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The journal began as the idea of a group of writers, artists, and musicians from a second year English honours class and has published 18 issues since September 2011. As “English” is a field of remarkable interdisciplinary richness and UBC students work in remarkably diverse mediums, we welcome a wide range of genres and forms: academic essays in the field of English, poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, stage and screenplay, photography, visual art, music, and film. Our mission is to provide a place for UBC undergraduates to showcase, celebrate, and share their work within the university and beyond. In turn, we hope we leave our student audiences feeling inspired and connected to the incredible energy and talent found in the community around them.

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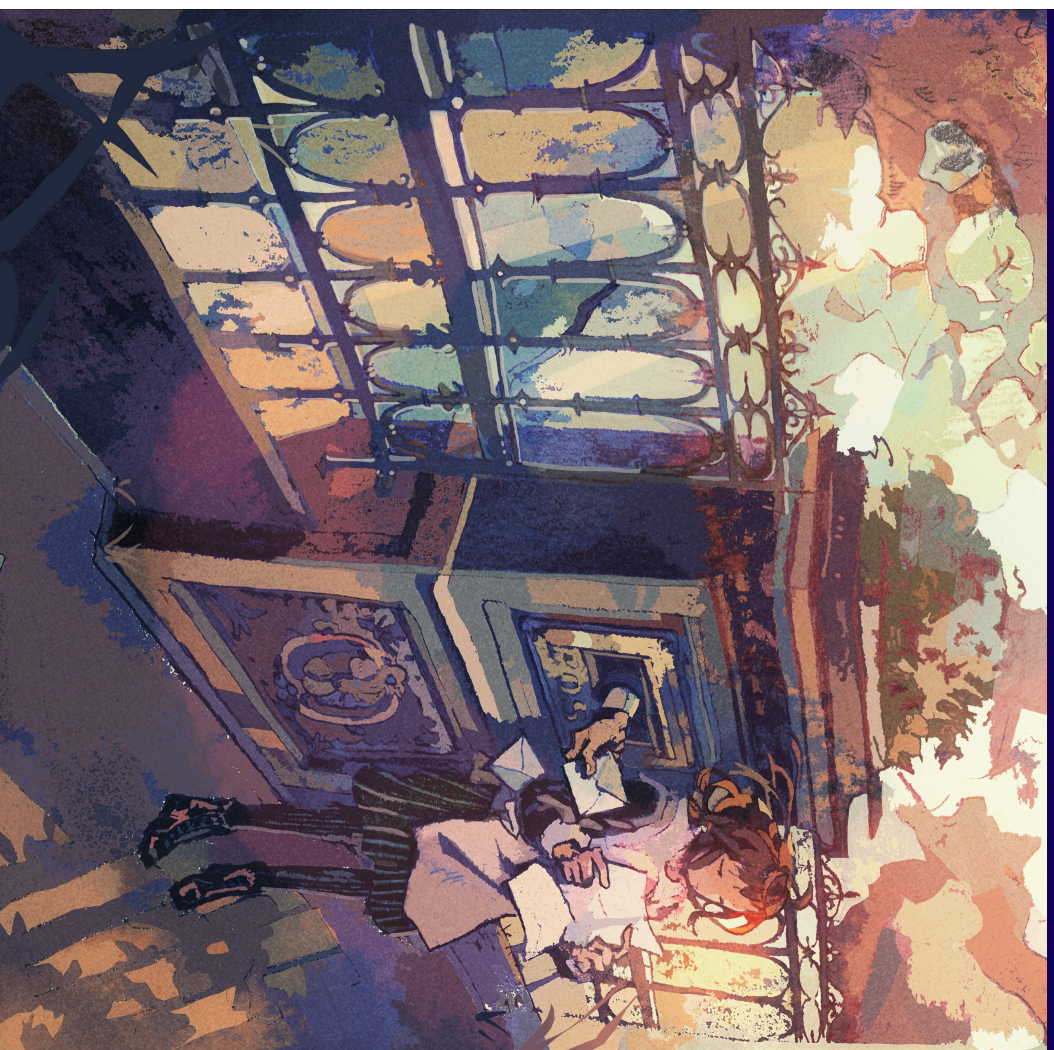
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FAILED LEGACIES OF FEELING:
RACIAL MELANCHOLIA AND FRAGILE
SUBJECTS OF QUEER INTIMACY IN
ANDREW AHN'S SPA NIGHT (2016)

AMANDA WAN

In Andrew Ahn's *Spa Night*, queerness circulates through the aesthetics of failure and fragility within the Cho family, and the losses that they desire and grieve as racialized and classed subjects. Racial melancholia, as formulated by David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, circulates between members of the family as traces of emotional maps and form their relationality to one another. The emotional terrains between the Chos and other figures throughout the film generate queer intimacies through spoken language, physical acts of care and kinship, and the preservation of lost desires and emotions in the memory work of circulating or inheriting grief. As these queer intimacies become generated through modes of kinship that do not privilege relationality based on shared claims to race, language, or biological reproduction—and as characters like David “fail” in western LGBTQ discourses and analyses of *Spa Night*—it becomes clear how fragile seemingly concrete identitarian categories like “queer,” “Asian,” or “Korean/Korean American” are in highlighting the politics of coherent subjectivity and recognition as a queer subject. Frustrations and

disappointed expectations about David's failure to perform as a visible and audible queer subject communicate the fragility of the emotional and political desires upholding these identitarian categories, and the need for resolution and legibility enclosed in these desires.

Through four sections, I will work through the immense communicative potential of failure and fragility across various characters and readings of *Spa Night*: “Reading the shame of racial melancholia in the Cho family,” “‘Inscrutable’ Asians and the failed queer subject,” “Speaking unclearly/Translating queerly,” and “Troubling ‘coming out’ narratives: the queering space of the Korean spa.”

Reading the Shame of Racial
Melancholia in the Cho Family

I approach racial melancholia as Eng and Han's construction of a “psychic condition,” wherein unresolved grief over losing objects and ideals associated with selfhood and subjectivity culminates in grief that is never redirected externally and is instead internalized (Eng 16). In their commitment to destabilize the pathologizing tendencies

of Freud—one of the points at which Eng and Han arrive at the theory of melancholia—racialized subjects moving through immigration and the legacies of Western imperialism in Asia, such as the working-class immigrant Cho family in *Spa Night*, may grieve over “lost objects, places, and ideals” in attempts to recognize themselves in fulfilling desires. As we see with the working-class immigrant Cho family in *Spa Night*, these longings “remain estranged and unresolved” because they are never fulfilled and therefore felt as lost (Eng 17, emphasis in original). Forced to close their restaurant due to financial struggles, the Chos’ psychic terrains become “uninhabitable and barren,” demonstrating “conditions of existence” characteristic of racial melancholia (Eng 13). Within this landscape of feeling, they are made to move with diminished capacity for embodying or imagining feelings such as happiness and hopefulness. It is the emotional and embodied lives of loss and longing that are made possible for the Chos, engendering not merely a lack of fulfillment but an excess—of sadness, of longing, and the shame of feeling helpless against such spillages, where shame turns the pain of melancholy into a matter of one’s own body (a thread I will take up in a later section). Such melancholic excess confirms the inarticulable quality of pain and loss; it also gestures towards the possibility of reading the aesthetics and communicative potentials of sadness, despair, and failure, rather than pathologizing either sadness or happiness as polar symptoms only capable of betraying—then excavating—the other.

Quietly, loss flowers between David

(played by Joe Seo), Soyoung (David’s mother, played by Haery Kim), and Jin Cho (David’s father, played by Youn Ho Cho) in their shared relationalities embodied through tiredness and memory work. When they close the restaurant, they lose access to its physical space and the emotional terrains mapped onto it. Echoes of their loss resonate as Soyoung and David encounter the tangible brokenness of the building where Soyoung and Jin first lived when they migrated from Korea, now neglected. Facing the building, and presently dislocated from her emotional memory map of arrival in America, Soyoung recounts details of her and Jin’s feelings to David while staring at the run-down building. She ends forlornly:

SOYOUNG: Moving to America... we were so excited to be here.

DAVID: Are you okay?

SOYOUNG: It’s been a long day.¹

(*Spa Night*)

Soyoung’s initial excitement and hope mapped onto the building, here, becomes disoriented by the present emotional terrain of losing their restaurant and great financial and emotional strain. Her loss and grief manifests as tiredness—“It’s been a long day”—as Soyoung physiologically bears the emotional weight of holding past affects while confronting their misalignment with the present moment. The labour of memory ensures that the weight of loss is not only the weight of loss itself, but of its haunting presence, carried long after it has been perceived to be gone.

Eng and Han offer that under racial melancholia, objects or ideals that are lost are preserved by the ego’s ongoing,

ambivalent identification with them—a person internalizes what is lost as part of themselves in order to keep it alive. Such internalization produces estrangement because the connection is based on lost objects associated with negative affects; identification not only happens with lost objects or ideals, then, but with their painful emptiness and ghostliness (Eng and Han 688). Grieving the lost building and an emotional map she no longer has access to, Soyoung preserves their ghosts by bearing their weight while passing them onto David through storytelling. David has no memories of the building himself (he only recalls their second home, “the pink apartment”), but the ghost has been articulated as part of their relationship in a shared psychic realm. In this way, the “intersubjective psychology” of racial melancholia “as a psychic state focused on bonds among people ... that might be addressed and resolved across generations” (Eng and Han 683) manifests in David and Soyoung’s relationality, which resonates with the circulating ghost of lost spaces and emotions.

“Inscrutable” Asians and
the Failed Queer Subject

Across *Spa Night* and film reviews, David seems to “fail” as a subject—as a gay Korean son in the context of his family and alongside other Korean diasporic subjects in the film, and as a queer subject in the North American LGBTQ discourse of English-language online reviews. He forgets to use both hands to pour alcohol for his father as per Korean etiquette. His SAT scores are too low for college admission

because study time has been spent helping his parents run their restaurant, and become distressing when hope is placed onto David to find promising employment. He is unable to express the appropriate affects of joy or pleasure when he joins childhood peer Eddie Baek and friends for lively, drunken karaoke. His playful, yet fraught conversation with Soyoung and Jin at a Korean spa locates points of temporal misalignment within the family:

SOYOUNG: David, when you get married, I’ll come to the spa with my daughter-in-law. [Laughs.]²

JIN: [Nods.]

DAVID: What if my wife doesn’t want to scrub your back?

SOYOUNG: Why wouldn’t she want to?

DAVID: [In English.] What if she thinks it’s gross?

SOYOUNG: Gross? What’s gross about that?

DAVID: [Laughs.]

JIN: Leave him alone. It’s too early to talk about marriage.

SOYOUNG: [Smiles.] He can start dating! It’s just dating. Don’t you want to meet a pretty Korean girl?

DAVID: What if I marry a white girl?

SOYOUNG: [Pauses, no longer smiling.]

A white girl is okay. If you want. But how would your father and I communicate with her? How would we talk to her? To our grandchildren? You should marry a Korean woman and have Korean kids. Wouldn’t that be nice?

Soyoung’s “*when* you get married” places David onto a timeline where he will inevitably be married to a woman who

engages with familial rituals like going to the spa and biologically reproducing grandchildren. David tests queering this timeline not by asking about dating a boy or not having children, but by disrupting the spa ritual that affirms Soyoung's temporal mapping of kinship—"What if she thinks it's gross?"—and by suggesting dating a white girl. Through these minor challenges, he asks about assumptions underlying bindings around language, culture, racialized bodies and tongues ("How would we talk to her? To our grandchildren?"), domestic rituals, and relationality within a viable family unit, potentially unravelling (or at least gesturing towards the possibility of unravelling) cisheteronormative assumptions about kinship and relationality.

In a number of film reviews, David fails as a queer subject because he is illegible and repressed within LGBTQ discourse. His quietness poses an "inability to fully express himself" to the extent that

there is no need for an Asian-American cyborg, because we already have plenty ... [Asian-Americans in cinema] kiss and undress, but never cross the lines or make a mess. They go through the motions of living but never experience joy, ecstasy, or devastation. *Like cyborgs, they are human on the outside, but on the inside not quite, not enough.*

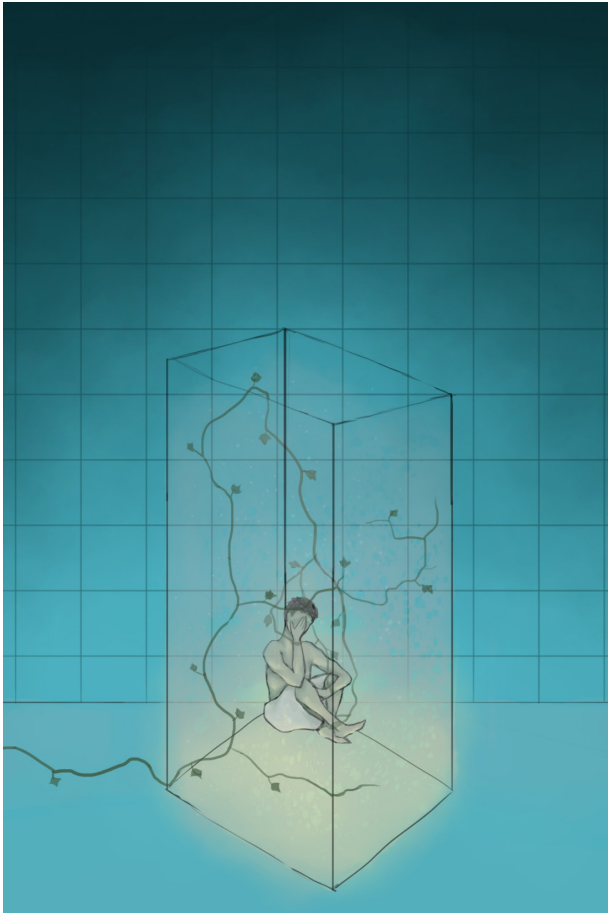
(Dong, emphasis my own)

Dong's comparison between the unfeeling cyborg and David is fascinating because it unfolds within the context of a genealogy of Asian subjects cast as mysterious or unfeeling in the Western imagination,

through "the Asiatic figure ... associated with aloofness and obfuscation, as exemplified by the notion of the 'inscrutable Oriental'" (Hu). Through this Orientalist trope of inscrutability, limited capacities for affect are mapped onto Asian bodies: unable to hold space for the interiority that characterizes humanity and individual subjectivity in liberal humanist philosophy, bodies racialized as Asian do not require readings beyond Western imperial projections upon their skin.

