituted, is the parenthetical "(it is very good for strength/To know that someone needs you to be strong)" (VII 414). Aurora displays consistent strength of character, but her implicitly male-coded behavior becomes explicitly so as her relationship with Marian becomes more intimate, and Marian's more traditional femininity brings out masculine traits in Aurora.

What Aurora's relationship with Marian highlights is that not only is femininity imposed by men, as we can see in Aurora and Romney's early relationship, but masculinity is merely the other side of this coin. Masculinity is no more natural than femininity - "male" traits are neither exclusive to men, nor are they inherent in men. Male characteristics are generated the same way female characteristics are in women: through the male-female relationship. Mill takes a similar stance, suggesting that just as women are educated into femininity, so are men educated into masculinity. In fact, he argues, "All the selfish propensities, the self-worship, the unjust self-preference, which exist among mankind, have their source

and root in, and derive their principal nourishment from, the present constitution of the relation between men and women" (558). The same social condition that allows men to be "masters of women" (486) and educate women into subordinate femininity teaches men "to worship their own will as such a grand thing that it is actually the law for another rational being" (516). Mill argues that the context in which men are given privileged access to and control over public spaces, fame, material wealth, and even women's own lives shapes their masculinity just as it shapes femininity.

Throughout the narrative, we can see Aurora realizing Mill's arguments, and defying the ideology that would keep her from her art. Initially, we see her reject the repressive femininity represented by England - it is not inherent to her character, because "the nature of women" as it is commonly understood "is an eminently artificial thing" (Mill 493). Romney, most explicitly, attempts to impose traditional femininity onto Aurora and convince her of women's natural inferiority to, or at least fundamental difference from, men - a state that Mill argues men enforce because "the generality of the male sex cannot yet tolerate the idea of living with an equal" (524). However, Aurora resists the constraints of femininity that would prevent her from publishing poetry and allows her male traits to flourish - particularly in her interactions with Marian, demonstrating masculinity arising in relation to femininity as Mill too argues. Finally, at the end of the novel, Aurora says she "flung closer to his breast,/As sword that, after battle, flings to sheath," comparing

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herself to a weapon and reversing traditional associations with the sword and sheath metaphor (IX 833). She is uncompromising in her refusal of limited femininity through to the last, denying the feminine characterization that Mill suggests is unnatural.

Aurora, in her defiance of traditional femininity and her expression of traditionally male behaviors, can be read as a narrative version of the very principles that Mill puts forth in *The Subjection of Women*. Mill argues in his essay that social order is founded on an untested understanding of what actually constitutes male and female nature, and that notions of both masculinity and femininity have arisen out of an unnatural, undeserved subordination of women. EBB's title character shows us just that: she refuses to shrink herself to fit within the private sphere, defying social conventions of femininity and explicitly placing herself within male spaces, effectively dramatizing Mill's ideas and undermining the Victorian idea of separate spheres.

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“We account the whale immortal in his species, however perishable in his individuality” An Exploration of Social Knowledge in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*

ELLEN JAMIESON

Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick, or, The Whale* is a book about ways of knowing. The authority of experience is front and centre: the author had been to sea and several times and had seen great whales close up, and his novel places the reader in a whaleboat within reach of a whale’s powerful flukes. But *Moby Dick* opens with a long list of quotations, “higgledy-piggledy whale statements,” giving the reader fair warning that the author’s reading will be as important as his whaling. Bookish science blends with the practical knowledge of men whose job is to transform whales into a valuable commodity. Ellen Jamieson compares the collective, cultural knowledge of whalers to the behaviour, and culture, of whales, exploring the analogies, in some cases very deliberate, that Melville constructs. She concludes: “Perhaps by showing both the whales and the men as social units in their respective species, and subsequently depicting their interspecific interactions and responses to each other, Melville is anticipating an environmentalist claim about the importance of preserving the diversity of the natural world to the maximization of various forms of knowledge.”

— Dr. Bruce Greenfield

Herman Melville’s novel *Moby-Dick* is well-known for being about a whale; however, the extent to which Melville dissects the whale both symbolically and physically cannot be

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understood without analysing the scientific content of the novel. Contrary to what the title suggests, *Moby Dick* is not the sole whale in the novel, or even the primary character. Indeed, Melville offers a detailed survey of the sperm whale as a species as well as the cetacean order as a whole, not to mention the inclusion of encounters with other marine animals such as the giant squid and the large groups of sharks. The scientific language and detailed descriptions of the natural history of whales seemingly contradict the philosophical questions of representation that the novel presents. This is a conflict between the objectivity of science and the subjectivity of significance and representation. Melville's examination of the natural history of whales, in terms of social behaviour, demonstrates the different approaches to knowledge that are often in conflict in this novel.

Melville establishes parallels between the complex social structures of humans, specifically the men on the *Pequod*, with the social and behavioral complexity of whales. Melville's anthropomorphic way of describing whales, and particularly *Moby Dick*, complicates the reader's view of Ahab's quest and the whaling industry in general, as one begins to sympathize with the whales and see them as ethical agents in themselves. In "How Is It Then with the Whale?: Using Scientific Data to Explore Textual Embodiment," Jennifer Calkins states:

The other animal in literature often plays one or both of two primary roles: it 'substitutes for human beings', and/or 'the other against which the human is constituted'. A third role for the

animal other, a third way of reading this other, is that of her particular self...created through keen observation of the sensory, cognitive, and behavioral world of the species group within which that animal other is contained. (32)

Whales play all three of these roles in the novel: as anthropomorphized beings, as Ahab's antagonist, and also as specimens under scientific observation. There is a particular emphasis on the "species group," as individual whales, in this case Moby Dick, are only understood by observing the collective species. An examination of the parallels between the complex community of the *Pequod* and the social and behavioural intricacies of whales emphasizes the social nature of knowledge. Melville's descriptions of whale sociality, which are mirrored by the interactions of the crew, present concepts of cultural, moral, and empirical knowledge.

Cultural knowledge, as a result of social interactions, is depicted in both the whale groups and the men of the novel. The *Pequod* is a mosaic of different cultures, in terms of race, religion, and nationality. However, the ship is unified by the overarching whaling culture that comes to define the men's lives at sea. This whaling culture represents a unique form of knowledge, as Ishmael describes the techniques and terminology involved in the industry. The social knowledge of whaling is epitomized in the Gam: "A social meeting of two (or more) Whale-ships" wherein passing ships "exchange the whaling news, and have an agreeable chat" (Melville 198; 197). These Gams represent a form of social learning and intraspecific

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interaction that is further depicted by the group of sperm whales in Chapter 87, "The Grand Armada." In his studies on sperm whales, Hal Whitehead explains that his "initial approach when looking for sperm whale culture was to examine the behavior of different sperm whale social units, looking for elements that are consistent over time" (27). This type of habitual cultural behaviour is observed both in the Gam tradition as well as in the migratory and behavioral displays of the whales. Melville makes direct parallels between whales and humans when describing the sharing of social knowledge that occurs in group living:

Had these leviathans been but a flock of simple sheep, pursued over the pasture by three fierce wolves, they could not possibly have evinced such excessive dismay. But this timidity is characteristic of almost all herding creatures...Witness, too, all human beings, how when herded together in the sheepfold of a theatre's pit, they will, at the slightest alarm of fire, rush helter-skelter for the outlets, crowding, trampling, jamming, and remorselessly dashing each other to death. Best, therefore, withhold any amazement at the strangely galled whales before us, for there is no folly of the beasts of the earth which is not infinitely outdone by the madness of men (300).

This collective behaviour as a form of herd or mob mentality exemplifies the concept of social knowledge as an accumulation of individuals that act as information centres for the rest of the group. Group living enables

cultural interactions such as the exchange of news and stories between whaling ships during Gams. Ahab's unwillingness to engage in the social Gams demonstrates his lack of social knowledge and perhaps foreshadows the *Pequod's* downfall, which results from an individual and subjective focus. He actively rejects intraspecific information from either his crew or other ships and therefore does not anticipate the chaos that follows.