That David is compared to an ineffectual cyborg because he speaks little, is reserved in facial expressions, and never vocalizes cathartic self-actualization throughout the film demonstrates the "ways in which subjects are rendered invisible, forgotten about, and positioned outside the limit of public feelings as figures the dominant publics can neither feel for or with" (Kim 100) when they are interpreted as lacking in the capacity to feel or express internal subjectivity. Illegible within a mainstream North American LGBTQ discourse that demands he externalize his queerness to be recognized as a feeling, queer subject, David is relegated into an emotional terrain that positions him as lacking or one-dimensional precisely because he is so "woefully opaque" that he will always be "unreachable" (Erbland) when he frustrates the desire for a coherent subject set on a linear temporality of resolution, articulation, and externalized self-actualization.

Dismissals of David's ambivalent subjectivity across *Spa Night* and its reviews signal the fragility of seemingly solidified identitarian categories such



as “queer”. That David can “fail” to be a liberated queer subject because he does not vocalize self-actualization by the end of the film betrays how fragile “queer” is as a mode of perception and identification—much like the subjects who are supposed to embody narratives around queerness. Within “an easy equation of queerness ... with modernity, visibility, sexual liberation, and revelation ... set over and against the tropes of ‘tradition,’ concealment, secrecy, and modesty” (Gopinath 166), failed expectations around expressing subjectivity communicate plenty about the slippages and seams of identity and recognition, such as the labours of desire, political investment,

and idealized trajectories that produce the discursive project of idealized subjects as “queer.” That David’s failed queerness is inseparable from his figuration under the shadow of the “inscrutable Oriental” elaborates the fragility of the “Korean/Korean American” subject, through which David’s reticence is uncritically attributed to a Korean culture’s “certain kind of family-based social conservatism” with “more traditional gender roles” (Barber 75) and an inability to comprehend queerness. At best, such an essentialist reading of so-called “Korean culture” stumbles on what Gopinath critiques as Western nationalist readings, which privatize and naturalize conflict as Asian generational issues within a “production of the ‘Asian family’” (Barber 166) rather than reading them as subjects of a diaspora embodying interconnected global intimacies of class, race, gender, sexuality, mobility, and legacies of imperialism.

Speaking Unclearly/ Translating Queerly

Christine Kim suggests that narratives circulating in Asian diaspora can “generate their affective power by bringing together generations of people who continue to share a collective identity.” Meanwhile, she wonders “what discursive space exists for difference and ... recognizing competing registers of diasporic affect and sentiment” (Kim 92). If competing registers mark the fragility of relationality or a failure to communicate, then the use of Spanish between David and Luis—the character who delivers supplies to the Chos’ restaurant—marks this space of failure as a site of potential queer intimacies.

Their shared use of Spanish generates an intimate space where differently racialized bodies and affective registers are able to communicate through translation, which is an act that is meaningful precisely because of the acknowledgement of difference and ambivalence in coherence. David and Luis' relationality also emerges from classed and racialized relationalities rather than biological claims to race or kinship. Translation, then, interrupts Soyoung's suggestion that the capacity for certain languages can be mapped onto racialized bodies based on watertight identifications of language, race, and the capacity to reproduce (e.g. Korean woman = Korean language, can communicate with David's family, viable biological or familial kin; white woman = English language, cannot communicate with David's family, impossible to imagine as biological or familial kin).

Spanish communicates another space of fraudtly queered intimacy for David when he encounters it during a conflict between the Korean-speaking spa manager, a Spanish-speaking patron who has been accused of doing "bad [presumably moralized, sexual] things," the Korean-speaking patron who has accused him, and an English-speaking police officer. David does not translate for anyone involved in the conflict; his silence amidst words hurled through Spanish, Korean, and English (all of which he can speak) helps us locate his relationalities mediated through Spanish both in and outside of the spa as one of multiple, differing translations of queerness. Put another way, the possibilities of communicating kinship through multiple languages, alongside

the associations between his use of these languages and his experiences with queer intimacy, mean that David's silence may actually be more communicative than if he had translated for the patrons, spa manager, and police officer. The fact that his silence is foregrounded in this scene invites readings of David's silence; we are called to question the desire for coherent speech and legibility, at the expense of the enriching language of silence, the failure to translate, and David's ambivalent presence.

Troubling "Coming Out" Narratives: the Queering Space of the Korean Spa

If we relate the possibilities of silence to queerness, the space of the Korean spa communicates intriguingly with western LGBTQ discourses of "coming out" and "cruising": Cruising takes on an ephemeral, almost melancholic tone, with the showers saturated in soft, electric blues. "I've talked about the cruising sequences as ghost stories," Ahn [Director of Spa Night] says. "Men come in and out; you may see them again, but likely you won't" (Jung). Ghostly figures of David's psyche around queer intimacy do move in and out of the spa, but as spectres, they do not all disappear. Eddie, whom David is caught gazing at in the sauna during their night out, is also encountered within his dorm—a space tense with David's desires, but also Eddie's performances of masculinity and the fact of David's barred access to college because of classed and racialized conditions. Ephemeral and yet mobile subjects of queerness, like Eddie, complicate readings of the spa as a closet out of which David must break to recognize his sexuality.

Jin, too, becomes a figure of queer intimacy in and outside of the physical boundaries of the spa. Scrubbing each other in the film's opening sequence, David and Jin express their care through actions based not primarily on the logics of sexual or romantic desire that regulate "capitalism's disciplinary temporalities" (Day 71), but through relationality embodied through shared ritual. As an expression of care, however, scrubbing later demonstrates the capacity to become a manifestation of racial melancholia or the shame formed by the internalization of lost desire and intimacy. David's erotic encounter with another patron in the sauna seems to be a moment of recognition, rendered mutual through their brief exchange:

DAVID: Are you Korean?

PATRON: Yeah.

DAVID: Me too.

(Spa Night)

What seems to be a moment of recognition mediated through shared racial identification as Anglophone Korean men is complicated as a relationality in the visual framing of the brief sex scene following this exchange. Throughout the scene, the majority of the frame consists of the patron's torso, with David's arm wrapped around him and a hand on his chest. Occasionally, David's face appears—but the patron's face remains out of frame. When they finish, the man returns silently to his previous seat in the sauna, and David gazes directly forward. Only when David leans in for a kiss and is abruptly rejected by the patron is the man's face shown. Such abrupt rejection, accompanied by the in-

and out-of-frame placement of the patron's face and David's embrace of the patron's body during the sex scene, are suggestive of a number of things. Continuing with racial melancholia, David's embrace of the patron's body, along with the figure's and the patron's out-of-frame face, suggests David's eroticized and embodied identification with this figure: in that moment he represents, for David, the potential for fulfilled desires of racial and sexual recognition. That the man's patron's face appears in the frame when he abruptly rejects David's kiss suggests that his body also represents the potential for loss and failure to fulfill such desires, once he disrupts David's identification with him as a source of reciprocated intimacy. They are further disrupted by the terror of being caught by the spa manager, who interrupts them when he walks up to the sauna door just after David attempts to kiss the patron.

Following this charged scene, David, repeatedly scrubs his stomach so hard that he cries and breaks skin. Resonating with intermittent cuts of David taking nude or partially-nude self-portraits with his cellphone and undergoing workouts towards toning his stomach, David's grief around his lost ideals—whether encapsulated in the encounter with the Korean American man, the fulfilled desire (and desirability) attendant to such an encounter, or financial support and proximity to other gay men from his employment at the spa—manifests as self-surveillance and shame and self-discipline, when David internalizes his loss as part of his body and physically punishes himself for it by scrubbing³. Through this moving,

yet painful scene, embodied registers of failure emphasize the affective and physical fragility of subjects moving through the emotional terrain of internalized desires that they cannot fulfill.

Why think queerness through failure and fragility? Working through failure and fragility is one possible reminder of the ways in which narratives around kinship, love, and feeling are, like all ways of living, narratives with their own ecologies, reproductive logics, and aesthetics. In reading through modes of failure and fragility I hope to consider the embodied efforts and labours that are taken to not only generate narratives around kinship and feeling, but also reproduce them as ostensibly natural and all-encompassing. I hope to ask what happens when racialized subjects fail to meet the disciplining criteria that grant their bodies subjectivity, and when we attend to the inevitable fragilities of these bodies under liberal humanist philosophies that associate human subjectivity with legible feeling and linear resolution to loss. Far from valorizing the “straightening devices” of colonial, cisheteronormative temporalities, I also want to illustrate how “[t]he effects and evidences of queerness” are “resolutely phenomenological; they are felt and bodies when they move” (Catungal, Diaz, and Kojima 70). Desires towards cisheteronormativity develop through the labours of the body—not always through externalized acts of suppression or violence, but sometimes through conditions that lead to self-disciplining/surveillance, or loss that becomes internalized and

inherited, and in the process potentially reproduce the conditions of such loss. Such labours have profound impacts on psychic and bodily terrains and the capacity to imagine alternative conditions. Yet the queering potentials of failure put pressure on the legacy of capitalist, colonial epistemologies where bodies earn the role of subject through coherence or toxic ideals of success via productivity and profit—and even then only flourish insofar as pleasure comes at the cost of exploitation of other bodies. Failure can be queering because the act of failure facilitates a language for when a queer subject “quietly loses, and in losing ... imagines other goals for life, for love, for art, and for being” (Halberstam 88). Failure might then operate as part of a refusal to be put-together under the logics and pressures of (settler-)colonial capitalism, which itself is an embodied, laborious, and often inconsistent mode of reading subjectivity.

Gesturing towards fragility and the embodied labours of subjectivity, I want to point to the ways in which projections of categories like “queer,” “Korean,” or “Asian” are made up of desires that “follow the line[s] of a wish” (Ahmed 114) towards coherent identities, along with the embodied landscapes through which identified subjects move towards desires for what is possible for racialized, queer(ing) bodies. I also point to the care and healing work that forms the center of my experience and understanding of what queerness does, and with my own desires and anticipatory positions in reading *Spa Night* alongside legacies of feeling in the Korean diaspora. Put another way, I want

to honour the emotional and political labour that it has taken to even imagine better futures through queerness, and have made it possible for me and my—or indeed any—body to do the work of writing this body of work in the first place. This includes any failures and latent desires that I am accountable for in my reading of *Spa Night*.

If David Cho is criticized as a failing discursive figure or incoherent subject in readings of *Spa Night*, I read David's failures as offering their own communicative logic and aesthetics for circulating and (re)generating meaning. Such failures, and subsequent frustrations with his character, are indicative of the rich possibilities of attending to what has been deemed unworthy of attention because there is ostensibly nothing there to attend to. Also highlighted are queering desires for what could be, which we carry into interpretations of "failing" queer of colour subjects like David. The work of queer desire and world-building can be messy and painful, if brilliant and worthwhile; perhaps what communicates the most about the possibilities of queerness is how we inevitably demonstrate imperfection in the course of doing so.

¹ Transcriptions from on English-language translations and captions provided by Netflix Canada.

² This section of dialogue happens entirely in Korean, except where indicated otherwise.

³ On self-discipline, I am informed by Elaine Marie Carbonell Laforteza's work on skin colour and language as "somatechnologies of the self" (51) within postcolonial Philippines. These somatechnologies are facilitated through embodied technologies of self-disciplining, e.g. the beauty industry's skin-lightening creams (discipline and surveillance through the skin) or Spanish language use in the education system (discipline and shaping through

the tongue). Laforteza argues that the colonial legacy of Eurocentric beauty standards and privilege attached to whiteness become circulated in everyday life as part of gendered, classed, and racialized routines around self-image, some of which are ostensibly banal. In *Spa Night*, more might be asked about the significance of quotidian, yet ritualized, cleansing and grooming in the Korean spas within the film. For more from Laforteza, see Works Cited.

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*please refer to thegardenstatuary.com to see the full Works Cited for this essay.

"TO WATER A MANDRAKE":
CORRUPTED CONVERSIONS OF
THE BODY OF CHRIST IN THE
NECROBOTANY OF JOHN WEBSTER'S
THE WHITE DEVIL

AIDEN TAIT

Blasphemous recontextualisations of religious subject matter and a preoccupation with cursed botanicals are two prolific characteristics of John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612), threading his work with the visceral tangibility of mortality, the call of the churchyard, and an implicit struggle with early modern England's tumultuous notions of faith. While previous scholarship has touched upon the manner in which religious rituals and objects are presented and converted in *The White Devil*, there has been little to no exploration of how Webster's necrobotanical references participate in these processes of conversion, where necrobotany refers to flora related to or thought to be intimately associated with the dead. More specifically, Webster's necrobotanical references to the mandrake and to the yew facilitate several corrupted conversions of the body of Christ in very suggestive ways. From the profane transformation of the body of the hanged man at the gallows into the body of the crucified Christ to the tainting of the Eucharist in the consumption of the body and blood of the dead, this paper intends to explore how examining

the use of necrobotanicals through this lens of corrupted conversion offers a new perspective into Webster's complex relationship with religious rituals in *The White Devil*.

The paper will first begin with the image of the corrupted body of the crucified and later resurrected Christ, and how this conversion is enacted by one of the necrobotanicals in the play: the mandrake. I will conduct a brief but relevant contextualisation of the folkloric history of the mandrake in England and analyse how this history is translated and recontextualised in *The White Devil*. I will discuss how the mandrake's repeated association with the gallows and with apocalyptic references to the Last Judgment converts the hanged man into the crucified body of Christ and recalls His resurrection. From this point, I will turn to Webster's allusions to and corruption of the Eucharist through the mandrake and the yew, both of which are believed to feed on the body and blood of the dead and both of which, from a folkloric and a textual perspective, sustain the memory of the dead similarly to the way the Eucharist sustains the

memory of Christ's sacrifice. As with the mandrake, I will also include a folkloric contextualisation of the English history of the yew. In linking these necrobotanicals to a corrupted conversion of the sanctity of the Eucharist, and in addition to Webster's references to *mummmia*, or corpse medicine, a new and relatively undiscussed topic reveals itself: understanding the Eucharist as theological medical cannibalism.