While the *Pequod* demonstrates the weaving and merging of several cultures into one, the sperm whale encounter in "The Grand Armada" describes an encounter with an overwhelming number of whales as the coming together of several pods. This immense group of whales coordinates itself into a social hierarchy by forming concentric rings with the mothers and young on the inside. Melville describes the convergence of these separate whale pods:

The Sperm Whales, instead of almost invariably sailing in small detached companies, as in former times, are now frequently met in extensive herds, sometimes embracing so great a multitude, that it would almost seem as if numerous nations of them had sworn solemn league and covenant for mutual assistance and protection. (298)

The group dynamics of the whales suggests an overarching culture and a means of communication. They are united by a common purpose, the protection of their species, which is threatened by the social culture of the *Pequod*. It is

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interesting to note the title of Chapter 87, as Melville likens the large group of whales to a fleet of ships, thus further associating the social circumstances and dynamics of the *Pequod* to the defensive nature of the whale's social structure. The image of ritualistic, circular unity in a social group is echoed in Chapter 94, "A Squeeze of the Hand," when the crew of the *Pequod* must squeeze out the lumps that have formed in the whale's spermaceti. Ishmael becomes quite invested in this task and thinks to himself, "Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness" (323). Ishmael captures the notion of cultural and spiritual knowledge that can only be attained via social interactions, even to the extent of physical contact. In addition, the homoerotic and sexual overtones in this passage create a sense of fusion and the image of a feedback loop of social knowledge and communication.

Further, Melville depicts whales as having the capacity for complex emotions such as commitment, loyalty, courage, and intimacy, which emerge from social interactions and the sharing of social knowledge. Calkins confirms, "The current study of sperm-whale behavior validates much of what is described in *Moby-Dick*, such as extensive sociality with female-centered groups, fission-fusion grouping behavior, alloparenting by females and play" (32). Alloparenting and forms of altruism are prevalent in *Moby-Dick* in both the realms of the whales and of the men on the *Pequod*. These social behaviours demonstrate a form of moral or emotional knowledge that

stems from a collective understanding of welfare and survival. Furthermore, the role of the parent or guardian is demonstrative of the relaying of knowledge between generations. The information that one receives from a parent, however, is subject to experience and could be defined as either learned or innate, again complicating the notion of objective versus subjective knowledge. Despite this ambiguity, alloparenting, or surrogacy, is observed both in the behavioral ecology of sperm whales as well as in the human interactions in the novel. In Chapter 24, Ishmael plays advocate for the whaling industry as he describes the discovery of Australia: "The whale-ship is the true mother of that now mighty colony. Moreover, in the infancy of the first Australian settlement, the emigrants were several times saved from starvation by the benevolent biscuit of the whale-ship luckily dropping an anchor in their waters" (99). This metaphor demonstrates a social altruism of providing for an individual or group other than one's own. Australia's adoption by a whale-ship mother is a form of kinship wherein groups of humans are interacting and sharing food and potentially knowledge. The ability to recognize suffering in others embodies the emotional knowledge that is generated through social learning. Melville depicts altruistic acts and feelings in both the sperm whales and the crew. In describing the group dynamics of whales, Ishmael explains, "Say you strike a Forty-barrel-bull - poor devil! all his comrades quit him. But strike a member of the harem school, and her companions swim around her with every token of concern, sometimes lingering so near her and so long, as themselves

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to fall a prey" (307). The capacity of the sperm whales for self-sacrifice in order to protect a member of their species reveals a proficiency in emotional understanding and communal signaling. However, this behaviour is observed only in female whales, thereby establishing a contrast to the inconsistent interactions between the men on the *Pequod*.

Indeed, Ahab removes himself from the sociality of the ship and focusses on the individual in a universe driven by social structures. Likewise, Moby Dick is isolated from his species group and bestowed a significance superior to that which an individual whale merits. Therefore, Ahab and Moby Dick are respectively the creator and the product of subjective knowledge, doomed by the lack of collective objectivity attained via social interactions. In *Comeuppance: Costly Signaling, Altruistic Punishment, and Other Biological Components of Fiction*, William Flesch comments on Ahab's moment of reversal in Chapter 132, "The Symphony:"

We can see that Ahab is human, that he has fellow feeling for his crew, and that human altruism might compete with the senselessly altruistic punishment of the whale. That punishment *is* senseless: Moby Dick is maddening just because he is opaque to human rage and human passion. This is what the excremental whiteness of the whale means. Ahab can signal to his fellow beings; he cannot successfully signal to the whale (94).

Ahab finally recognizes that social communication is vital

to the welfare of the *Pequod* and humanity. His vengeful intentions were informed by an individual subjectivity and not a collective moral knowledge thereby creating a distinction between “Ahab’s *transcendental* whale [and] Ishmael’s *naturalistic* whale” (Zoellner 146). Perhaps by observing the sperm whale’s social behaviour in nature, Ahab perceives the social aspects of their species and relates them to his crew. Ishmael’s ecological descriptions of whale sociality conflict with the subjective philosophies of the novel. However, by reducing nature to its basic, biological components, knowledge can be perceived as something communal in addition to being empirical.

Melville also describes social interactions of a more intimate nature, in the forms of friends and lovers that display intraspecific partiality and emotional awareness. As aforementioned, play is a prevalent behaviour in whales, a phenomenon that can be compared to the camaraderie between Ishmael and Queequeg. The intimate relationship between these two men is captured by their accumulation of interpersonal knowledge. Ishmael describes his feelings towards Queequeg:

How it is I know not; but there is no place like a bed for confidential disclosures between friends. Man and wife, they say, there open the very bottom of their souls to each other; and some old couples often lie and chat over old times till nearly morning. Thus, then, in our hearts’ honey-moon, lay I and Queequeg – a cosy, loving pair. (Melville 57)

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This personal exchange of information explores the realm of subjective knowledge of another human being. The image of the loving, monogamous couple is echoed during the *Pequod's* encounter with the whale cows and calves in "The Grand Armada," where they witness, "young Leviathan amours in the deep" (303). This poetic portrayal of whale mating is juxtaposed to the objective scientific observation and industrial knowledge that belongs on a whaling ship. Melville further complicates this contradiction in his footnote to this passage. He makes a direct parallel between the mating habits of whales and humans: "When overflowing with mutual esteem, the whales salute *more hominum*" (303). This is followed by the editor's additional explanation: "*More hominum*: in the manner of human beings; that is, they face each other" (Parker and Hayford 303). Although these social interactions are on a smaller scale than those observed in the large groups of whales or on the *Pequod* as a whole, they illustrate how moral and empirical knowledge are unified in their stemming from intraspecific communication and contiguity.

Melville perhaps most effectively illustrates the significance of social knowledge by depicting group learning in the form of scholarly institutions in both the whales and the men. Indeed, Ishmael comments that the, "whale-ship was my Yale College, and my Harvard" (Melville 101). Ishmael likens the knowledge that he gains from the community of the *Pequod* to an empirical or logical education that he would receive from a university. This knowledge, however, is an amalgamation of social,

moral, and scientific understanding that is contained within the collective of the crew. The image of scholarly learning in groups is echoed in the “bands [of whales] known as schools” (305). Social structures enable the exchange of information and the passing of knowledge from one generation to another or from teacher to student. Despite the analogy to educational institutions, Melville does not limit knowledge to solely a methodical or logical approach but depicts learning through social and emotional interactions.

Melville yokes poetic and scientific descriptions of group dynamics in both whales and humans as a way of exploring the social source of knowledge. His detailed observations of sperm whale behaviour capture various forms of understanding contained in the communal nature of a species and its interactions. Melville performs figurative ecological analyses of intraspecific relationships on the levels of immense pods, smaller schools of young whales, family units, friends and lovers, and mirrors these associations in the men of the *Pequod* in terms of the whole crew as well as more intimate relationships. Therefore, knowledge is presented as both the driving force and the product of sociality within a species. By showing both the whales and the men as social units in their respective species, and subsequently depicting their interspecific interactions and responses to each other, Melville is anticipating an environmentalist claim about the importance of preserving the diversity of the natural world to the maximization of various forms of knowledge.

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Bridging Critical Race Theory and Lockean Social Contract Theory:

Derrick Bell's "The Space Traders" as Proto-Racial Contract Theory

ERIK NOLAN

The paper below was written for a course that focused on non-realist literary works by authors of the African diaspora, framed within a larger diasporic tradition known as Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism, as Lisa Yaszek explains, is a "term . . . generally credited to [Mark] Dery," who defines it as "'speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th century technoculture – and more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future' to explore how people of color negotiate life in a technology intensive world" (Yaszek, "Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, and the History of the Future").

As Erik Nolan points out in his work below, however, Afrofuturist work can also deploy science fiction tropes to analyse social and political structures beyond the "technology intensive world." As Nolan argues, Derrick Bell uses the standard science fiction trope of alien abduction specifically to explore the problems of the legal system in the US: a system that purports to be unbiased but is, in practice and theory, built on the exclusion and exploitation of Black people.

– Dr. Jason Haslam

The principal foundations of political and social reciprocity in America are founded on the tenets of the social contract, generally imposing on the state a duty of care to its citizens and likewise imposing on citizens a duty to uphold and support the state. Derrick Bell's "The Space Traders" puts these reciprocal expectations to the test, but finds them utterly lacking in

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substance, revealing in their shortcomings the machinations of an idealized system that in reality demarcates a qualification of citizenship, security, and care along racial lines. To expand this critique, I will first define critical race theory (CRT) and apply it to “The Space Traders” to reveal its overlying themes: the hopelessness of legal remedies and the futility of racial equality. I will then adopt social contract theory, and demonstrate the way in which it features in the story. I will argue that by synthesizing Bell’s CRT and social contract criticisms, “The Space Traders” signals the beginnings of a new form of contact theory, what Charles Mills would eventually call racial contract theory, as the core of its underlying theme.

CRT is an oppositional form of legal scholarship that champions the idea that racism is a normalized, systematic, and structural component of American society, built upon the supremacy of white people and the deliberate, yet obfuscated disenfranchisement of people of colour, particularly black people (Taylor 122-23). For white people, the obfuscation of their own supremacy occurs through the normalization of racist behaviours and practices, which makes racism look “ordinary and natural to a degree that oppression no longer seems like oppression to the perpetrators” (123). Factors that contribute to the normalization of white supremacy are the entrenched mechanisms of false neutrality, such as colour-blindness (through the erasure of race and racial history) and meritocracy (through the implementation of seemingly objective standards to positions of power and privilege) (123). These mechanisms, and others, trace their roots back

to liberalism and liberal ideology, at which the main body of CRT scholarship takes deliberate aim (Delgado 462). CRT criticizes liberalism for pushing the idealization and implementation of abstract, egalitarian principles through various legal means, while simultaneously abusing or acting in direct defiance of these means to consolidate or facilitate white supremacy (462). These means include civil rights, legal remedies, affirmative action, and antidiscrimination laws, which CRT identifies as being inadequate or even counterintuitive to the progress of racial equality (462). Only during instances of “interest convergence” are the “interests of blacks in achieving racial equality accommodated” (Taylor 123); black people achieve progress only because white people are in conflict with other white people or because white people stand to gain more than black people (Taylor 123; Bell, “Bakke” 10). However, when racial equality poses a perceived cost to white people (be it to their privilege or power), white people suppress black people and forego racial equality to guarantee their social, political, and economic superiority (Taylor 124).

CRT frequently disseminates its critiques through stories and parables giving voice to black people and other people of colour excluded from mainstream legal scholarship, revealing their perspectives of lived prejudice at the hands of white people, and describing the reality of racism and how it can be adequately challenged (Brown 154; Taylor 122; Delgado 462). Bell’s “The Space Traders,” is unquestionably a CRT narrative. The larger collection that it belongs to, Bell’s *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, is

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aptly named for it gives voice to the “faces” that are “stranded at the bottom of society’s well” (“Will Not Be Saved” 1358), and as Brown highlights, to the “faces” of “exclusion [...] ‘from the bottom’ [of] mainstream legal scholarship” (513). The futile belief in the success of the civil rights movement, the veneration of symbols thereof, and the denial of black voices in the articulation of racial issues all feature heavily in the collection (“Will Not Be Saved” 1359). When told by Bell in the first chapter that many white and black people “rely on symbols to support their belief,” that they have made significant progress towards racial equality, that “the laws protecting our rights” and the “holiday recognizing one of our greatest leaders” are proofs of this progress, Semple, the taxi driver, simply and ironically answers, ““They all dreamers, man [...] And stupid dreamers at that” (Bell, *Faces* 20).

I will first use CRT and Bell’s extensions of it to reveal some of the interconnected, overlying themes of “The Space Traders” such as the futility of relying on the hegemonic legal system, and the preeminent motivation of white people to exploit and subordinate black people not only in the pursuit of economic and political self-interest, but in the interest of stability. By exploring these overlying themes, which rebuke liberal ideology, I will set the ground for a subsequent investigation of the story’s underlying themes, informed by CRT but extended by proto-racial contract theory.

While the narrator and Gleason Golightly repeatedly stress the futility of relying on the legal system and legal remedies to stop the proposed trade, the story’s anti-trade

groups and characters defiantly pursue legal remedies as they cling to the moral imperative of liberal idealism. The narrator frames the failure of the legal system to maintain civil rights not only as the eventual outcome in the story, but also as the context to the story's setting. The narrator states that the "race problem" has worsened, and a severe "retrogression of civil rights protection" has occurred: "long dead [is]the dream that [the] black underclass [can] ever 'overcome'" (163). Yet this dream appears to persist among the story's anti-trade interest groups and characters, including Golightly. In his arguments to the President's Cabinet against the trade, he resorts to "morality" and an assumed "willingness on the part of the President and the cabinet to be fair" (171), believing that "due process or judicial review" (167) will overturn the Attorney General's proposed plan to implement the trade. But after the Cabinet ignores him, and after realizing that white people will never "do right by black people" simply because it would be "right that they do so" (171), Golightly attends the Anti-Trade Coalition assembly to attempt to convince them that "[their] plans for legislation, litigation, and protest cannot prevail against the tradition of sacrificing black rights" (174). He argues that the coalition "rel[ies]on the [liberal] assumption that whites really want to grant justice to blacks" (174-175). His alternative, to dupe white people into making the constitutional challenge instead, is rejected by the coalition after Reverend Jasper extols moral "integrity," condemns the country's "evil," and declares his willingness to sacrifice his body if it means holding on to his moral "soul" (177).

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The coalition then quickly adopts its plan to pursue legal remedies, confident that the legal system and its alleged dedication to liberal morals will support them. Contrary to expectation, however, the legal system not only fails them but turns on them as well. The Supreme Court dismisses their litigation, and the law is used to suppress black people and their supporters. In the end, the referendum passes, forcing black people back into to slavery on the “last Martin Luther King holiday the nation would ever observe” (194). Despite the black population’s faith in legal remedies, legal remedies fail them in turn.

The pursuit of racial equality is futile in “The Space Traders” because the costs of upholding it are too great for most white people in the story: the economic and political costs, alongside concerns of stability, take primacy over any liberal or moral considerations. With the nation on the brink of bankruptcy and collapse, the narrator describes the Space Traders’ offer as coming “just in time to rescue America” (162), highlighting that from the beginning, many white people “expres[s] the view that what the nation would give up – its African-American citizens – [is] as worthwhile as what it would receive” (163). Golightly echoes this reality when he addresses the Anti-Trade Coalition, stating, “we all know that black rights, black interests, black property, even black lives are expendable whenever their sacrifice will further [...] white needs or preferences” (174). Indeed, whenever white people in the story debate the trade, the issue of cost is always central to that debate. When Helen Hipmeyer considers the “pluses and minuses” (164) of the trade, her focus is on the

alleviation of the national budget and the “severe psychological toll” (165) to white people. When the corporate leaders of America discuss the trade, their concerns center around “losses in sales” (181), the lost market share, and the potential shock to the money supply. The story’s white people altogether ignore the issue of racial equality. However, a larger concern than profits plagues the story’s corporate leaders. They understand that black people serve as a distraction to the “ever-increasing disparity between the incomes of rich and poor,” and as “comforting insulation of [the rich’s] privileges and wealth” (181). Without black people, poor white people would no longer be ignorant of “their real enemy” (181), the rich, and potentially revolt against them. Golightly alludes to this possibility when addressing the Cabinet, stating that black people’s inferior status “provide[s] [the] nation an essential stability,” which, in the absence of black people, would bring “confrontations and strife that could cause the eventual dissolution of the nation” (169). The corporate leaders therefore choose to support racial equality, but only because it benefits them, as the costs otherwise would be too high. Throughout the story, the survival of white supremacy takes precedence over racial equality. Though the majority eventually vote to banish black people in exchange for the economic benefits promised by the Space Traders, they risk paying a higher, psychological and socioeconomic price than they bargained for: the stability and future of their nation.

At the heart of “The Space Traders” is a critique of the social contract and how it fails black people and other

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people of colour. I will first provide a brief definition of social contract theory, apply it to the story, and then repeat this process with racial contract theory to uncover the story's underlying theme: the totalizing ascendancy of structural racism.