1. *Mandragora officinarum*, crucifixion, and resurrection

Mandragora officinarum, or the mandrake, is a perennial herbaceous plant whose characteristically forked root system often resembles a human figure, engendering the rich history of superstitious and folkloric beliefs surrounding it. The mandrake was prized for its analgesic, soporific, and hallucinogenic qualities by Graeco-Roman physicians such as Dioscorides in his *De Materia Medica* (c. 50–70 CE) and, more contemporaneous to Webster, with early modern herbalists like John Gerard in his *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (1597). It was also feared for its madness- or death-inducing screams once uprooted (Carter 145; qtd in van den Berg and Dircksen 73) by those still attached to its mythology. Consequently, the mandrake occupies a fascinating position in that liminal space between esotericism and secularism. While efforts were made in early modern England towards the standardisation and secularisation of Classical pharmacological and botanical knowledge, prompted by “the demand that the tradition of plant lore be re-examined, and that works of Pliny

and Dioscorides be separated from the accumulated encrustation of centuries of myth and folklore” (Elliot 24), the works of William Shakespeare, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Webster maintained and even contributed to the mandrake's folkloric and monstrous heritage. In the case of *The White Devil*, Webster popularises the belief that mandrakes are grown specifically from the blood-contaminated ground of the gallows (3.3.107). Much of the folklore surrounding the mandrake prior to *The White Devil* argues that the plant grows from the urine or semen of the hanged man (Carter 146) but, as is characteristic of his blood-soaked works, Webster makes a clear connection between the blooming of the mandrake and the shedding of the hanged man's blood instead.

Webster first introduces the mandrake and its association with the gallows in Act 3 Scene 1, where, in criticising Marcello's blind loyalty to the Duke of Florence without concern for his (Marcello) own socioeconomic advancement, Flamineo makes the telling statement: “But as we seldom find the mistletoe / Sacred to physic on the builder oak / Without a mandrake by it, so in our quest of gain” (47-49). In these three lines Webster engages in several levels of inter-folkloric references with a considerable degree of poetic license regarding the mandrake, which does not, in fact, grow beneath oak trees but in ruderal or disturbed habitats (Carter 147). What is revealed in this addition, however, is a conflation of the heavenly and the profane that will come to construct many of the necrobotanicals in the play. The mistletoe that grows on the oak tree was often

interpreted as the presence of the hand of God and, as such, was treated as a sacred means of curing illness and warding off evil in Druidic and Anglo-Saxon circles (Hutton 14). The oak, however, is also known as “the gallows tree” for its frequent use in Britain as a dule tree, or trees utilised for public hangings and for the gibbetting of the corpses of criminals or interlopers—much in the way Christ is hung upon the cross as a transgressive interloper. The mandrake in this instance, then, is understood as blooming from the contaminated earth beneath the hanged bodies. Consequently, Flamineo muddies the sacred by tethering it to the profane, to iterate that in seeking that which ensures protection—the mistletoe, Marcello’s loyalty to the Duke—all attempts are negated in some manner by an unavoidable, parasitic threat—the mandrake that feeds on the blood of the hanged man from the oak, the Duke’s drain on Marcello’s socioeconomic opportunities. In fact, prior to this interaction Flamineo propagates this image of blood-drinking or the consumption of bodily fluids in his statement that Marcello’s dedication to the duke “feedest his [the Duke’s] victories, / As witches do their serviceable spirits” (3.1.36-37). From this association, Webster then makes the connection between witches’ familiars feeding from their blood to the mandrake feeding from the blood of the hanged man, perhaps recalling the esoteric belief in the Middle Ages that mandrakes, like familiars, “were thought to be powerful allies who could perform true miracles for their masters” (Van den Berg and Dircksen 74).

Establishing the association of the

mandrake with the gallows and specifically with the mandrake consuming blood, Webster’s next references to the mandrake are explicitly associated with Vittoria and the spilling of her blood. In Act 3 Scene 3, after Vittoria’s arraignment, Lodovico scornfully asks Flamineo: “Wilt sell me forty ounces of her blood, / To water a mandrake?” (107), with the implication that Vittoria will be executed for her complicity in the deaths of Camillo and Isabella and that her blood will sustain a mandrake beneath her corpse at the gallows. Much in the way the blood of Christ upon crucifixion washed away the sins of humankind—“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* Ephesians 1:7)—so the spilling of Vittoria’s blood in her arraignment, her persecution and her “execution” by imprisonment in the house of convertites, washes her sins from the state’s hands. Eventually, however, it is only by Monticelso paying Lodovico to kill Vittoria to avenge the death of Camillo that any true absolution from her “sins” is (dubiously) attained, articulated by Vittoria herself: “O my greatest sin lay in my blood. / Now my blood pays for’t” (5.6.236-37). In *The White Devil*, legal and personal absolution through bloodshed suggests a corrupted conversion from the sanctity with which the purification through bloodshed is attributed in the book of Hebrews, perverting the hallowed understanding that “under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (10:22).

The spilling of the blood of the hanged



man at the gallows, here Vittoria, at once absolves the state of her sins while feeding and sustaining the profane mandrake, who is “resurrected” when pulled from the earth like a corrupted body of Christ emerging from His tomb. We imagine the anthropomorphised body of the mandrake pulled from its earthly prison, this human-like but not quite *human* creature that transcends natural and divine law by its ability to be seeded and resurrected by the blood of the hanged man. However, where the resurrection of Jesus engenders faith and salvation of humankind, the resurrection of the mandrake only propagates death and madness (a fact of which is later articulated by Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*, in which he states “I have this night

digged up a mandrake / [...] / And I am grown mad with’t” [2.5.6]). Indeed, the image of the mandrake as this corrupted resurrected body of Christ is facilitated by an explicit association with the resurrected dead at Judgement made by Vittoria, who states: “I prithee yet remember / Millions are now in graves, which at last day / Like mandrakes shall rise shrieking” (5.6.64). At Judgement, John writes: “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne... And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done” (Revelation 21:12-13). The mandrakes, similarly, are raised from their dormant, “death-like” state beneath the ground, delivering the ultimate judgement unto those who hear their screams.

2: *Mandragora officinarum*, *Taxus baccata*, and the Eucharist

It is through the folkloric understanding of the consumption of the dead by the mandrake, through the blood or bodily fluids of the hanged man feeding the mandrake’s propagation, and by the yew, whose roots were believed to draw their nutrients from corpses, that suggests a corrupted conversion from the consumption of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Like the mandrake, *Taxus baccata*, the notoriously poisonous coniferous yew tree, has a rich necrobotanical heritage as the “tree of the dead” (Laqueur 133). Sacred to the British churchyard, the yew is a protector of the dead in that it shades grave mounds—Thomas W. Laqueur notes that “*Taxus baccata* almost invariably casts its

shadow where the dead are, on the south and west sides of the church. Like the bodies it watches over, it is rarely found on the north side” (135) — and in that, should the bodies of the dead be rubbed with an infusion of yew leaves, the spiritual and medicinal properties of the yew were thought to “preserve them [the dead] and to guarantee their immortality” (Lee 570), a belief which reflected principles of rebirth and regeneration in Druidic death rituals (Laqueur 135). By that same token, the roots and branches of the tree were, according to Robert Turner in his *Botanologia* (1664), believed to “draw and imbibe’ the ‘gross and oleaginous Vapours exhaled from the graves by the setting Sun” (qtd in Laqueur 135), to draw sustenance from the putrefying remains of the very corpses they were thought to protect. Turner goes on to state that it was believed that these “Vapours” gathered beneath the branches of the yew before being imbibed, and that they were understood to be the dead bodies resurrected from the earth (Lee 571).

In Act 4, Scene 3, Monticelso questions Lodovico’s revenge plot against Brachiano and Vittoria: “Like the black, and melancholic yew-tree, / Dost think to root thyself in dead men’s graves, / And yet to prosper?” (4.3.120-22). Monticelso here refers to the perception of the gross violation of the sanctity of the dead that the yew incurs by profiteering from the decaying remains of corpses, much in the way that Lodovico is implied here to problematically profiteer from the deaths of Vittoria and Brachiano, in that their deaths would assuage his own anger, fuelled by misplaced

lust surrounding the murder of Isabella. By recalling the folkloric assumption that the yew consumes the dead, however, Webster also recalls a much more telling implication. By imbibing the dead, by incorporating their gaseous Vapours and their putrefying remains into the yew’s branches and root system, the spirits of the dead are imbibed, remembered, and immortalised, as the body and blood of Christ is imbibed by His followers in the Eucharist to remember His sacrifice and to reinstate their faith in Him. As stated in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Similarly, the consumption of the blood of the hanged man as the corrupted body of the crucified Christ by the mandrake is the imbibing and remembrance of the death of the body and the resurrection of the spirit of the hanged man, which, when understood as participating in this perverse form of the Eucharist, elevates the hanged man to the spiritual status of Christ.

What is brought into awareness by this corrupted conversion of the Eucharist

through the yew and the mandrake is the intriguing implication that the Eucharist may be theoretically understood as a form of theological medical cannibalism. Webster's work is not unfamiliar with the practice of mummy or corpse medicine (tinctures made from dead human flesh and bones)—a medical practice popularised from late antiquity to early modern England despite the assumption that it is relegated to “medieval” practices (Sugg, “Medical Cannibalism” 825)—with two explicit references to mummy in *The White Devil* and one by Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Gasparo scathingly remarks to Lodovico, “Your followers / Have swallowed you like mummia, and being sick / With such unnatural and horrid physic / Vomit you up i'th'kennel” (Webster, *The White Devil* 1.1.15-18); Isabella feigns rage at Vittoria by declaring that she would “dig the strumpet's eyes out, let her lie / Some twenty months a-dying, to cut off / Her nose and lips, pull out her rotten teeth, / Preserve her flesh like mummia” (2.1.245-248); Bosola sounds the death-knell of the Duchess by comparing her to “a box of worm-seed, at best but a / salvatory of green mummy. What's this flesh? A little / cruded milk, fantastical puff-paste” (*The Duchess of Malfi* 4.2.137-39). There is even a reference to the consumption of the hot blood of felons as a solution to epilepsy in the servant Zanche's provocation “I have blood / As red as either of theirs; wilt drink some? / 'Tis good for the falling sickness” (*The White Devil* 5.6.224), where “falling sickness” is an early modern term for epilepsy.

Richard Sugg articulates that the

human body in early modern theology and medicine “represented the pinnacle of natural creation, God's finest piece of artistry” (*Mummies, Cannibals, and Vampires* 264), a vessel in which the body and soul was mediated by the “spirits” of the body and which medical cannibalism prioritised as a great life-giving force with many medicinal and pharmacological uses. These spirits, Sugg explains, “seem to have been a mixture of air and blood: that is, not just any blood, but blood in its most rarefied, vaporous state” (265). This statement recalls Turner's “gross and oleaginous Vapours” of the dead that the yew imbibes and the fact that Webster emphasises the consumption of the hanged man's blood by the mandrake. The mandrake reflects the practitioners and users of medical cannibalism, who “were trying to swallow not just blood, but those vital spirits nestled within the blood. They were trying, at times, to gulp down the very force of life itself” (268). By understanding these necrobotanicals as metaphorically participating in these crypto-pharmacological practices and as participating in a corrupted form of the Eucharist, Webster invites us to explore the understanding of the Eucharist as a practice of theological corpse medicine. Sugg speaks to this issue, or what he cheekily coins “the weekly cannibalism of the Eucharist” (“Medical Cannibalism” 828), by recalling Paracelsian Edward Taylor's discussion of what the communicants ate and drank during the Protestant ceremony of the Eucharist in 1691: “When the disciples ate and drank Christ's flesh and blood, he [Turner] states, they consumed ‘not the

palpable fleshly humanity, but the spiritual humanity,' namely, 'the virtue and power of his body and blood, his own mumia in which was the divine and human power'" (829). He expands on this by making the telling statement that "until perhaps as late as the mid-eighteenth century, Christians were effectively seeking to swallow the immortal soul" (*Mummies, Cannibals, and Vampires* 272). Consequently, the necrobotanicals in *The White Devil* as they are understood as consuming the body and blood of Christ not only engage in a corrupt conversion from the Eucharist in a play rife with the perversion of religious rituals and subject matter, but they also implicate and sharply bring to light greater theological questions. The necrobotanicals prompt us to consider the extent to which the normalisation and ritualisation of theological medical cannibalism in the Eucharist skirts the fine edge between dubious but relatively widely-accepted crypto-pharmacological and medical practices and a gross perversion of the sanctity of the body and blood of Christ.

Sacrilegious transformations of the body of the hanged man at the gallows into the body of the crucified and resurrected Christ, the perversion of the Eucharist in the consumption of the body and blood of the dead, and the consequent references to the murky waters of the Eucharist and medical cannibalism are three corrupted conversions of the body of Christ that occur in *The White Devil*, proliferated through Webster's engagement with and recontextualisation of the folkloric heritage of two necrobotanicals: the mandrake and the yew. This paper has explored the various

ways in which Webster's treatment of these necrobotanicals participates in a larger tradition of the conflation of the heavenly with the profane that threads through *The White Devil*, prompting questions into the way religion is discussed, complicated, or implicated in Webster's notoriously bloody, subtly blasphemous work. While this paper has touched on the necrobotany of *The Duchess of Malfi*, having necessarily largely focused on *The White Devil* for the sake of brevity, there is room for further probing—particularly as necrobotany relates to the many references to overripe fruit, decaying flora, and rotting, bloated corpses within a distinctly religious setting. What manner of grotesque and damnable corrupted conversions could we unearth in *The Duchess of Malfi* through this new framework of enquiry?

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WHITE WITCHES AND WARRIOR
BEASTS: HIERARCHICAL
ARRANGEMENTS OF BEING AND THE
FANSTASTICAL NORTH IN THE LION,
THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE
AND THE GOLDEN COMPASS

MABON FOO

The fantasy worlds of C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* both feature British children exploring mysterious Northern landscapes and encountering non-human and supernatural beings whose cultures and authority challenge British and Christian hierarchical understandings of existence. Indeed, Pullman's work has been widely read as a retelling of *Narnia* that destabilizes Lewis's problematic beliefs, which Pullman himself summarizes as being that "boys are better than girls; light-coloured people are better than dark-coloured people" (*The Dark Side of Narnia*). Nevertheless, by applying Victorian notions of the Great Chain of Being, this paper aims to demonstrate that such distinctions are not so clear-cut. While *The Golden Compass* inverts the struggle between masculine, human liberators and feminine, monstrous villainy that predominates in Lewis's novel, it retains familiar orderings of gender, ethnicity and species.

Prior to the rise of evolutionary theory in the late-Victorian era, the Great Chain

of Being had since the beginnings of Western thought allowed for Christian hierarchical privileging of humans as being "elevated over nature" (Tedeschi 22). In this categorization, humans were "created to rule over animals, and men to rule over women", with God at the top (Hatlen 84). However, according to Victoria Tedeschi, the boundary between human and non-human became contested through the rise of Darwinian natural selection, as the realization emerged that humans "had descended from godless brutes" (22). This sparked efforts to "defend humanity's privileged position" (22) and reinstate these divides, the "fanciful, fantastical setting" of fairy tales supplying a useful "platform to respond to Darwinian anxieties" (27). These stories, which included Hans Christian Andersen's "The Marsh King's Daughter" and the Grimms' "The Frog Prince", acted on the Victorian "fascination with growth and transformation" (21) by featuring humans cursed into animal forms. Here, the key to reversing these transformations was the suppression of animality and the reinstatement of "normative gender roles"

(27), a figuring of humanity in “opposition to animality” by casting animal existence as Other (27).

Despite this uneasiness, evolutionary theory provided a framework through which “animals, people, and societies” could be ordered from “the least primitive to the most civilized” (Lesko 16). A scientific Great Chain of Being was introduced that established “white European men and their societies, norms, and values” as the pinnacle of evolution (17) and “primitives, animals, women, [and] lower classes” as lesser. Key to maintaining these distinctions was the relationship between the maturation of a child into adulthood and the development of humankind from “primitive to savage group and finally to civilized society” (27). So-called ‘barbarous’ peoples, trapped in ‘pre-civilized’ states, had to be subjected, like children, to British “imperial policies of tutelage [and] discipline” (27), while on the other hand, the development of the “white boy towards civilization” capitulated the “progress of the white race” (27) and their ability to mature past this ostensible ‘pre-civilized’ adolescence. In an era where the supposed threat of atavistic “degeneration and the thwarting of progress” (22) loomed, it became essential for British boys “to perform masculinity, ...to be read as masculine”, in order to maintain their superior positions. Stories of adventure and conflict with “racialized others” (27) therefore provided templates for cultivating this “strong, courageous, [and] loyal” (29) population of future “citizen[s] and soldier[s]” (40).

The depiction of the Arctic North as mysterious and othered provided an

opportunity to prove “the excellence of the masculine British subject” (Franklin 47). In the Middle Ages, the North was positioned as “the entrance to hell” and “the home base of Satan” (46), and the Victorian era furthered a conception of the North as a “desolate region of marvels, mystery, magic, and even evil” despite the “rich culture” and heritage of its very real, actual inhabitants (46). This definition highlights what Edward Said, terms “imaginative geography”, a division of “what is ‘ours’ and what is ‘theirs’” (Hudson 4) defined by the separation between knowable, territory, and “unfamiliar, destabilizing” lands (Cudmore 221) whose mystique must be quelled through “the establishment of Western imperial dominance” (Hudson 4). Thus, the quest to master an inhospitable North served as an ideal masculine enterprise, the “ultimate testing ground of [a] nation” eager to reify its claim to the world (Franklin 47). Indeed, Victorian children’s literature “capitalized on this hunger for tales of modern exploration” (46), and in the 20th century, British “juvenile literature continue[d] to be fascinated with the imaginary North” (63), Lewis and Pullman’s works being two notable examples of this trend.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe evokes the mysterious, magical North in a variety of ways. Not only is there the “dazzlingly bright” sun, “great glaring moon” and preternatural stillness (Lewis 67, 112, 31) of Narnia’s eternal winter, but also of great importance is its plethora of talking animals and mythological beings, ranging from “Dryads and Naiads” to pelicans, centaurs and eagles (138).

Although the sentience of these animals disrupts the “essential connection between personhood and human-hood” (Hage 9), this claim to personhood hinges on the particularly British, gendered humanness these characters demonstrate. The Beavers are “more British than Narnian” (Towns 16); Mrs. Beaver is introduced “with a thread in her mouth working busily at her sewing machine” (Lewis 78) to indicate her domestic femininity, while Mr. Beaver demonstrates masculinity through his prowess at ice-fishing (75). They maintain British politeness and gesticulation, with Mr. Beaver maintaining that his dam is “merely a trifle” (76) and putting his “paw against [his] mouth” (68) as a signal to be quiet. The imposing and potentially frightening Giant is rendered amiable through British civility, as he “[touches] his cap repeatedly to Aslan” (187) and asks for a handkerchief (189). The faun Tumnus, initially viewed by Lucy as a “strange otherworldly male creature”, becomes a “stereotype of a British gentleman” (18), most notably through the afternoon tea of “buttered toast” and “a sugar-topped cake” he serves and the quaint furniture of his cave (Lewis 15-17). Finally, the White Witch encounters a picnic where “a squirrel and his wife with their children”, are sitting “on stools round a table” and eating with forks (125-26). These human modes of food consumption and affirmation of familial harmony stand in contrast to the White Witch’s monstrosity, her illusory Turkish delight that lures Edmund from his siblings.

Aslan, the most notable animal character in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*,

also undermines “the natural distinction between man and animal” (Hage 9). Instead of choosing “a little boy or girl, or even a king or queen” as the God figure of the *Narnia* books, Aslan’s status as a lion enables an interpretation of Creation “outside of a humanist framework” (Hage 56) in which animals transcend “natural animal forms,” wield powers that “outperform humans,” and set moral standards that humans can aspire to (Proper 92). However, the lion also reaffirms existing hierarchies in that it was generally seen as the pinnacle of animal existence in the Great Chain of Being and “traditionally associated with Great Britain” as a national symbol of kingliness and valour (Chapman 7). As a result, Aslan, the “King of Beasts” (Lewis 86), can also be seen as integral to the British nation-building project. Throughout the novel Lewis makes distinctions between lesser and greater animals—the frozen lion believes himself equal with Aslan but is “steadied” after being saddled with “three dwarfs, one dryad, two rabbits, and a hedgehog” (Lewis 191), and it is notable that the animals liberated by Aslan lack speech, instead erupting in “happy roarings, brayings, [and] yelpings” reminiscent of a zoo (185). Indeed, a binary exists between animals “who possess language and those who do not” (Hage 63), with only the former wielding the “benefits of personhood” (66), and it is surprisingly those animals which speak and exhibit British values that possess names and assume the roles of guides, liberators and explorers.

Furthermore, despite his miraculous powers, Aslan demonstrates “a restraint of divine, miraculous intervention”

(Dalton 132) and deference to human exceptionalism, as it is humans, most notably boys, that must lead the charge against the White Witch and her anti-British totalitarian regime. In preparation for Peter's future role as King, Aslan tasks him slaying Maugrim and saving Susan (Lewis 143-44), and although Aslan's arrival brings about spring (133), the White Witch's reign can only end when "two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve" sit at Cair Paravel (89). Under this framework, humans take on a privileged position in which they are destined to establish dominion over Narnia and usher in British institutions. The mindset of Northward expansion is apparent early on when Lucy suggests pretending "[they] are Arctic explorers" (61), and Edmund, weighing the White Witch's offer to make him King, contemplates "where the principle railways would run" (98). During their reign, the Pevensies "[make] good laws" (200), and in accordance with democratic freedom, they "[liberate] young dwarfs... from being sent to school, and... [encourage] ordinary people who wanted to live and let live" (Lewis 200-201). Aslan and the Pevensies take on the mantle of "savior nation" (Chapman 6) and their quest can be read as a metaphorical representation of the Cold War desire "to oppose the spread of communism" (3). Indeed, the Pevensies venture from the "wild woods of the west" (Lewis 12) towards a totalitarian East, the White Witch's winter and rejection of Christmas conjuring a "stereotypical picture" of Siberia and the godless austerity of "life behind the Iron Curtain" (Chapman 4).



The White Witch's presence as architect of Narnia's winter also provides a feminized Other through which divine, masculine and "natural authority" (McSporran 192) can triumph, and the overall struggle against her takes place along gendered lines. Her unearthly appearance, her face "white like snow or paper or icing-sugar", (Lewis 34) reflects the characterization of the North as "either a deadly temptress or a bride to be conquered" (Cudmore 224). She is comparable to Circe and Lilith, mythological females that reject male authority and instead seduce men (Graham 39), as she tempts Edmund with the "oriental and romantic" allure of Turkish Delight (Townes 24). Her power is viewed

as illegitimate and monstrous, Mr. Beaver railing against her audacity in claiming herself “Queen of Narnia” (Lewis 153), and her abject nature is further cemented by the legions of “Cruels and Hags and Incubuses, Wraiths, Horrors” (165) she commands. By contrast, Aslan hails from a species “whose gender is immediately obvious” (McSporran 193), and although he is shaved and therefore emasculated by the White Witch (Lewis 168), he reinstates male dominance by flinging himself atop the White Witch (194) and returning her to her place “underneath a male” (McSporran 195). In accordance with this paradigm of masculine forces emerging victorious, Lewis ensures that girls are exempted from the physical conflict and demonstrate traditional feminine traits. Father Christmas notes that “battles are ugly when women fight” (Lewis 119), and while Aslan shows Peter his future throne at Cair Paravel, he instructs Lucy and Susan to be taken “to the pavilion” (142) to be domestically attended to. Aslan also solely divulges his “plan of campaign” to Peter (160) while remaining saturnine with the girls (160-61), who later “display feminine characteristics” by weeping for his ostensible death (McBride 66). With all this in mind, it is clear that hermeneutic of masculine British conquest and ascendancy predominates. Girls cannot “perform in an active role to enact real change” (Rodriguez 194) as only boys can serve as “generative, restorative forces” (193) of order and civilization.

At first glance, *The Golden Compass* seems to contest the gendered injunctions of Lewis’s work, yet it can also be seen

that Pullman reiterates many of these distinctions. Firstly, Pullman appears to challenge established “gender hierarchies by giving women central roles” (Hatlen 79), with Lyra Bellaqua taking on the mantle of explorer. Living “outside the strict segregation of gender roles” in an alternate Victorian England (Gamble 190), she clambers over the “irregular Alps” (Pullman 43) of the Jordan College roofs, explores dusty crypts, and picks fights with boys belonging to rival colleges (32). She displays a capacity for deception, as like the White Witch, she influences “those around her through language” (Rodriguez 193). After weaving an alternate tale of how she arrived at Bolvangar for Mrs. Coulter (Pullman 246), she later convinces Iofur that she is a daemon (296), leading Iorek to champion her “Lyra Silvertongue” (305). Nevertheless, she remains complicit in the “inherently discriminatory” system at Jordan College (Gamble 191), viewing the female scholars there as “animals dressed up and acting a play” (Pullman 59) rather than as agents of resistance against its “male-dominated environment” (Gamble 190). Enraptured by the “tantalizing hope of going north” (Pullman 75), she flees Mrs. Coulter’s feminine socialite world of “restaurants and ballrooms [and] soirees” (66) and follows in the footsteps of Lord Asriel, a clearly masculine character who is most at home engaging in “secret exploration” and “distant warfare” (5) within uncharted frontiers. The Gyptians, with whom she travels North, also remain a “society led by men” despite the presence of imposing women such as Ma Costa (Gamble 193). As the purpose of a Gyptian

wife is to “cook for [her husband]” and “bear his children” (Pullman 276), the argument for including women on the quest surrounds the purely maternal concern of “[looking] after them kids” after they are rescued (121), which further privileges men as agents of exploration.

Over the span of Lyra’s journey through the “bitter arctic cold and immense silence of the North” (183) however, the Gyptians are but one of a series of Othered populations whose agency destabilizes the centrality of white, male Arctic exploration. Firstly, it has been observed by scholars that the Gyptians bear resemblance to the real-life Romani people, or Gypsies, who were often perceived stereotypically by Victorians as “savage heathens and... a corrupting threat” due to their apparent rootlessness and rumoured propensity for child-stealing (Peters 102). Pullman, however, addresses these notions in ironic fashion by having the General Oblation Board serve instead as the “mysterious group of enchanters who [spirit] children away” (Pullman 40) and the Gyptians as the “child-losers”, therefore revealing the “humanity of [Gyptian] culture and its own civilization” (Peters 104). Nonetheless, they largely serve the “narrative purpose of furthering the goals” of the British protagonist (Sampson 31), as they figure little in the plot once Lyra reaches Bolvangar. Although Ma Costa maintains that Lyra “en’t gyptian” (Pullman 100), Lyra swiftly becomes “as much at home with this new life as if she’d been born gyptian” (98). This mirrors the “ascendancy of British character” over the Other often found in Victorian boy adventures, where British boys possess the ability to “[adapt]

to any new environment” (Sampson 30) with little effort. Identifiable through her blonde hair as British, white, and therefore exceptional, she joins an exclusively adult male expedition through her ability to read the alethiometer (132), and like the Pevensies, she is privileged by prophecy, identified by Serafina Pekkala as the one “destined to bring about the end of destiny” (271).