Social contract theory is founded on the idea that citizens regulate their political and moral obligations based on a collective agreement formed between them and the government (Friend). The incentive to enter into such an agreement stems from the pressures individuals face in the state of nature, a hypothetical state that pre-empts the foundation of society (Friend). According to Locke, the state of nature is pre-political (without government) but not pre-moral (Friend). He argues that in the state of nature all men are free and equal, bound by the law of nature, the source of all morality (as dictated by God), not to harm, kill, steal, or limit the freedom of others (Friend). However, this state is far from ideal. Self-defence is condoned when the law of nature is breached by an individual, but self-defence may entail the killing of said individual, giving rise to retributive action and leading to a state of war that is unlikely to end in the absence of a civil authority (Friend). Thus, to avoid a state of war, individuals are incentivized to come to a collective agreement and form a government, forfeiting to it their power to punish (Friend). Locke is the first social contract theorist to introduce the idea of a reciprocal agreement between the government and its citizens (Friend). While citizens are obligated to serve the nation-state and abide by its laws, the government in turn is expected to objectively

reciprocate this service by guaranteeing the equal liberty and security of its citizens, particularly in regards to their property (Friend). This expectation is rooted in the constitution, from which the government derives its legitimacy and thus its “accountab[ility] to the community” (Ward 797). If the government reneges on its duty of care to its citizens or their property, thus acting in tyranny, then its citizens are justified in rebelling against it by re-entering a state of nature to formulate a new, reciprocal agreement (Friend).

In “The Space Traders,” the predominantly white government and its pro-trade allies invoke the social contract as their method and justification for approving the trade. The Secretary of the Interior is the first person to invoke the social contract argument, stating before the Cabinet that if he were willing to sacrifice himself for the country’s prosperity, then “every red-blooded American with an ounce of patriotism would as well” (Bell, *Faces* 165). His statement prompts the Secretary of Defense in turn to compare such a sacrifice to military service, “a call a country makes on the assumption that its citizens will respond,” which then leads him to suggest that the country should have “its citizens of African descent [...] step forward and serve” (165). Duty, military service, and patriotism together form a vocabulary of citizen-government obligations anchored in social contract theory. The cabinet members assume (or pretend) that the country has offered the same care, security, and liberty that white people enjoy to black people. Because the country has provided this service to them, they should, as “citizens”

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(165), serve the nation in return and save it from bankruptcy and collapse, even if the cost includes their lives or freedoms. As the pro-trade advocates put it, “[a]ll Americans are expected to make sacrifices for the good of their country. Black people are no exceptions to this basic obligation of citizenship” (189). The social contract argument as justification becomes quite clear in this moment. By implementing a constitutional amendment and a referendum to guarantee legitimacy, the government manipulates the social contract and abuses its principles to guarantee the trade. If the constitution allows for the drafting of its black citizens, which it does by the end of the story, then the pretense for rebellion (by virtue of tyranny) is negated, and the social contract is maintained. On the surface then, the government and its pro-trade allies appear to be successful in using the social contract as their method and justification for satisfying the trade.

While the “‘ideal’ social contract has been a central concept of Western political theory for understanding and evaluating the social world” (Mills, *Racial Contract* 6), Mills argues that his proposed “*Racial Contract* [...] is the *truth* of the social contract” (64, emphasis original). According to Mills, the racial contract establishes a polity, state, and juridical system that secures the privileges and advantages of its white citizens while maintaining the subordination of nonwhites (13-14), allowing for the “exploitation of their bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunity to them” (11). The racial contract “restricts the possession of natural freedom and equality to white men” while nonwhites are “appropriated

to a lower rung on the moral ladder [...] born unfree and unequal" (16). This differentiation between whites and nonwhites creates a split in social ontology between (white) persons and racialized subpersons (16, 55), between citizens eligible for benefits and noncitizens who are not. The racial contract is maintained by the divergence of the "officially sanctioned reality [...] from actual reality" (18), creating an "epistemology of ignorance" in which white people are incapable of understanding the "reinvented delusional world" they have created (18), as they have structured it around themselves (76). Through "misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race," which form a structural blindness that props up the white polity, white persons have been able to justify a history of conquest, colonization, and enslavement (19). Mills identifies, however, that in the present moment the racial contract is not as explicit as it once was and thus demands the concealment of differences between persons and subpersons, generating the illusion of social contract neutrality (83): "whereas before it was denied that nonwhites were equal abstract persons, it is now pretended that nonwhites are equal abstract persons who can be fully included in the polity" (75). The unfortunate result is that "[r]ace is made to seem marginal when in fact it has been central" to the polity's function, revealing an "illusory color blindness that actually entrenches white privilege" (77). The illusion of racial equality, however, has not been accepted by those denied the full status of personhood. In the eyes of black people and other victims

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of the white polity's hypocrisy, the racial contract has always been seen as the true contract of society (110-111).

"The Space Traders" is a story that traces the degeneration of the racial contract from its implicit, self-hidden, de facto state back to its explicit, honest, de jure state. Mills describes the implicit, de facto state of the racial contract as being the state in which the racial contract "has written itself out of formal existence" (73, emphasis omitted), extending the illusion of liberal, egalitarian principles of social contract personhood to everyone, but in truth privileging white people and white interests (73). During the rising action, the story's various interest groups and individuals operate under the tenets of the implicit racial contract. Black people and anti-trade liberals buy into "the pretence that formal, juridical equality is sufficient to remedy inequities created on a foundation of several hundred years of racial privilege" (Mills 73). White characters and interest groups obsess over the costs of racial equality rather than the ideal itself. Concurrently, black people are misleadingly qualified as "citizens" by government members and pro-trade groups (Bell, *Faces* 165, 189), preserving the illusion of the social contract. The President, the Cabinet, and pro-trade advocates further enact the implicit racial contract by denying the involvement of race or racist attitudes in their arguments, by pretending to listen to black peoples' opinions (only to dismiss them), and by rewriting racial history, thus "obfuscat[ing] the nonideal history of white oppression and racial exploitation" (Mills, "Racial Liberalism" 1386). The implicit racial contract in the rising action of the story

operates on illusion, obfuscation, and ignorance, which most of the characters, if not all, demonstrate through their actions and dialogue.

By the end of the story, the open use of force, racial transparency, and the reinstatement of slavery signals the return of the explicit racial contract, the state of “de jure white supremacy” (Mills, *Racial Contract* 73). Force is applied both against black people after the amendment passes and Jewish people during their protests against its ratification. Mills posits that “physical violence [is] [...] the dominant face” of the explicit racial contract (83) – the police, the penal system, and the army become its enforcers, maintaining racial order and destroying challenges to it (84). The use of force against Jewish people in the story is worth noting. It reveals the application of the Racial Contract against a multiethnic group, which includes visibly white people, as a stop gap measure to instability (103), establishing them as the potential successors of subpersonhood after the departure of black people. Racial transparency, as another indicator of the de jure racial contract, reveals itself through the increasingly racist dialogues of the Pro-Ratification groups. Towards the end of the story, they state, “our survival today requires we sacrifice the rights of blacks in order to protect and further the interests of whites” (Bell, *Faces* 188). Here, “white supremacy [is] openly proclaimed” (Mills, *Racial Contract* 73, emphasis omitted) not only to the public, but by its majority. The most concrete representation of explicit white supremacy, however, is the 27th amendment and its ratification. Its intent to enforce the conscription of all

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black people through the deliberate eschewing of their rights amounts to the reimplementing of slavery. Bell is overt with his use of slave imagery and allusions at the end of the story. The 27th amendment, ratified by 70 percent of the population, writes the racial contract back into formal existence. Its effects, furthermore, extend beyond those who are inducted. The black people who remain behind are openly forced to “accept a subordinate status with ‘suspended citizenship’” (192), signaling the totalizing completion of the explicit racial contract. Through the implementation of slavery, dialogues of racial transparency, and the use of force to enforce the racial contract, “The Space Traders” tracks the retrogression from the implicit, de facto racial contract to the explicit, de jure racial contract, forming the underlying theme of the story.