Unlike Lewis’s non-human beings, both the bears and witches seem to acquire legitimacy due to their separation from, rather than conformity to, British humanness, yet this legitimacy is still marred by the primacy and ascendancy of British human subjects over them. Iofur Raknison’s aspirations of becoming a human, having a “palace built of imported marble” (24), making “alliances and treaties” (277) and cradling a doll dressed like Mrs. Coulter (295), are dismissed as “ludicrous aspirations” (24), and like the homes of Mr. Tumnus and the Beavers, his palace is decorated in human fashion. Yet rather than generating a homely atmosphere, these “preposterous decoration[s]” (294) lie unused and crumbling, the bears forced to exist as “semi-humans conscious only of a torturing inferiority” (311). It is only when Iorek returns that the “coldness, danger [and] brutal power” (157) of bear society is restored and “the polar bear kingdom ultimately reclaims itself from human influence” (Cudmore 225-26). Despite this, Iofur’s affectations also reveal the impossibility for Othered populations to assume positions “greater than what [their] nature would allow” (Sampson 36). Playing a custodial role as befitting a British

explorer and stepping seamlessly into the role of white saviour, it is Lyra that liberates Iorek from alcoholism, “reminds him of his identity” (36) and quells Iofur’s perversion of “ethnic and racial [hierarchy]” (34) through sheer cleverness.

Pullman’s witches, unlike Lewis’s monstrous tyrant, also resist Christian British hierarchies, being depicted as neither good nor evil despite their matriarchal organization and engaging in “causes of war quite beyond [human] understanding” (Pullman 94). Living for hundreds of years (275), they regard human life and ambition as immaterial, “creatures of a brief season” (275), and are “not interested in preserving value or making profits” (270). Along with this seclusion from Western civilization, their practices bear resemblance to the real cultural practices of the Sami people in Scandinavia, as they believe in Yambe Akka (275), an “actual figure from Sami Folklore” and practice a shamanic religion (Cudmore 221). The prominence of bears also references traditional Sami beliefs, who “regarded [bears]... with great respect” (Beveridge 173), and the witch’s bird-daemons symbolize the “fragile boundary between the real and spirit worlds” within this mythology (173). Nevertheless, even if the witches offer “a model of a social system centered around women,” (Gamble 193) Serafina must repress her love for Farder Coram, lest she be inscribed within a patriarchal system as a Gyptian wife and lose her authority as clan leader. Thus, witch society can be regarded as a marginal community of women “in mourning for the heterosexual relationship they cannot preserve” (193).

Further establishing that humans are not “rigidly fixed and separate from animals and the supernatural” (Beveridge 171), yet still affirming hierarchical divisions, is the presence of daemons, extensions of a human’s corporeal existence that manifests as an animal of the opposite gender. One of Pullman’s most fascinating inventions, daemons are able to freely change shape between multiple animal forms when their human is still a child, but settle into a fixed shape upon reaching adulthood. Attached to their humans as an essential part of their physical and spiritual personhood, daemons therefore mandate fraternization and intimate connection across the human/animal, male/female divide. The Church, however, seeks to reinstitute these divides by engaging in the brutal process of intercision. Through intercision, a human and their daemon are separated into distinct beings, the latter rendered a mere “wonderful pet” (Pullman 248) to the former in a more palatable system of ownership. The animal symbolism of daemons, however, is used to reaffirm class and ethnic hierarchies, as upon close inspection, “the natural shape of servants is obvious, observable, through the dog shape of their daemons” (Hines 39). Ethnic Others are depicted as homogenous through their daemons, the Tartars possessing solely wolf-daemons (Pullman 252) and the witches birds. Unlike Lyra’s daemon Pantalaimon, who shifts from “a wolf, a bear, a polecat... [in] a succession of transformations too quick to register” (243), the daemons of Gyptian children possess “limited [imagination]” (49) in terms of their repertoire of transformations.

Furthermore, Tony Makarios's underclass "Irish and Skraeling and Lascar" heritage is reflected through the fixed shape of his "Ratter" (219). Conversely, nobles like Mrs. Coulter possess appropriately majestic daemons, the "deep and lustrous gold" fur (37) of her monkey comparable to Aslan's "masses of curling gold" (Lewis 168).

Lastly, although Mrs. Coulter can be interpreted as a "wicked witch in Bolvangar" (Hines 41) who, like the White Witch, pursues the heroes throughout the North and destabilizes existing hierarchies, she notably acts as a "charming" and "well-connected" front (Pullman 329) for the masculine authority of the Church. Her decision to portray Dust as "physical evidence of original sin" (325) despite its inherently unknowable status as a "mystical presence in which everything coexists" (Bird 190), reflects the pitfalls laden in the Western "desire to... segregate all that is ordered and rational from all that is chaotic or 'other'" (191). The "severing of humans and daemons" into separate beings through intercision is "figured as monstrous" (Hines 41), and in their pursuit of this project, the adults of Bolvangar seize Pantalaimon in their "human hands", a forbidden, entirely "wrong" (Pullman 241) action comparable to molestation. Ultimately, the "real evil and savagery lies within those identified as Europeans" (Peters 105), as the supposedly heroic Asriel separates Roger from his daemon (Pullman 341) in his quest to open additional worlds and destroy the "origin of all the Dust" (331). Instead, the "truly heroic characters" like Lyra and Iorek are those belonging to marginalized populations "outside the world of polite

society" (Cardew 36), which directly contrasts the genteel humans and animals that save Narnia.

In essence, *The Golden Compass* proves largely antithetical to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, which presents a clearly feminine, monstrous North subdued by the restoring, liberating forces of male authority and the imposition of British modes of jurisdiction, where even the heroic animal characters are marked by the ideals and mannerisms of British existence. On the other hand, Pullman's Church is identified as villainous and emphasis is placed on a North populated and traversed by the legitimate, distinct cultures of the Gyptians, armored bears and witches among others. Despite this, the narrative remains centered on children who are chosen by prophecy, master indigenous populations of the North, and vanquish dangerous institutions by demonstrating masculine traits and British exceptionalism.

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*please refer to thegardenstatuary.com to see the full Works Cited for this essay.

CHASE DREAM

JADE LIU

most of all, i remember the running

a tapped knee's instinctual flight, the uncoiling spring liminal in desperation. a meagre handful of paces ahead on foliage slick, disintegrating under splintered feet, no further ground to be gained for the crumbling, relentless splitting of the reliable dirt into blackness so pitch the sole remainder after dismemberment is desire—

the sodden taste of it is salt oceans, the current a cruel gondola guide hellbent to ruin the little lead tired arms manage in limpid liquid gushing, through cracks of strength in fingers much too spread. i can't suck in enough air to feed blistering lungs as the demanding ghost breathes across these shoulders in suffocating closeness and again i choose the edge of the earth and again i topple off and—

this is soaring. a full rushing gale, quintuple floating clouds, a sudden jolt. the ice drip of panic from feathers plucked clean to hard bone, still flapping but the descent from Eden is long-ing and i am afraid. of snake tongue tracing the earlobe's bend, teasing teeth to pierce scarred flesh so i push harder, i fight harder, i strain to capture the translucent air but it slips. gone on a tumble and i plummet as disappointment, blinding in blurred technicolor, i feel it, i feel it all—

falling open into darkness,
the burden of perspiration trickles a trail on a chilled spine.



MINGUS MINGUS

FRANCOIS PELOQUIN

The man leading
the blonde through the bar
by the small of her back,
the one humming
Paper Moon soft in her left ear,
he's a madman.

In the pockets of his overcoat he keeps
a crow, the reed from a fallen saxman's horn,
enough cash for two Mingus Tijuana nights,
four arrowheads blessed by voodoo saints,
and a pound of black pepper tied up
in a red silk kerchief.

Stalking New York alleyways and Albuquerque dives
his fingers feel for the notes on the neck
of the longbow strapped to his chest;
later, he'd drink chicken blood
from a steel goblet to survive
he could play piano too.

My father never told me about Mingus Mingus,
only about Ray Charles and The Beatles.

If you could hear him:
The calliope lost at the fair.
Notes caught in poplar down and Massachusetts red oak leaves.
If you could hear him:
The scramble of dusty palms beneath the border-line.
The yell of the condemned beneath the Jim Crow man's boot.

If you could hear him:

Burning bar fights alone.

Wine fists swinging at nothing at all.

If you could hear him:

The way he spoke to the crow and the girl at the night's end.

The way he sang a little.

The way he drank champagne and told fortunes in the dregs of strangers' drinks.

The way he listened to the shrapnel of the empty bar,

the hollow room

he'd shaped from music.



CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

- IN MEEK TRIBUTE TO THOSE MARTYRED FOR
 সত্য, স্বাধীনতা, এবং মুক্ত মন; TRUTH, LIBERTY,
 AND THE FREE MIND

SAGORIKA HAQUE

Fellow servants of the state, take care
 to armor your belief, the body
 is of little cost. A statistical flicker, leaping
 on and off midgrade paper. Not even a headline,
 no such generosity will be accorded
 until your ears are deafened again.

The mosquitoes come, drawn to the wolfish scent
 of blood, lustrous in shade, civil in nature.
 Asphalt and copper elope well,
 the television anchors at gunpoint
 will have you trust. That word, foreign
 in hungry mouth, blisters at contact
 with truth – are our memories failing,
 rushed street blurring with rushed street;
 the discord of unrest, the harsh echo of blasts, broken windows
 a neighborhood over; curved blades in the sun
 A book fair. Shield. Mask. Barricades stormed with night-jasmine.

Lakes and rancid rivers rich with corpses,
 rank with knowing. Radio silence, the twenty-four hour
 news cycle idles. Malnourished chickens. Chemically
 fattened Oradexon cows. My liberties meet with denial
 of my realities; oh, how you flaunt your power well, these bullets. Some visuals:
 tears rolling down dirtied faces, spirited, the gas impenetrable and intimate
 cocoon-like. A shroud for shrouds. Blood blossoming on a school shirt.
 National truth committees held in the shade

of offseason jackfruit trees; the uniformed children swaying above.

I was born with gold in my mouth and claws in my eyes.
 My city was built on strained backs and fortune was kind,
 she dealt me an unusual hand, gave me marble
 to stand on, marble to be beaten on, marble to bleed on.
 Be small, I was told. Be meaningless. Be compliant.
Chup kor. Quiet. You think you matter in this house?
 Dare not raise your voice, dare not speak
 a single constitutionally enshrined word. Acknowledge
 and appreciate the freedoms given to you. Dissent is costly and unfashionable.

Think of those who have less, think of those who have less!
 Screamed at me as if my thoughts were mine to begin with,
 as if I chose to not know ignorance. As if I chose to fear
 walking down roads with my own two bare, immoral, salacious legs,
 as if I chose to know my rights, as if I chose to be -
 as if worth had worth anymore.

Around, the crows linger, the rot in me alluring; nothing is isolated.
 They watch from the walls. They watch from the screens.
 “We have given you everything. Cement, steel, occasional electricity,
 tainted tapwater, the very right to have rights, the ground beneath your cursed feet,
 and not the ground above your lungs – be grateful, believe less, go back to school,
 you petulant, disrespectful, *beyadob* little thing.
 Here is a sponsored street-sign for your troubles. A half-melted lozenge,
 mind not the ants. Bite your tongue and enjoy our mercy.”
 To a soul so privileged and enriched, subservience does tempt,
 the comfort of air-conditioned walls, the chauffeured taxed cars,
 the occasional rooftop discourse, words hollow and resignation-fueled,
 you may be blameless to mirrors but your calm is dangerous.
 It enables. It turns a blind eye. It kills in broad daylight.
 Look to your skies. Meet the gazes that look down at you –
 you do not need me to tell you we are not equal.

Choked oceans, expanding seas, charred leaves, uprooted trees,
 all they can speak of anymore is the pure and impure; the created and the owed.
 Not being the source of disease is no excuse for willful infection,
 accountability exists solely because it must.
 A culture of fear drives. A culture of fear awakens. The light of dusk

is brilliant, crimson, a virulent green – can you hear its call to you?
It echoes the revolution that runs in your veins, as it does mine --
1857. 1952. 1971. 1990. 2010. 18.
History awaits your words in its blank pages,
the voiceless are a myth. It is only the loud and the forcefully silenced.



FALLING INTO OURSELVES

EMMY PEHRSON

“Falling Into Ourselves” is a piece composed for piano and orchestrated for small ensembles, completed from June to December of 2018. The piece moves seamlessly between the keys of F#m and C#m, with a time signature shifting from three to four beats per measure. The first movement being based in F#m adds a “false floor” to the work, allowing the listener to feel like they’re falling into the piece along with the music when the first chorus in C#m appears. This “falling” motion continues through each upper hand run that separates the movements, going down and up again with the appearance of the lower hand.

The title and theme come from exploring the feelings of self discovery, whether related to the role of the self in interpersonal love, feelings of self worth, or any shift in inward personality. The first movement emulates the birth of a consciousness and the subsequent building of worldly experience, while the first chorus acts as a kairotic moment in life that significantly alters this character’s perception in perpetuity (the Dmaj to C#m base chord shifts acting as the impetus to each chorus from that point onward).

The second movement, beginning directly after the first chorus, sees this character participating in their environment in different ways but still viewing the world through the frame that was implanted in them by that first impactful moment. This culminates in the first movement motif coming back for the final time with more and more energetic orchestration building around it.

This work is part of a large piano-centric album project I am currently undertaking, being the first piece in a series of 9-10. The theme and story of this consciousness is explored throughout the album with each track gaplessly flowing into each other. The few notes that act as the beginning of the next piece have been removed from this recording.

First movement: 0:00

Second movement: 2:09

Third movement: 3:58

**To listen to the audio for "Falling Into Ourselves", please refer to thegardenstatuary.com.*

PORTRAIT OF SHANGHAI

ALGER LIANG

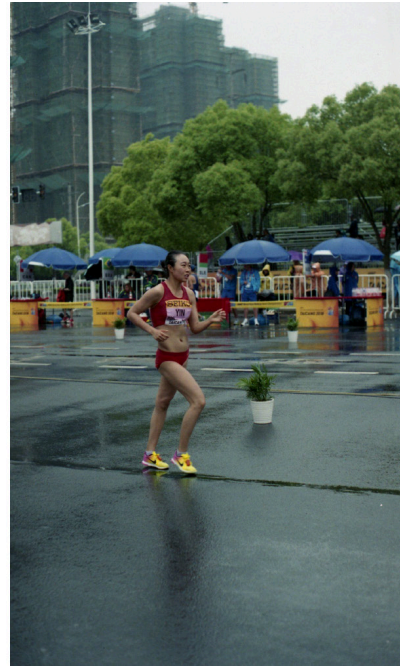
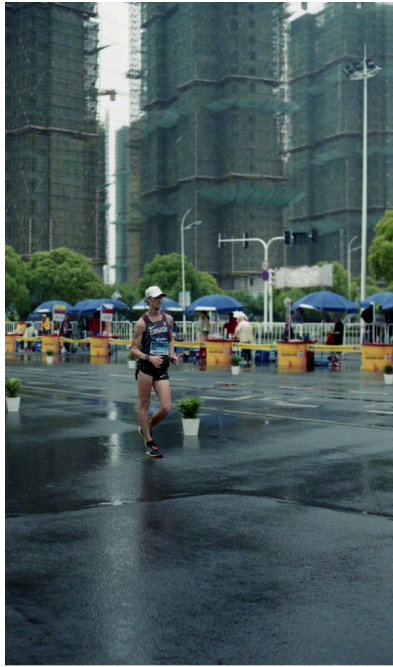


Seeing and being seen. Being and not being. How do you see yourself in a place and culture that is yours but feels foreign? What is the relationship between nationality and ethnicity? How does space reorientate identity? Who are you and where do you belong? Where are you from? No. I mean, where are you really from?

In 2018, Liang qualified for his first World Racewalking Championships - a position that allowed him to represent his Canadian nationality and visit his mother country of China. The competition is a symbolic extension of his identity that both brings him to and dialectically pushes him against his roots through a globalized competition. Liang competed against China (and the world) while representing Canada.

Portrait of Shanghai is a visual documentation of an ephemeral experience that embodies the feeling of - being a foreigner, being at home, feeling close, and feeling distant. He explores identity, representation, and space in a globalized world - to be from Canada but not of Canada, and to be of China but not from China. Through the visceral quality of analog photography and street style, Liang documents the people and places of suburban and metropolitan Shanghai. A portrait is a representation. By exploring and observing the city, Liang captures a portrait of Shanghai and also his own portrait in the process.





QUINN

VLAD KRAKOV

In those days, we didn't really know what vegans were. There were no vegan options at the 7-11, the Fresh Slice, or at Ali Baba's Shawarma Stop. When Quinn Holmes first explained to us, three sweaty children standing on a street corner, that he was raised vegan, and what that meant, we were horrified.

"You mean you've *never* eaten meat?" asked Roshan, a fistful of tzatziki-dripping beef donair in his left hand, the oils soaking through the wax paper into his meaty palm, the sleepy eye of his belly button protruding from underneath his Puma shirt.

"Well, I have. I do *sometimes!* Just not in front of my mom," Quinn confessed, scratching his head. "I love bacon," he added weakly.

We looked at his stick-like alabaster limbs protruding from his earth tone clothing, his long frizzy ginger hair nearly down to his waist, his heavy-lidded eyes, unconvinced.

"Then why didn't you get anything in there?" Abdul countered between bites of his sizzling wrap.

"I- I don't have that much money right now. That was like what, eight bucks? That's kind of a rip-off."

"Yeah, you watched me buy it. You were standing next to me-"

"Besides, I'm not that hungry right now."

"C'mon. We've been out here since, when?" Abdul groped inside of his basketball shorts for his flip phone, but I beat him to it with a resounding *snap* of my Motorola Krzr.

"My mom texted me at 12. So, about four hours. Three and a half," I announced.

Abdul, pretending to doubt my time-keeping abilities, unholstered his flip phone with a proud cowboy-like *snap*, and peered at its sun-drowned screen, hunching forward with a mouth full of meat and tzatziki sauce.

"Hey! How the hell did you get that!" Roshan cried, turning back around after flinging the last of his tomato slices onto the baking ground of the freeway-adjacent parking lot. "It was in my pocket! And Mom told me to hold onto the phone from now on, since you broke the last one!"

"Shut up. Yep, three and a half, maybe four hours. You must be hungry, Quinn."

"Nah, I don't get that hungry, uh, very much," he replied.

"Let me buy you a donair," Abdul offered, staring at him.

It was no light matter. Even the closest of friends hardly ever bought one another candy or slurpees, let alone \$8 donair wraps. When they did, it was typically on a strict loan

system, sometimes with interest terms negotiated upon in raised voices in front of a baffled cashier. When food was shared, it was generally from the pantry.

“You still owe me \$3.50, you snake!” Roshan cried out, half-a-block down, swivelling around on the blocky concrete parking lot barrier upon which he practiced his trapeze skills while eating.

Fidgeting, Quinn finally assented. The four of us grimly, officially, marched back into Ali Baba’s Shawarma Stop. The two teen-aged attendants, brothers enjoying the mid-afternoon lull behind a fridge full of Cokes and Sunkist Juices, peered around in matching baseball visors, intrigued by the sound of nearly synchronized marching footsteps.

“Hi, yes. Another donair wrap please,” Abdul commanded, with the bravado of a youth on their first sanctionable visit to a bar. The electrical saw came out, shaving thin, juice-dripping brown-black strips off the rotating hulk of beefmeat, with a sheet of foil behind and underneath it collected untold greasy meat syrups, whose smell thickly permeated everything both within the small building and across the humming parking lot outside to the very street corner.

“Would you like cheese with that, boss?” the tense attendant asked. All four of us stared at him wildly.

Abdul, ever with a keen sense for suspense, drama, and tragedy, turned around and repeated the question to Quinn, who was standing two steps behind Abdul, nearly receding into the tall ferns and framed photos of Persian ruins that covered the entirety of the back wall. “Yeah. Sure.”

“Tzatziki?”

“Tzatziki?”

“Ok.”

With a flurry of elaborate hand motions, the dreaded wrap was entombed in wax paper and a plastic bag, the numbers were dialed on the cash register, the sum was requested: “That’ll be \$9.49, sirs.”

A dull pause. Flies whirled. The heat pressed down on us.

“\$9.49! Brother. Sir. Señor! Compadre!” Abdul began to get worked up, with the same boldness with which he furiously negotiated his righteousness with his teachers, with his parents, with his basketball court-side friends, not so much with genuine anger as with secret excitement and zeal at the opportunity to exercise his mastery of rhetoric and persuasion. “We were in here *not two minutes* ago, and it was seven dollars and ninety nine cents.” The elder brother, glancing over again, began to walk over to stand by his brace-mouthed younger brother. His chest was broad, and he had a prominent cubic zirconia studs in each earlobe.

“The cheese is extra, *sir*,” the elder brother boomed.

“The cheese is extra,” Abdul repeated, half to the attendant, half to the rest of us. There was a hint of mocking in his voice, but it was an automatic response, a last resort, and it was ambiguous enough to also be possibly interpreted as self-deprecation. His rhetorical

fury was winding down. He could see he was, more or less, in the wrong. But Abdul was not about to accept that.

“Can you put the cheese back.”

“Sir?”

“Abdul!” I protested, tugging at his elbow, horrifically embarrassed. I began to fish in my pockets for change.

“Could you put the cheese back?” he repeated. He was donning his devilish grin. Nothing was serious to him. Yet everything was worth fighting for.

“No, sir, I cannot put the cheese back,” the fatigued younger brother said. He was exhausted from being next to the sweltering heat lamps pointed at the masses of meat sumptuously rotating, not to mention the summer sun. He was being incredibly patient, it seemed to me. I was red-faced. The younger brother, resigned, unfurled the wax paper. “It is already melting, see? It is all melted.” He lifted it to eye level for us to see. “I cannot put the cheese back.”

“Well, I don’t have \$9.49. You should have told us it was extra.”

“Abdul!” I cried, unreasonably horrified at the scene I was witnessing. Roshan, too, was trying to get him to calm down, but, unlike me, was uncontrollably laughing. Meanwhile, Quinn had fully disappeared into the ferns and into ancient Persia. “Abdul!” I repeated, “I have money! Look, I have...I have enough to cover the cheese!”

“No,” said Abdul darkly. “No. I don’t want to pay for any of this if this is how they do business.”

“I have enough for the whole thing. I have enough for the whole thing!” I cried out, hot-eared, listening with wonder and pain at the words coming out of my own mouth.

I had sixty-five cents left for the rest of the week. It was a Tuesday.

* * *

Back in the parking lot, a shouting match ensued.

“You owe me nine dollars *and forty-nine cents*, you f-f-fucker!” I cried, still red.

“Do not. Do not! Did I ask you for nine dollars and forty-nine cents? Did anyone ask you to pay the nine dollars and forty-nine cents? No. So no, I do not!” Abdul was getting gleeful over the drama at hand, over the boisterous argumentation, while I recoiled into myself and, in some dark boiler room in my cranium, shook with fury at this betrayal. I already knew how this would end.

“F-f-fuck you, assfucker!” I retorted, incapable of processing such injustice. Inside, the two brothers were leaning over the counter, shoulder to shoulder, watching us with wonder in their eyes. The elder one took out his flip phone, began searching for the video recording function.

“Oh, calm down, Sven; he’s obviously going to pay you back,” Roshan negotiated, raising his thick-slabbed hands as a symbolic barriers between Abdul and I. “Right, Abdul?”



“Nuh-uh. Think of all the Nutella sandwiches we’ve fed him over the years, Roshan. Those add up to, like, *at least* one hundred dollars. Probably *two* hundred!”

“That’s pantry food!” Roshan and I replied in unison. Yet Abdul only smiled snakily, as he always did when proven wrong.

“Hey- where’s Quinn?” Abdul asked, looking around with an expression of feigned concern.

“Yeah, where is Quinn?” Roshan asked, beginning to swivel around as well, oblivious to the tactic.

Quinn walked straight-spined out of the bathroom at the back of Ali Baba’s, past the healthy ferns rocking hypnotically in the turns of the fan, past the sand-swirled ruins of Ancient Persia, into the frame of the older brother’s flip phone video recording, whose

screen now in its granularity and dull tones displayed Roshan, Abdul, and I peering in through the glass, calm and unified as Quinn opened the glass door, the bells at its crest jingling merrily, and, finally, the four of us forming an equidistant square, as any group of four young boys seem to have the primordial instinct to do when it is time to negotiate.

“Hey, Quinn. Listen, homie,” Abdul began, making sure to be over-endearing to add a veneer of sarcasm to his expression of concern, “you don’t actually have to eat this if you don’t want to. I could bring this to my dad or something-”

Calmly, Quinn took the entombed wrap out of Abdul’s gesturing hand, crinklingly unsheathed it, and took a rich bite. “C’mon,” Quinn said with a mouth still half-full, ignoring our uncertain stares, “let’s go to DLG. I’m tired of standing around here.” Quinn began to walk down the street. “C’mon!”

Slowly, a maniacal laugh ripped out of Roshan, his head bent skywards and knees slightly bent, and he poked me forcefully in the chest to communicate his strange-borne elation. Abdul tried to suppress an amazement-betraying smile, but, failing and then giving up, joined his brother with a similar high-toned laughter. I took my thick-goggled glasses off to wipe the moisture off of my still-hot cheeks. We followed Quinn down the street. Adjusting my glasses, breath uneven and still chuckling, I raced last.

* * *

Upon a grassy slope dotted with windbent daisies, between two nook-filled pyramidal evergreens, with the stout, waist-high fence protecting us from the street above, with the green immaculately level grass field of the elementary school sprawling below, Quinn sat, knees to chin, eating his chicken shawarma wrap.

“Hey! Let me have some of that,” Abdul said. “After all, I bought it for you.” Hidden from me, he winked at Quinn.

“You what! You what now!” I began, standing up and gesticulating with fluster, one among four tiny figures at the edge of a vast field. Abdul cackled with relish and then shrieked with emphatic terror. I tackled him and we went tumbling down the hill. The wild animal noises of four young boys echoed into the middle reaches of the atmosphere, would have been heard by the curious new-coming noses pressed to glass within low-flying airplanes, if it had not been for their own engine-rumbling and air-shearing sounds replying.

Piano lessons tinkled in the neat-gridded, grand-housed distance to the up-sloping North. Mice scurried in the dark of the locked cafeteria, across god-like bands of dust-suspending sunlight, between folded tables lining the wall, towards dried splotches of pasta sauce behind the radiator. Somewhere, outside, crows flew into the humid haze, disappearing into the white-and-blue to the South and, as the down-sloping land peeled away from them and they gained their altitude, cawed madly and life-thirstily. All hungered.

HISTORY OF (A) BEACH

TYLER ANTONIO LYNCH

Don't ask me the name of the beach.
 I won't tell you.
 I don't want you to know.
 I don't want you to go to this beach.
 I don't want anybody to go to this beach.

A very long time ago, there was no beach at all. The island met the sea on a thin edge of knuckled stone, against which the warm sea would pummel endlessly. Upon the island grew a voracious jungle; the trees shed their leaves directly into the sea. Ocean and island divided hard and instant.

The beach is born far away from the ocean. Dragging erosion from far inland, a river deposits sediment and rock into the sea. The silt and clay wash away, carried by currents, but the rocks remain to be broken down by the tides over thousands of years. The sea floor becomes covered in sand, wracked and tossed in the current. As the waves lap against the island's stony face, sand is swept with them. You will have to wait a good while on the rocks as the ocean does its work. But over thousands of years, the tide methodically brings in a beach.

Ten thousand trillion particles are washed onto the island, blurring the line between the jungle and the ocean. The sand is composed of quartz, feldspar, and calcium carbonate—this last material the fragmented remnants of coral, sea shells, and plankton. There is quite a lot of this fine, white sand. You could be the very first human to touch it, to let it pour through your fingers, fine as gold dust.

It is almost a perfect beach, you remark. A kilometre of pure white sand, lying like a blanket along the shore. The water, cresting with little waves, is shallow. You could wade a hundred feet out before the ocean reached your knees. The water is pure, free of silt. Little fish colorful as stained glass dart around your feet like sparks. It is blue like polished turquoise, like no other blue ever. Warm, so warm, that even a summer swimming pool will seem cruel.