Though I have argued that racial contract theory features prominently in Bell’s “The Space Traders,” it is important to reiterate here that the theory only exists in its primitive form, as proto-racial contract theory. While there are many overlapping features between CRT and racial contract theory – Mills calls his book on racial contract theory an example of CRT (Mills, *Racial Contract* 126) –, key differences still exist. CRT generally condemns liberal values for their hypocrisy and facilitation of racism, urging black people towards non-compliance and the pursuit of alternative ideologies. Bell goes so far as to advocate for the acceptance of black peoples’ subordinate position, as such a move would enable more meaningful and organized action against systematic racism (Bell, “Racial Realism” 377). Racial contract theory, on the other hand,

criticizes the misapplication of liberal values and not the values themselves. Rather than pursuing alternative paradigms, racial contract theory advocates for the realization of universal personhood, the true realization of liberal values (Mills, *Racial Contract* 129). “The Space Traders” is undoubtedly a CRT story: it ends with the reenslavement of the story’s black population, which was unable and unwilling to find a viable alternative to liberalism. Nevertheless, I have shown that by bridging CRT and social contract theory in “The Space Traders,” a proto-racial contract reading is both possible and constructive, exposing an underlying theme of structural, racist norms that trace the corruption of liberal idealism to the totalizing influence of white supremacy in American society.

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Changing Janes:

"The Yellow Wallpaper" as a Case of Dual
Consciousness

HELEN PINSENT

Charlotte Perkins Gilman originally wrote "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) to criticize a medical treatment known as the "rest cure," which was commonly prescribed for women suffering from "neurasthenia" or a lack of nervous energy. Gilman had personally experienced the "rest cure" as a period of intense suffering, and she was pleased to learn that her story had successfully convinced physicians to alter their treatment methods. As neurologists stopped diagnosing "neurasthenia" in the early twentieth century, however, Gilman's story gradually fell into obscurity. It was not rediscovered until the early 1970s, when it was recognized as a landmark of feminist literature. It has since been the topic of countless essays that have struggled to explain how the apparent madness of the protagonist can also be interpreted as a form of feminist emancipation. Helen Pinsent's paper covers much of the same territory, although she does two things that are highly original and innovative: 1) she discusses Gilman's story not in terms of "neurasthenia" but rather in terms of non-unitary theories of the mind and 2) she shows how this new scientific context potentially resolves the ambiguity of the story's conclusion by suggesting that "losing one's mind" and "finding oneself" are not necessarily contradictory possibilities. Pinsent thus implies that Gilman appropriated the scientific concept of "double consciousness" to describe the experience of patriarchal oppression and resistance.

—Dr. Anthony Enns

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

(Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper")

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Amongst the final lines of “The Yellow Wallpaper,” we see the name Jane for the first time. Who is she? It is unlikely that Gilman would have introduced a new character so late in the story and with no further comment. The only other unnamed figure at this point is the first-person narrator herself. The most logical conclusion, then, is that this troubled woman has suffered some sort of alteration in her consciousness. This split is often studied as a generic sort of madness or psychosis¹ brought on by patriarchal oppression and physical confinement. But is this approach enough? Can we call Jane crazy and walk away, or is there something fruitful in looking more closely at her condition? Theorists who oversimplify Jane’s disorder, and search only for meaning in its possible causes, often note inconsistencies or contradictions in the story’s ostensibly feminist message; these readings fail because they overlook the possibility that the illness itself reveals an important element of Gilman’s thesis. Jane’s condition at the close is

¹ Beverly A. Hume argues that the narrator’s “madness” (477) spirals out of her obsession with assigning meaning to the hideousness of her wallpaper, and views the anti-patriarchal elements as peripheral. Paula A. Treichler is more interested in the diegetic diagnosis of the narrator’s condition, and treats Jane’s end state as merely an intensification of her “nervous depression” (1, qtd in Treichler 61). Treichler does, however, use the term “madness” (67) to describe Jane’s final condition, and calls her liberation “compromised” (67) because of it. Jürgen Wolter uses the term “insanity” (207), and worries that her “physically weak and psychologically fragile” nature “may corroborate the patriarchal argument Gilman set out to disprove” (207).

immediately distinguishable from the straight-jacket, rubber-room kind of madness we often imagine, because she finds enough composure to write the end of her story down; still, she maintains the new personality that has taken over her body. I propose we consider Jane's illness as a case of what nineteenth-century physicians called "dual consciousness" (Proctor 86)—the phenomenon of two distinct personalities occupying the same body. Jane's transformation mirrors certain elements of the cases of Felida X, published in 1877, and of Mary Reynolds, published in 1889.² When Jane is compared to other cases of dual consciousness and her madness is read as a permanent switch to a second rational state, her actions no longer contradict the anti-patriarchal message of the story: instead, Jane is a woman who successfully escapes patriarchal oppression by shifting to a second personality devoid of the hierarchical ties that patriarchy reinforces.

In 1877, Richard Proctor described the phenomenon of dual consciousness as the theory that "we have two brains, each perfectly sufficient for the performance of mental functions" (86), calling into question the ultimate essence of individuality, and the natural unity of the soul. Under this theory, each body would be host to "two mental lives" (86), often opposite in nature, with distinct memories, and capable of very different personal choices and habits. For most, only one brain would ever manifest itself; for a few, the brains would take turns operating the body (though

² From a talk given by Gilman's own physician, Weir Mitchell, and published just three years before the publication of "The Yellow Wallpaper".

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not necessarily in so polite a manner as the term implies). The cases of Felida X and Mary Reynolds detail each girl's transitions from a reticent, often anxious, personality to someone more vivacious and fearless. We see a similar transformation in "The Yellow Wallpaper," as Jane, over the course of her confinement, undergoes sudden changes in personality, in speech and writing style, in sleep patterns, and in her connection to her environment. Each of Jane's changes has some correlation to Felida's and Mary's, and the process as a whole reveals a new woman, free from the bonds and bondage that have kept her "sick" (1).

Well before Jane's shift, the story gives it both a medical and a literary foundation. Jane and her husband have rented a house in the country as part of her treatment for a "temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency" (1). This disorder fits into a category Proctor describes as a theoretical precursor to episodes of dual consciousness, "some disorder either of the nervous system or of the circulation," claiming that "one can hardly imagine it possible that a disorder of the sort should be localised so far as the brain is concerned, while in other respects affecting the body generally" (89). In the case of Mary Reynolds, her nephew John reports that she suffered from "fits" that he describes as "certainly hysterical" (3). The primary symptom of Jane's "nervous depression" is fatigue, which manifests when she "write[s] [. . .] in spite of [her family]" (2), and when she "take[s] pains to control" her irritation with her husband (2); but she also gets "nervous" (4) when she is around her infant son. These

symptoms suggest Gilman is describing neurasthenia, a nervous illness commonly diagnosed in the nineteenth century, and which Gilman argued stemmed from women attempting to adhere to the oppressive and often ill-suited roles that patriarchal society assigned to them (Breakdown 204). This diagnosis, then, serves as both a warning of and a motive for Jane's eventual change of consciousness.

In literary terms, Gilman lays groundwork for the shift by demonstrating the narrator's flight from conflict. The most obvious sign is Jane's habit of "tak[ing] pains to control [her]self" (2), as mentioned above: she suppresses her suffering (3), her "whim[s]" (4), and even her tears (6) before her husband and sister-in-law. The one time she does admit crying in front of John is when she attempts "a real earnest reasonable talk with" him (7) to propose taking a short trip. Jane tries as much as possible to avoid confrontation, and when it needs to happen, she crumbles in the face of it. She cannot manage to reconcile herself completely to John's diagnosis and treatment, however, which maintains a conflict that she cannot ultimately escape as her first self.

Close reading provides yet further evidence of Jane's persistent inner division. Her description of the house is peppered with the rhetoric of isolation and conflict: from the rigidly designed grounds with their "hedges and walls and gates that lock" (2), to the house's history of "legal trouble, [. . .] something about the heirs and co-heirs" (2), to the wallpaper itself, whose "uncertain curves [. . .] destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions" (3), Jane's double-meanings suggest that, despite her efforts to

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“let it alone and talk about the house” (2), she is unable to separate herself from her feelings of oppression.

Interestingly, Paula Treichler notes that this “first journal entry consists of 39 separate paragraphs” (62), demonstrating Jane’s inability to rest on a single subject. Jane maintains this pattern throughout the story, and among these topic changes are eight noteworthy moments when she turns from discussing either her keepers or her illness to talking about the wallpaper itself. This habit suggests that, despite his condescension and general awfulness, John is right: if they change the wallpaper, Jane will fixate on “the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs” (4), because the paper is really just a focus for her own “unheard of contradictions.” Well before she shows any switch to another consciousness, she proves herself physically and mentally susceptible to a split.