There are no palm trees laden with green coconuts; instead, the treeline is shrubby and dense, scattering drying leaves on the sand. Overall, it is a small beach. You could walk end to end in ten minutes or so. And on the horizon, there seems a permanent hint of storm. A hint of foreboding.

But you love it instantly. The beach is so pure you think it is a fairy-story, so delicate and beautiful only a child would believe in it. But it exists, and you have seen it. Of course, your beach will have a history.

Every beach has a history, and every beach's history is the same.

But now, while the earth is still quiet and her evenings still dim, you must leave this island paradise. Leave your beach to the bright fish and urchins, the jellies and curious birds, to be washed endlessly by a frothy tide, regular as the breathing of the Earth.

When you return, you can be sure that your beach will be as you left it. Swathes of sand will be washed into open water by cantankerous typhoons, and swept back to the beach in cloudy droves, replenishing what the storm stole. Nesting birds and glinting fish will patrol her corridors. Coral will grow in the water, like living sculpture. With the noncommittal tide forever creeping back and forth, the beach is forever changing, circular and the change is circular, cyclical.

It maintains this peace as the first humans tread footprints into her sand. Ten thousand years later, others have found your beach. They splash through the surf to pull their long, thin boats onto the sand. They spread coarse blankets on the beach and roast a fish or two, laughing and telling stories. The scar of their fire remains the next morning, smoldering, ashy black over the white sand.

The fishermen like the beach. They will be back. The catch is good off the island, and they will return from the mainland to fill their holds with baskets of mirror-grey fish. They tire of spending nights in tents. They build something on the beach, small and modest. A wooden hut to spend the nights in.

As other fishing families find the beach and the good fishing offshore, they will want to erect their own huts too. They will spend a few days on the island now, fishing and gutting and salting their fish on racks. A little patch of jungle is shaved off the beach. There grows a fishing village. In fishing season, a hundred brown, wiry men and boys will make the beach their home. In winter the huts sit empty, brown, and slanted, almost invisible in the jungle.

So far, the only humans who know of your beach are those that fish its waters. Most boats return to the solid shelf of the continent at night, but increasingly there are intrepid souls who tentatively uproot their lives to the little green islands that offset the line of the horizon. A small community lives permanently on your island now. Their children run naked on the warm sand, splashing in the little frothy waves.

Others are coming soon, from distant lands. The sun treats them differently. It bleaches their hair blonder, it fades the tattoos on their arms, it hides their pale skin under a golden tan. These are wild souls. Their cold, evergreen lands could not contain them.

Hippies, sea gypsies, wanderers, draft dodgers. They come bringing soft guitar music and earthy clouds of marijuana smoke.

They will boast to their friends, later, that they were the first souls to come to this beach. And in a way they were. They were the first souls to come for the beach, not for fish or a less crowded island. They set up tents and hammocks and have bonfires and dance naked in the surf, drinking and falling, drunk and high and covered in sand, sleeping under billions of stars.

Then they leave. They return to their snowy countries, putting a brief, mad escapade behind them, screwing back into place the sensible ambitions they cast off in their youth, or else leaving to find new beaches, and temples, and mountainous tribes, amongst whom to live and trek and be aimless and glorious.

They never return to your beach, but they tell their friends.

You return to your beach after the backpackers have spread the word. More backpackers have come, paradoxically trying to escape the crowds yet contributing, person by person, to those crowds themselves.

On the island, a veritable town has arisen: hostels, surfing rentals, diving schools, scuba tours, and local houses. Over a thousand people live on the island, some far-flung from distant countries, still fishing, or else using their boats to ferry the backpackers. With every trip of backpackers (nobody dares to identify themselves as tourists), the bragging rights decrease, the sense of touching wilderness becomes less palpable. Some on the island still know it from the time it was a fishing village, a collection of tents on the beach, to the time the first Westerner or enterprising local built a bunch of huts and a bar and called it a hostel, charging \$4 a night.

More hostels came. They set up deckchairs and hammocks and a minibar on the beach, and build a picturesque wooden swing-set just offshore. They put a long wooden dock in so boats can drop off guests straight at the beach. Some cleared local trees to give their residents an ocean view. Some bring in a backhoe to lay concrete foundations in the jungle.

It's not a secret anymore. You can look this island up online. It's in Lonely Planet. Your beach has a foreign name like Coconut and Driftwood. But it's still a blonde beach as gorgeous as any in the world. For the people – not tourists yet, since they wear backpacks and are willing to sleep in hammocks – it's just as beautiful as it ever was.

Contamination, however, is manifesting itself on the shoreline. After any storm since the birth of the beach, wastes of jellyfish and seaweed would trace the line of the waves on the sand, and assorted flotsam would wash up on the beach.

Those things still wash up. But with them, like an invasion of pathogens in the blood, are strange, alien, hard things of plastic. PVC pipe, barnacle-encrusted foam blocks, water bottles, beer bottles, beer cans, rope, nets, spoons and forks, bits of car tire, bits of mattress, Styrofoam, plastic bags, goggles. They lie half buried in the sand like the remnants of a shipwreck.

Although you can't see it, the storm is still washing sand off the beach into the currents.

But it isn't being replaced like it used to be. Those rivers that once carried sediment to the sea have been dammed and diverted, built-over and drained. The beach— though you don't know it— is slowly shrinking.

The backpackers love it. They drink beer on the beach, play Shithead and swim up to their chests at night, waving their arms in the dark water. Bioluminescent plankton fly off them like sparks, green and evanescent.

The wiry local guy who owns the hostel loves the beach. He gives free beer to anyone who collects a bag of trash and deposits it at the hostel. Although he commodifies this bit of sand and water, selling boat rides to scuba spots and stringing hammocks over the water, he wants to protect the beach from worse fates than this.

The word *development* hangs over his head like a piano strung from a crane. He pays a lease to the local government. He bought the whole beach, and owns the hostel too. It's his to protect, to preserve in this middle state of wild and civilized, as long as he has a lease.

Their lease, you discover— and the fact hits you like nasty gossip— is only one month long. The government will sell out at a whiff of bigger money. And there are plenty of people whose pockets bulge with bigger money. It's a prime piece of real estate, your beach.

Will you stay and find out how long the government renews that pathetic one-month lease? How beautiful does a beach have to be for some bureaucrat not to sell it to a Chinese casino? How many boat trips before those backpackers turn into tourists? Before families and businessmen and German couples come down to spend the summer lounging on a deck chair?

Will you stay that long, to see the fate of your beach?

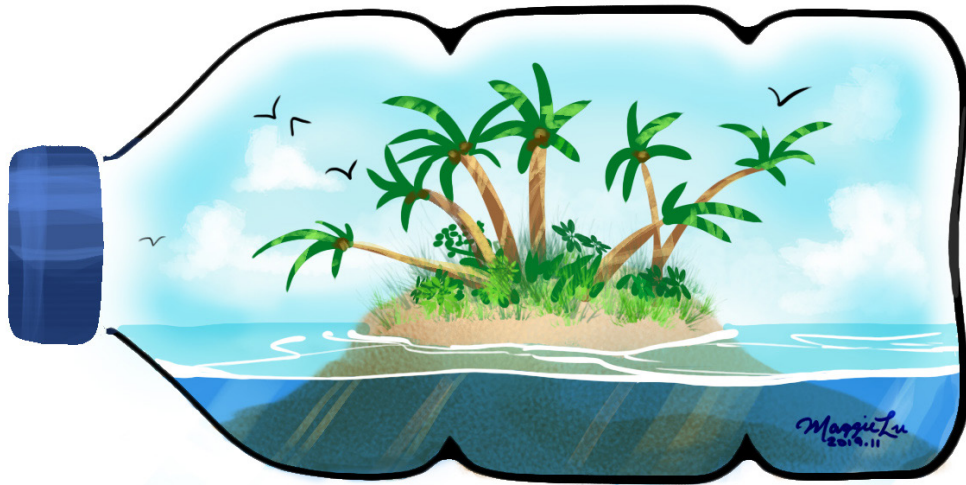
Is it really your beach anymore?

You might come back one day, to see the beach again. It might be gated, exclusive to guests of a beautiful hotel, or casino, or luxury apartment complex. It will almost certainly have had a face lift — truckloads of sand carted in by ferry from some other beach to replace the sand that no longer runs along the conveyor belt of the current.

The people will still enjoy it, to be sure. A beach is a beach. The sand, so white and soft. The water, almost as turquoise as it was, kept almost as clear of plastic bags as it was by uniformed attendants with nets on poles. The scrubby line of trees on its shore will be replanted with coconut palms, which is all a five star resort deserves.

This is the end of your beach's history. The inevitable path that all beaches take on every fair coastline in the warm belt of the world.

It seems that the life of every wild place ends in luxury.



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DON'T LOOK BACK: THE ROSE- COLOURED NOSTALGIA OF ROUGE AND HAPPY TOGETHER

MOIRA HENRY

Nostalgia is a common theme across the Hong Kong cinematic canon, particularly in the New Wave films created during the transition period between the 1984 signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the 1997 Handover of Hong Kong. This essay will focus on how nostalgia is configured and located in Stanley Kwan's *Rouge* (1988) and Wong Kar-wai's *Happy Together* (1997). In *Rouge*, nostalgia emerges from the temporal dislocation of Fleur (Anita Mui), with the linearity of time being fragmented as the setting alternates between Hong Kong of the 1930's and the film's contemporary Hong Kong. Nostalgia in this case is located at a specific point in the past, but embodied in the present by Fleur's temporal dislocation as a ghost from the 1930's haunting the contemporary world. Alternatively, in *Happy Together*, nostalgia emerges from Ho Po-wing's (Leslie Cheung) and Lai Yiu-fai's (Tony Leung Chiu-wai) mutual desire for an impossible return to an imagined closeness, which temporally dislocates nostalgia in the film. Though these configurations of nostalgia differ, the projections of nostalgia that manipulate linear timelines in both films grasp at

Hong Kong's collective search for a secure identity as a nation caught between two worlds.

The constant shifts between past and present in *Rouge* are central to the nostalgia that is projected in the film. In her essay, "A Souvenir of Love," Rey Chow describes these shifts as "beautiful golden colors [of the past] that contrast sharply with the mundane documentary tones of the present" (212), creating a sense of longing for the past and a sense of lack in the present. This sense of loss is reiterated by the film's depiction of Hong Kong's changing landscape, particularly in the shots that show what the various landmarks of 1930's Hong Kong have become in the present day. For instance, there is a flashback to the Tai-Ping Theatre in the bus scene that cuts to Fleur's saddened facial expression; in the following shot, it is revealed to have become a 7-Eleven. This is followed by a sequence that reveals multiple changes in Hong Kong's landscape, with Fleur's tearful observation that "It's all changed now," as she arrives at a present day Shek Tong Tsui. The bustling Kam Ling Restaurant of the past flashes to a lonely car passing by a closed bar in the present, and the flashback



to the Yi Hung brothel is followed by a shot of a kindergarten in its place. Through these flashbacks, the film creates a sense of nostalgia for the Hong Kong of the past.

However, Chow also notes that in *Rouge*, “nostalgia is not simply a reaching toward the definite past from a definite present, but a subjective state that seeks to express itself in pictures imbued with particular memories of a certain pastness” (215). That is, although nostalgia is seemingly located in the past, it is because of the temporal dislocation of Fleur and her unbelonging in the present that there is a greater sense of longing for an idealized past. Fleur is the vessel through which the viewer is

able to access the memory of the past, therefore imbuing the past with Fleur’s sense of belonging to and longing for the past. Simultaneously, the fragmentation of the linearity of time through the imaging of Fleur’s memories exacerbates the sense of unease in the present that reflects Hong Kong’s precarious sense of identity during the transition period after 1984; Fleur’s general disorientation and melancholic search for the Twelfth Master in the present seems to both express hope for and challenge Hong Kong’s search for identity in its own past. That is, nostalgia only seems to be a way of looking to the future, inasmuch as the past presents itself as a point from

which to move forward. This is signalled at the end of the film when Fleur is able to move on from her search for the Twelfth Master and the passion she projected onto the relationship, subsequently leaving the human world.

Similarly, *Happy Together* is interested in nostalgia as a place from which one must move on, also manipulating the linear progression of time to project this configuration of nostalgia. While the fragmentation of linear time in *Rouge* was used to create a sense of dissatisfaction with the present, Wong Kar-wai plays with temporality in *Happy Together* to highlight the reality of dissatisfaction in the fraught intimacy between Ho Po-wing and Lai Yiu-fai. In another essay by Rey Chow, she notes that “the nostalgia projected by [*Happy Together*] complicates the purely chronological sense of remembering the past as such” (34). In other words, in a nuanced differentiation from *Rouge*, nostalgia is projected as a “desire to return to... a fantasized state of oneness” (35) between the two lovers, rather than being a nostalgia for a tangible point in the past. This constant desire to return is evident in the repetition and recursion associated with Fai and Po-wing’s relationship as seen in the form of various motifs throughout the film, and particularly through Po-wing’s constant desire to “start over,” which further dislocates nostalgia from a distinguishable point in the past. Countering the desire to return is the inevitable violence of their relationship which the viewer witnesses on loop, revealing the flaws in both characters’

nostalgic perspectives of their relationship.

This temporal dislocation of nostalgia is reiterated in a scene towards the end of the film, when a memory of the couple dancing in their apartment is shown. The scene depicts a tenderness that is inconsistent with other depictions of physical intimacy between the couple throughout the film, suggesting that this is merely a snapshot or fantasy from the nostalgic perspective of Po-wing as he laments the end of their relationship. Rather than seeing this as an accurate representation of their relationship, the viewer sees the desire to return to “the flawless union among people... a condition which can never be fully attained, but which is therefore always desired and pursued” (Chow 36). However, Fai’s rejection of Po-wing’s final attempt to start over becomes a point from which they can move into the future. Fai thus rejects the nostalgic projection of their relationship, allowing himself to embrace an unknown future. This notion of facing uncertainty was pertinent to the film’s contemporary Hong Kong society, *Happy Together* having been released in 1997, the year of the handover. The film ends with a vivid image of forward movement as Fai sits in the front of a train speeding through Hong Kong in fast motion, suggesting the opening of possibilities in embracing an unknown future.