Once Jane does begin shifting, her two selves are marked by differences in language patterns, sleep patterns, and in how she relates to her surroundings; these changes resemble descriptions of differences in the respective states of Felida X and Mary Reynolds. While the two case studies make no explicit mention of speech styles, Felida’s case does specify that before her condition presented itself, “she differed in no respect from other girls” (90). Similarly, Treichler notes that early Jane’s writing shows stereotypically feminine markers: “not only are its topics limited, it is marked formally by exclamation marks, italics, intensifiers, and repetition of the impotent refrain, ‘What is one to do?’” (66). At first, Jane’s language is

deferential and often passive, as when she notes, "It is an airy and comfortable room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim" (4), which matches John Reynolds' description of Mary as "sedate and reserved" (3).

Jane makes her first journal entry as her second self a few entries before the end of the story, beginning with the line "Life is much more exciting now than it used to be" (10). Immediately, this new Jane distinguishes herself from the former, speaking with more vivacity and eagerness. Jürgen Wolter cites Catherine Golden, who notes "the narrator's increased use of nominative-case pronouns" (206); says Golden: "force and boldness [. . .] punctuate the writing in the final lines of the once timid narrator" (qtd in Wolter 206). Second-Jane resembles Second-Mary, who is "buoyant and social" (8), and Second Felida, who "smil[es] gaily, speak[s] briskly, and trill[s] [. . .] over her work" (90). Felida notably ceases complaining of pain in her second state, which matches Jane's behaviour as well: Jane describes her change as an actual physical recovery, and attributes it to the wallpaper, when only two pages earlier she is begging John to "take [her] away" from it (8). In general, she is "more quiet than [she] was" (10), but when she says, "I turned [John's comment] off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was *because* of the wallpaper" (11), she reveals it as the silence of dismissal and deceit rather than deference. Like Mary Reynolds and Felida X, Jane's second self exhibits all the animation and confidence that her first self lacks.

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Jane's newfound fascination with the paper corresponds with her change in sleep habits. The story links the two thematically in the entry that describes the change in the wallpaper's pattern from day to night: "by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind" (9); "[a]t night in any kind of light, [. . .] it becomes bars" (10). In other words, by day, her first self recognizes it as symbolic of the spark in her that resists John's patriarchal dominance—a revolutionary itch she cannot scratch—and at night, her second self sees it as the prison holding her in. After this section, the narrator's state is inseparable from her account of the time of day; so when Jane announces her switch to largely nocturnal habits two entries later ("I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime" (11)), it signals a shift to her trapped second self.

From this point, what could charitably be called a fixation degenerates into an outright obsession. The woman she imagines behind the pattern soon "gets out in the daytime" (12), when Jane "can see her out of every one of [her] windows" (12), meaning she can never escape the paper, even if she can avoid looking at it. The wallpaper dominates not only her vision but her sense of smell: "not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met" (11). Lastly, the paper infiltrates her sense of touch in two ways: first as she rattles the bars that hold the woman in (or out), thereby tearing off sections of the paper (13), second as she "creep[s] smoothly on the floor, and [her] shoulder just fits in that long

smooch around the wall" (15). By the end of the story, she has shifted so completely into her new consciousness that she thinks she has "come out of that wallpaper" (14), thereby claiming the paper as home and birthplace.

Appropriately, Jane greets her new world as a child might – curious about her immediate surroundings, but apprehensive about going beyond them:

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room to
creep around as I please!

I don't want to go outside. I won't even if Jennie
asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground,
and everything is green instead of yellow. (14-5)

Wolter expresses concern that Jane's late rejection of the outside indicates that she "learns to accept [John's] confinement, but he fails to consider that a new consciousness means new boundaries: this Jane has not been fighting to leave the room, she has been fighting to leave the wall – she has been successful, and is now committed to assessing the new outside frontier (that is also marked with bars) before engaging with it. Thus, Jane's hesitation at the end is not a regression (Hume 481), merely a plateau of learning: her new language style, sleep routine, and habitat will need getting used to before she can move on. Mary Reynolds' second consciousness began in a similarly child-like state: during her first major episode, "[a]ll of the past that remained to her was the faculty of pronouncing a few words, and this seems to have been as purely instinctive as the wailings of an

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infant" (4). Like Mary, Jane becomes like "a new being, for the first time ushered into this world" (Mitchell 4), and behaves accordingly.

More significant than her speech loss (which reversed with teaching) was Mary's severed emotional connection to her friends and family. Her memory loss had robbed her of any knowledge of these connections. Although Jane's memory of her first self is intact, her ties to John and Jennie are not. As her shift becomes more complete, she refers to John in less intimate terms: "dear John" (7) becomes "John" (8-14), and then "young man" (15), and finally "that man" in the last paragraph of the story. Although Jane remembers who John is, as Felida X does, she, like Mary Reynolds, views her relations "as for the most part strangers and enemies, among whom she [is], by some remarkable and unaccountable means, transplanted" (Mitchell 4-5).

One might be inclined to read such an ending as inauspicious, even tragic – but given that "[t]he first lesson in [Mary's] education was to teach her by what ties she was bound to those by whom she was surrounded, and the duties devolving upon her accordingly" (4), can we really be sad that Jane has lost this opportunity? Jane's permanent severance from emotional ties to John and Jennie is immediately followed by increased energy and an improved mood—her break has finally cured her neurasthenia, allowing her "nervous serenity" (Breakdown 203) as a single, fully dedicated self. While Mary Reynolds' second self relearned her former intellectual and vocational skills, she regained "no recollection of the feelings" (12) of

her former relationships. Should the same thing happen to Jane, she would be able to leave behind the conflict and repression that plagues her at the story's outset.

Mary Reynolds made a switch that left her "permanently in her second state" (Mitchell 11, italics removed). What would a permanent change for Jane say about the story's ending? Second-Jane's grip on reality at the end of the story is tenuous; but, since she is able to write her own story, she does seem fully functional, as Felida X was in her second state, with "moral and intellectual faculties, though different, [. . .] incontestably sound" (Proctor 90). Should Jane remain shifted into her second consciousness, it seems likely she would, like Mary, eventually relearn her former faculties and assimilate into society as a new identity. What she would not regain, though, is her attachment to her overbearing husband and abuse-enabling sister-in-law. This prospect offers a hope in the story's ending absent from any other reading. What theorists have been studying for years as a tragic descent into madness can be seen rather as a freeing split from an oppressive and even abusive relationship.

Thus, when "The Yellow Wallpaper" is read in the context of dual consciousness and with Gilman's own socio-medical theories in mind, it becomes a positive, though harrowing, story of liberation. Second-Jane is an exaggerated model - not necessarily an idealized pattern to follow; but she does have a much greater hope of eventual happiness than First-Jane ever did. In fact, Jane's struggle presents one notable departure in Jane's story from those of Felida X and Mary Reynolds: a possible trigger. Given

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Gilman's position on the adverse effects of "interference with natural physical habits" (Breakdown 203), she may, without realizing it, be telling the story of a forced split, an early conception of Dissociative Identity Disorder, in Jane's attempt to free herself from abuse. Whatever the cause, Jane's new consciousness, rather than madness, can be viewed as a new sanity – a fresh start. With her conflict resolved, her energy restored, and her creativity reclaimed, she can now be happy: she has "got out at last [. . .] in spite of" (15) her first self, and destroyed the physical manifestation of her original captivity.

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Searching Between the Lines:

Ambiguity, Paralysis and Revisionist Readings of
Joyce's "Eveline"

CHRIS WIECZOREK

Chris Wieczorek's "Searching Between the Lines: Ambiguity, Paralysis and Revisionist Readings of Joyce's Eveline" is an exemplary research essay that, as its title suggests, spells out its thesis in its methodology, taking the reader step by logical step through the act and history of interpreting one of the most critically acclaimed and debated stories in James Joyce's *Dubliners*. It deftly and articulately summarizes a wide range of interpretations, both traditional and revisionist, before coming up the middle to turn the light on reader response. In a collection that famously focusses on the paralysis that afflicts turn-of-the-century Irish society, readers have traditionally focussed on Eveline's failures, while historicist and revisionary critics have highlighted the failures of Frank, her suspiciously glib paramour. After crisply summarizing these interpretations, Wieczorek draws attention to their gaps, and argues that the story is actually about failures in the reader, who is "repeatedly forced to question, and then re-evaluate, our judgements about Eveline's decision." Persuasive, immaculately structured and accessibly written, this essay seems to enjoy doing what we do in English, and I think its readers will agree.

—Dr. Judith Thompson

James Joyce's "Eveline" tells of its namesake protagonist's stagnant life in Dublin, and her subsequent paralysis when faced with a decision to either yoke herself to a life of unpromising domesticity or to instead secretly elope to Buenos Aires. Such an orthodox

reading of the text – seeing Eveline as a casualty of dead Irish society, unable to flee but yet also unwilling to stay – has been decried as “stubbornly conventional” by revisionist critics (Sigler 185). This paper largely circumvents the traditional paralytic interpretation of the text, instead offering a summation of both the orthodox and revisionist interpretations, before going on to argue that neither of these readings accurately captures the essence of Eveline’s dilemma. Although there is both merit to the traditional and the revisionist works done by respective critics, the central paralysis of the story lies not with Eveline’s inability to make a decision, but rather with the reader’s failure to accurately evaluate the decision that Eveline has made.

While traditional interpretations of “Eveline” are by this point in time largely universal, it is helpful to briefly summarize their argumentation so that the interpretation may be compared with those in the revisionist camp. Orthodox critics have argued that the “mode of sensibility” that “Eveline” presents furthers the “core theme of paralysis in the story” (Pirnajmuddin & Teymoortash 36). The central dilemma results when Eveline must decide “whether to keep her promise to Frank [...] or to keep her promise to her dead mother” (36). What transpires is Eveline’s introspective battle, created by two characters that never actually appear before the reader. Eveline must confirm her allegiance to one of them, but the two are mutually exclusive. As Lee Spinks argues, the protagonist is “suspended between identities and role,” with her life failing to contain more than a “passive

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watchfulness, enervation and a nameless sense of threat" (50). Crucial to the orthodox interpretation is Spinks' assertion that Eveline is "suspended", or unable to act when faced with the dilemma. Although she does ultimately choose to stay at home, this is not portrayed as her own decision. Eveline seems to have lost the idea of agency and cannot act for herself. She vacillates wildly between hoping that "people would treat her differently" once she has eloped with Frank (Joyce 2223) and worrying that her father - for which there is substantial textual evidence to indicate that he has abused Eveline - is "becoming old lately" and "will miss her" (2224). At its core, the orthodox reading is almost entirely about Eveline and her inability to decide. Pirnajmuddin and Teymoortash argue that Eveline "*leans on her past,*"* and consequently she "cannot break free of it" (37). She resigns herself to the past that she cannot leave, returning to a familiar but quotidian life in Dublin.

What is largely ignored in the orthodox reading, however, is that Eveline does make a decision about her future. Central to traditional interpretations is what is presumed to be the binary nature of the text - Eveline can either choose life in Dublin, or love and romance with Frank. Yet, the notion of love is largely untouched in "Eveline"; studying the relationship between Frank and Eveline, the reader only gleans such trivialities as "he was awfully fond of music" (Joyce 2224). When Eveline seems to finally commit to the idea of eloping with Frank, it is

* Italics here are from the authors.

because he would “save her” from a life of drudgery (2224), and will “give her life, perhaps love, too” (2224). Joyce crucially positions the first clause, that of giving Eveline “life”, before the thought of “love”. The inclusion of “perhaps” also aids our understanding of Eveline’s decision. She is not leaving because she loves Frank, as his ability to provide her with love is dubious at best. Instead, she chooses to go because of Frank’s potential to give her “life” – a new start. Even at the docks, when indecision once again compromises her ability to think rationally, Eveline prays to God “to show her what was her duty” (2225). Notably, Eveline asks not for God to guide her to true love, instead referring to duty, an idea which has already been referenced in the promise that was made to her mother to “keep the home together for as long as she could” (2224). Eveline is praying for an answer that she already knows: she must keep the remnants of her family together. The final line, of giving Frank “no sign of love or farewell or recognition” is ambiguous, and has been used by critics in a multitude of different arguments. It is strongly suggested, however, that Eveline has in fact made a decision – a decision to remain at home. Eveline’s central dilemma, framed as choosing her family or Frank’s love, is incorrect. It is about choosing either to stay with her family or to run away from them. Eveline quite clearly chooses the former.

It was with Hugh Kenner, however, that a credible revisionist reading of “Eveline” truly emerged. Central to Kenner’s argument is his reinterpretation of the character of Frank; rather than offering a superficial reading of what

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seems to be an archetypal character, Kenner instead argues that Frank has a narrative of his own – a narrative, primarily, of deception (20). Hinging his argument almost entirely on the weight of two commas in one sentence – “he had fallen on his feet in Buenos Aries [comma] he said [comma] and had come over to the old country just for a holiday (20) – Kenner proceeds to convincingly argue that Eveline is not simply quoting Frank in this passage, deducing instead that Frank has been quoting as well from “the kind of fiction Eveline will believe, the fiction in which ready lads ‘fall on their feet’” (20). He claims to have a “home waiting for [Eveline]” in Buenos Aries (Joyce 2223), but this is suspicious at best. The promise of a better life in a far away land is almost appallingly cliché when the unavoidable cynical undertones of *Dubliners* are considered; even more crucially, this promise is entirely unverifiable by either Eveline or the reader. Ambitious revisionists since Kenner have gone on to suggest that “‘going to Buenos Aires’ was recognised as code for being sold into prostitution” (Kreshner 305); this claim, however, is irresponsible given the lack of support from the text. Instead, as Frank “pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze” (Joyce 2223), one senses that this is a hyper-romanticized version of the actual events. Verisimilitude may exist in other parts of the story, but it is certainly not found in “a face of bronze”, given that Frank has ostensibly spent at least several months courting Eveline in dreary Ireland. Whereas orthodox critics reduce “Eveline” down to a narrative about a girl who cannot make a decision, Kenner opines

that the hidden story of "Eveline" is the story of Frank, "a bonder with a glib line, who tried to pick himself up a piece of skirt" (21). A reduction of narratives does not exist in this reading, rather, a duplicity emerges. On the one hand, the ambiguity of Eveline's own personal decision is certainly a factor, however one still must consider, "the patter of an experienced seducer" (Kenner 21). This is also a story with a second, even more sinister narrative than an initial reading would suggest.

Kenner's reading receives much-needed corroboration from historical investigations into the time period, negating some critics who have argued that Frank's nature cannot be deduced with "the lights Kenner brings to illuminate the text" (Feshbach 226). A large part of Frank's fairy-tale narrative is his story of life on the seas; he "sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told [Eveline] stories of the terrible Patagonians" (Joyce 2224). Using a colloquialism to explain his newfound affluence—having "fallen on his feet in Buenos Aries" (2224)—serves a dual purpose for Frank. Not only does it give him a credible explanation as to why he can afford both a vacation in Ireland and a house in South America on a sailor's salary, but it also distracts from the impracticality of what Frank is claiming. Reinales invalidates Frank's Patagonian claim, noting that the "Patagonians had long been wiped out by the time Frank travelled around the world" (530); she also argues that the group was "not nearly as 'terrible' as Frank portrays them" (530). Both of these facts lend support to Kenner's argument that Frank is weaving Eveline a story that she will believe, despite the

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fact that it is “clearly a myth” (Reinares 530). In dealing with Frank’s assertion that he owns property in Buenos Aires, Reinares adds that by the beginning of the 1900s, the native Argentinean oligarchy took pride in its possession of native land and property (530). For this reason, it is implausible that Frank, or for that matter, “any other working class immigrant, would have been able to purchase (very expensive) real estate” (Reinares 530).[†] Traditional critics are not wrong, in that Eveline undergoes tremendous personal angst in her attempts to make a decision about her future. However, such a narrow reading ignores the subtleties of Joyce’s work. A look at this broader context “considerably complicates Eveline’s ‘idyllic’ plan of escape, and Frank’s invitation looks far from innocent” (Reinares 532). “Eveline” is not just a story about the titular character; according to revisionists, it is also a story about outside characters intertwining their personal narratives with this titular character.

Although a credible theory, the revisionist reading still leaves large gaps which are filled by assumptions. Eveline herself never seems to acknowledge any of the problems with Frank’s story; hence there is never a textually based reciprocation of Kenner’s work, other than the ambiguous mention of Eveline’s father forbidding the affair because he “[knows] these sailor chaps” (Joyce 2224). The revisionist reading assumes that Frank’s deceitful motives will impact the other characters in the story, and particularly Eveline’s decision. Although her father’s

[†] Brackets here are from Reinares.

comment is obviously meant to be read with a negative connotation, it is doubtful that he forbids the relationship because he suspects Frank of planning to fulfill a consummation of sorts. If this were the case, he would likely speak to her directly, so as to alert the reader to this crucial point. A much more probable explanation for her father's disapproval is the fact that he is "becoming very old lately" (2224), and is likely frightened that he will lose what is ostensibly his only source of income for alcohol-filled Saturday nights (2224). Although the modern reader may not realize that Frank is being dishonest, Reinares suggests that a reader at the turn of the twentieth century would likely be aware of Frank's deception; at the very least, they would question the discrepancies in his story (532). Be it through lack of education, her abysmal situation at home, or a desire to believe whatever she hears, Eveline does not question Frank's narrative or his motives in the same way the reader does.

Eveline's failure to respond to the implied threat that Frank poses - and thus, the inability of Frank to have a direct impact on the story - leads to questions about the usefulness of revisionist interpretations. Margot Norris, eulogizing Kenner's passing in, "The Voice and the Void: Hugh Kenner's Joyce," recounts how the critic "loved to sleuth for what was [...] untold and inaudible yet capable of being inferred" (486). Norris is correct here, in that what seems at first to be an ambitious assertion - Frank's true desires are radically different than we first assume - is empirically justified. Does this realization matter? Just as the orthodox reading is discredited for being solely

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focussed on Eveline, Kenner's interpretation should be scrutinized for what seems to be his devotion to Frank. Central to the revisionist interpretation is the colloquial framing of Frank as a 'bad person', who will ultimately harm Eveline. Kenner seems to think that Joyce uses Frank as a direct foil to Eveline, influencing her to remain at home. This is incorrect, as Frank's desires fail to have a meaningful impact on the characters in the story. Imperatively, rather than using Frank to influence Eveline, Joyce uses Frank to influence the reader; we alone are supposed to have knowledge of his true intentions, not Eveline.

Giving the reader certain privileges while simultaneously withholding much of Eveline's thought process seems to suggest that a third interpretation of "Eveline" inherently exists. Rather than being an narrative about Eveline's inability to make a decision, "Eveline" is truly about the reader's failure to judge the decision that Eveline does make. What transpires is indecisiveness on the part of the reader - crucial ambiguities exist where we need concrete information in order to solidify our judgement about her final decision. What changes in the final 25 lines, between Eveline's epiphany that "she must escape!" (Joyce 2224), and when she gives Frank no sign of recognition as she chooses to fulfill her duty to the family? Although we may originally think - as Eveline seems to - that it would be better to escape a life of staggering dullness and potential abuse, Frank's true intentions cloud our judgement irreconcilably. Although Eveline does not realize his nefarious motives, they complicate how the

reader feels about her decision, perhaps leading us to think that she is better off remaining in Dublin. We are repeatedly forced to question, and then re-evaluate, our judgements about Eveline's decision, and it seems as if "there is no end to this questioning" (Luft 49). Significant events repeatedly take place in "Eveline" without proper explanation for the reader. Deprived of the knowledge as to why these events have happened, the reader is incapable of making broad judgements. A universal meaning or profound truth is antithetical to the existence of "Eveline" as a story because it is incapable of being reduced to a singular meaning. "[T]he story does not imply that one option is better than the other" based on what is given to the reader through the text (Luft 48) - not enough information is available.

A better way to interpret "Eveline", perhaps, is through the lens of reader response theory. Rather than forcing the text to fit a meaning, multiple readings should be accepted in accordance with our personal experiences. Luft writes that the reader is caught "in a similar, hermeneutic, conflict" as Eveline is (50), but this conflict has a different resolution for all of us. Admittedly, reader response theory can be, and is, applied to almost any piece of literature; as Harkin correctly notes, "today it's fair to say that reader-response *conceptions* are simply assumed in virtually every aspect of [literary] work" (413).[‡] Yet I argue that "Eveline" is different from "virtually every aspect of literary work" that Harkin cites because the response of the reader is not

[‡] Italics here are from Harkin.

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just a facet of our overall experience; rather, as with much modernist work, the reader's response is the primary contributor to the overall experience. The ambiguity of "Eveline" encourages self-reflection because it catalyses our ideas about what Eveline should have done and why. These opinions "are based on the values and mental habits of the reader rather than the story itself" (Luft 50). Joyce does not encourage reflection from the titular character, but instead reflection from the reader about this character. Unlike Eveline - who is able to make a conscious decision to remain at home - readers are "trapped [...] by conflicting interpretations of the story", implying that the dilemma is irresolvable (Luft 49). Hartman argues that the story challenges readers to stay within this indeterminate state for as long as possible. This fosters an attitude of understanding, based on how we personally relate to the text, rather than one of judging what Eveline's correct approach should have been (270). The reader is able to navigate this impasse to some extent, and look at the text from his or her own personal experience. Although Joyce refuses "to resolve the fundamental ambiguity of the story" (Luft 51), we can find significant individual meaning from components within it. Perhaps we see ourselves in the flawed father who is afraid to let go of something he loves, or maybe we relate with Eveline's intense emotional connection to her deceased mother. Each character is created by Joyce to make the reader think; not necessarily of what Eveline should do, but rather of what they would do.

It is clear that "Eveline" has not ceased to be a controversial text. Two primary interpretative theories - the orthodox and the revisionist - have done significant work to further our understanding of the story. It is clear, however, that unsolved questions remain. Luft argues that "Eveline" is about more than "the anguish of decisions having to do with obligation, emigration, marriage, and love. It is about the complexities and ethics of interpretation" (50). Any reading or interpretation of a text attempts to provide meaning to extrapolate on what is given to us by the author, and to create something out of what is often the mosaic of modern literature. The problem with "Eveline" is that the mosaic remains unfinished; large, unavoidable gaps exist where we expect there to be colour and meaning. Trying to deduce meaning solely from what is in front of us - as the majority of critics up until this point have attempted to do - is largely impossible. We do not have enough pieces to complete the puzzle. Rather than trying to fit the text to a monolithic theory, it must be allowed that people will fill in the gaps of the mosaic with their own personal theories and knowledge. "Eveline" is not a story about Eveline's paralysis - it is more a story about our paralysis, and our attempts to break free from a personal dead society.

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CONTRIBUTORS

DANIELLA CONLEY is a fourth year student at Dalhousie University. She will be graduating this spring from the Bachelor of Arts program with a Combined Honours in English and Creative Writing and a minor in Spanish. Daniella has been practicing her craft as a writer for many years and would like to continue her involvement in the literary world through publishing in the future.

ALLISON HILL is a fourth-year student who will soon have an Honours English degree with a minor in Spanish. After graduating in May, she'll be returning home to the San Francisco Bay Area to thaw, spend time with her dogs, and hopefully do some writing and editing. Allison is also considering pursuing a Masters after some time off in order to study what she has come to realize is her interest within English - gay and lesbian subtext in Victorian literature.

ELLEN JAMIESON is from Peterborough, Ontario and is completing her Combined Honours in Biology and English at Dalhousie this year. Her thesis investigated the effects of anthropogenic noise on parent-offspring communication in Tree Swallows. In September, Ellen will be attending Trent University to pursue a Masters in Environmental and Life Sciences with a focus on avian conservation. She loves birding, biking, and books, and hopes to continue finding the beauty in both science and the arts.

Contributors

ERIK NOLAN is an English Honours student in his fifth year of undergraduate studies. He writes largely on race, gender, and politics, and favors studying medieval and modernist literature. Beyond the hallowed halls of academia, he is an amateur dancer, an aspiring fisherman, an avid volunteer, and an ardent violinist. He enjoys reading speculative fiction for pleasure and the news for torment, balancing his mental health precariously between the two.

HELEN PINSENT is in her graduating year at Dalhousie, and should really be writing a paper right now. Instead, she's likely reading, watching, or listening to something lovely and underappreciated. She'll be returning to Dal in the fall for her Master's, where she hopes combine her love of Terry Pratchett with her love of validation through praise.

CHRIS WIECZOREK is a second year student from Victoria, British Columbia, currently pursuing a double major in English and Political Science. When not trying to figure out ways to pretend like he's done all of the readings for seminar classes, he enjoys getting outdoors, playing soccer and hockey, and reading books not assigned for class.

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