Hong Kong New Wave cinema’s interactions with nostalgia are not always located at a distinct point in the past, but do deal with Hong Kong’s future in an uncertain time. Nostalgia in Stanley Kwan’s *Rouge* is

seen through the fragmentation of linear timelines through flashbacks showing the changing Hong Kong landscape, as well as through Fleur's memories. Fleur's temporal dislocation creates the sense of discomfort and unease that reflects Hong Kong's anxiety during the transition period after 1984, with the past and nostalgic perspectives framed in opposition to the future Hong Kong. The notion of embracing uncertainty is also seen through the projection of nostalgia in Wong Kar-wai's *Happy Together*, wherein the film's temporal dislocation of nostalgia reveals the flaws of a nostalgic perspective. Fai's ultimate rejection of the nostalgic perspective presents a possibility for the future of Hong Kong in embracing a precarious identity and the unknown.

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THE REIMAGINED (ANTI-)ORIGIN STORY: EXAMINING NU WA'S DIASPORIC IDENTITY THROUGH BODY AND BIRTH

LISA LIU

For immigrants of any generation, or members of any underrepresented group, the pressure to define and explain one's origin or identity is always complicated. In the novel *Salt Fish Girl* by Larissa Lai, birth and the body are reframed to justify the difficulties in classifying oneself. Through confronting conventions of birth and the use of shifting bodies, the novel challenges the notion of pure origins. In particular, I will be examining Nu Wa/Miranda's history through the body at birth and reincarnation. From her original non-human form to her birth as human, as well as her rebirth as the durian-born Miranda and her own birth at the end of the text, I theorize that the shifting body illustrates the subjectivity of the diasporic experience.

I: Nu Wa's Non-Human Body: Bifurcation of "Tales" and Consumption of Alternate Bodies

The novel opens with Nu Wa's creation myth but does not follow conventional understandings of origins. Author Larissa Lai states "*in Salt Fish Girl*, I began with wanting to think about the whole question of origins." (L.Lai, *Future Asians* 171). In

particular, she states her distaste of "go back where you came from" and "so where are you from?". Such statements turn the questioned individual into an object of gaze to satisfy the querier and restricts origin to a geographical context. To reclaim one's identity, the novel instead promotes an anti-origin, a personal experience that is carried within the individual. Lai advocates for "a sense of history that is not factual, that is not for the historical record, but that is experienced in and written on the body" (L.Lai, *Future Asians* 173). This is established through the body of Nu Wa. Lai explains why she chose Nu Wa's story as the novel's basis, saying "it's a Chinese story, I'm a Chinese woman. At least in one version of my history" (L.Lai, *Future Asians* 171). In context of multiple histories, Lai states "my Nu Wa is highly inflected with Western literary references, as well as with references to my own past." If Nu Wa represents the Chinese identity, then her divergence to other bodies can be seen as how the cultural identity can transform. She is a diasporic figure reshaped as different cultural perspectives mixed with her own sense of self.

Unlike most creators of humankind

Nu Wa is not immaculate, but flawed. Lai critiques the traditional idolization of dehumanized creators through Nu Wa's body. After describing her anatomy, Nu Wa accuses the reader, saying "I know that eye, the eye that registers fear first, and then the desire to consume. What kind of soup would my flesh make? What would you dream after consuming?" (L.Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 2). While the creator is often seen as majestic for their non-human traits, Nu Wa's half-snake body makes her feel objectified. She claims that from this fear of unfamiliarity comes the desire to domesticate through consumption. As the embodiment of Chinese identity, the craving for her flesh reflects the widespread fetishization of female Asian bodies as domestic, submissive, and ultimately digestible. Moreover, her rebirth as a "bawling black-haired baby girl" is a result of being physically consumed by a giant woman as Nu Wa "glided down her throat and slid into her womb" (48). Similar to the assimilation of displaced cultures, Nu Wa's body had to be objectified, then consumed, in order to be accepted as human. The intentions of the colonizer's gaze (symbolized as the accepted human) is addressed in "what would you dream after consuming?". This quotation foreshadows the dreaming disease, a representation of diasporic post-memory as undesirable and painful, yet here her histories are trivialized into a commodity for others to experience.

The most significant change to Nu Wa's body in her transition is the splitting of her tail. Nu Wa's bifurcation represents a metaphorical relationship between 'tails'

and 'tales.' Scholar Kate Liu theorizes that "the word [bifurcation] refers not only to the splitting of the human tail, but also to the dual plot of Nu Wa-Salt Fish Girl and Miranda-Evie" (Liu 332). Histories and identities are constantly reconstructed and reinterpreted by different perspectives and "the creation of new bodies" are "fundamentally connected to the creation of new texts" (Latimer 125). Therefore, through the absence of one fixed body, Lai demonstrates how there is never one true beginning. As a figure from the Chinese creation myth, Nu Wa is the 'original' (a term I use loosely, considering the novel's critique of absolute origins) Chinese identity, the 'old' diaspora to the 'new' diaspora, which is represented by her reincarnation Miranda. Furthermore, the act of her tail splitting is described as a "terrible burning sensation" as her "vertebrae cracked in two and the strands of the spinal cord were wretched apart" (L.Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 8). The violence of her tail's bifurcation foreshadows the pain she and Miranda will experience in their search for individualism, illustrating sacrifices from the splitting of cultural narratives.

II: Nu Wa's Shifting Body: Constructing Histories Through Reincarnation and Shed Skin

Following Nu Wa's rebirth as a human, it is alluded that Miranda is the reincarnation of Nu Wa. In a converging of storylines, it is revealed Nu Wa was encased in a durian and hears Aimee and Stewart having the exact same conversation that is foreshadowed in Miranda's chapter

outlining her birth. Kate Liu notes that “the “birth” or originary moment—of a person or a nation—is traditionally seen as the moment that defines the unifying essence of a personal or national identity” (Liu 319). However, as she points out, through reincarnation, “there are multiple origins”. If birth and origin are no longer conjoined to one another, their meanings are skewed. Similar to how the objectification of Nu Wa’s half-snake body reframes our idolization of the creator, the creation myth further loses its significance through the ability to ‘re-originate’ in new bodies. Instead, the subjectivity of the creation myth confronts the way history is written systematically rather than in the individual’s subjective view. Stewart Ching, Miranda’s father, alludes to this when he tells Miranda the original story about Nu Wa and her brother Fu Xi as the creators of humankind. When Miranda is disturbed that they were siblings (a commentary of a common homophobic trope that compares homosexuality to incest), he reminds her that it is “just a story,” hinting that narratives, and therefore the bodies that embody them, are fluid, and can be reframed (L. Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 187). What follows is a meta-reenactment of the novel, in which Miranda draws a series of changes closely emulating Lai’s alterations to this classic Chinese creation myth, which include having Fu Xi reimagined as a woman. Not only does Miranda’s own birth embody the ability to reconstruct histories, but she illustrates it by taking on Lai’s role as a writer through these drawings.

Lai also addresses this mobility of history

between physical bodies through the use of second person narration during another scene of rebirth: Nu Wa’s suicide and “pre-birth” of Miranda. There is a distinct shift from Nu Wa’s first person narration, “I looked over my shoulder once then leaned into the water” to second person in the following paragraph: “[Y]ou take a last look at the sky, a last breath, slowly” (L. Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 183). Hee-Jung Serenity Joo interprets this shift as signifying that Nu Wa has once again “shifted shapes by merging with the water and leaving her body—that economically malleable form—behind” (Joo 57). If the perseverance of physical bodies is determined by their economy, abandonment of the body allows the stories they carry to transcend past its economic state. As Nu Wa transitions into Miranda and dissociates with her (now past) self: “[Y]ou have left your body far behind” (L. Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 184). Nu Wa/Miranda’s change in narrative voice acts a metaphor for shedding worn out bodies for a fresh life of new possibilities. Similar to Nu Wa’s original anatomy, her reincarnation as Miranda shifts like a snake who sheds its dead skin for a new one: the animal itself is the same, but its body has been revived and it is ready to hold any potential narratives. Continuous subjectivity in narratives through rebirths of new bodies is especially reminiscent of the diaspora, and how diasporic subjects don’t just appear but emerge as a production of post-memories and other similar factors that reject linear temporality. As theorized by Niels Buch Leander in the book *Narrative Beginnings*, “even one’s own beginning cannot be ascertained without relying on

other narratives” (Leander 25). As these identities emerge from past experiences, current diasporas (as embodied in Miranda), while taking on its own shape and identity, stem from a reincarnation of past diasporas (from Nu Wa). It is carried from body to body of individuals rather than simply through a linear progression of time.

III: Miranda’s Marked Body: Queered Birth by Durian and “Stinky” Truth

As mentioned, Lai’s history does not follow time and geography, but embodied experiences. After Nu Wa’s reincarnation into Miranda, her body still holds remnants of history. This is supported by Leander’s claim that “even a beginning that defies the notion of origin will have to establish its authority on an alternative narration” (Leander 26). Even in a new body and narrative, Nu Wa’s past is not erased and Miranda is marked by the past even before she is born. Miranda’s birth is ambiguous and differs from conventional impregnation. Paul Lai calls Miranda a “product of “queer reproduction” between her parents and the durian (P. Lai 177). Not only does this allude to the lesbian genealogy of the text, but it raises discussion as to why some truths are easier to accept than others. It is important to note that Miranda’s mother Aimee “was a good eight years past menopause” (L. Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 15). Furthermore, the durians Miranda’s father Stewart brings home were actively involved in the sexual act he and Miranda’s mother Aimee engaged in, which ultimately resulted in the miracle birth of Miranda. I propose



that the durian’s erotic behaviour presents the fruit as an alternative human body, another symbol of how subjective bodies are. The durian “tumbled between them, its green spikes biting greedily into their flesh, its pepper pissy juices mixing with their somewhat more subtly scented ones” (L. Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 15). The diction is sensual, with “biting” and “mixing” reminiscent of penetration and the exchange of bodily fluids. The lack of logical explanation behind Miranda’s birth brings up divide between the factual and the experienced in discussing histories: why is it easier to accept that she was conceived by a woman long past menopause than by a penetrative fruit? I theorize that Aimee is the optimistic, encouraging

narrative of marginalized groups while the durian represents the difficult truths and oppressive forces that these groups must come to terms with. Miranda states “if the truth must be told, I stank”, but Aimee claims “she smells delightful” (L. Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 15). Throughout the novel, “Aimee strives to shield Miranda from negative associations with her durian smell” (P. Lai 180). Nevertheless, Miranda’s body is marked by the odour of the durian, forcefully impacting her identity and experiences with her environment and the people around her. The queer illusions around Miranda’s birth with the durian allow for her body to become a space to manifest outside of what is systemically expected. Tara Lee describes Miranda as a reminder “of how the body has the power to own itself and write itself into the future” (Lee 108). Using her body as a mode of constructing history, Miranda’s existence justifies the ‘stink’ of post-historic memories experienced in diaspora and gives individuals the agency to both embrace and transcend this part of their identity. Moreover, the ambiguity of Miranda’s birth regards origin as inconclusive. The questions Lai as well as other diasporic individuals dread to hear: “go back where you came from” and “so where are you from?”, are therefore de-legitimized, erasing the demand for any locative origin, nor explanation, for anyone’s identity.

IV: Our Subjective Bodies: The Ending Reborn as a Beginning

Experiences carry over through births and rebirths in Nu Wa/Miranda’s bodies

This is highlighted in the novel’s final birth scene, when Miranda and Evie have sex in a hot spring, conceiving a “black-haired and bawling baby girl” (L.Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 269). The newborn mirrors how Nu Wa was described when she was first reborn as human. Nu Wa’s origin story is still referenced and reinterpreted, suggesting that the queering of stories will continue beyond the end of the novel. Through this parallel, Lai reminds the reader that “history relies on memory. But memory is always subjective. (L.Lai, *Future Asians* 172). By ending the story at a birth, usually symbolic of a beginning, the creation of new bodies highlights the endless rewriting of subjective stories. Simply put, it is “by our difference we mark how ancient the alphabet of our bodies is. By our strangeness we write our bodies into the future” (Lee 108). Instead of being trapped within the constraints of origin, the reader is given the space to reimagine and redefine themselves to fit their understandings of self. Miranda ends the novel saying “Everything will be alright...until next time” (L.Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* 269). Sparking hope for a future that “will be alright” while acknowledging the existence of a “next time.” The story turns to the reader, offering a space to reflect on their own narratives beyond their bodies as “all of our tails, figuratively speaking, are already split” (Latimer 125).

Larissa Lai’s novel “Salt Fish Girl” is not a clear linear story but reflects the subjectivity of realities for many individuals. Outlined in Nu Wa’s shifting anatomy, through embodied histories and queering notions of birth, the novel

challenges pure origins. Nu Wa's body transforms from the objectified snake-woman of the fetishized Asian female, split into the possibilities of new bodies and new narratives until the narrative reaches the post-memory of Miranda's durian-marked body and beyond. These re-births highlight not only the subjectivity of origins, but also spark hope of possibility for diasporic identities of the future.

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RACISM, ABLEISM, EXCEPTIONALISM, AND IMPERIALISM: JANE EYRE AS ANTIFEMINIST

LINDSEY PALMER

In “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane’s Progress,” Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar quote Richard Chase: “Well, obviously *Jane Eyre* is a feminist tract, an argument for the betterment of governesses and equal rights for women” (338). This essay will argue that the novel is not at all this straightforward, and by some definitions, can be considered antifeminist. There are three overarching reasons for this critique, being: the racist and ableist treatment of Bertha Mason, particularly through Gilbert and Gubar’s reading of the novel; the depiction of other women in the text and Jane’s exceptionalism as a single outlier among them; and the religious privileging of St. John’s “God-given” destiny over Jane’s, despite its situation in the British imperial project. While *Jane Eyre* may be considered profeminist for presenting a heroine that was free-thinking and independent for her time, it falls short of a feminism that includes an agenda of systemic, structural change targeted at all forms of oppression.

An argument that a text is antifeminist must necessarily begin by defining feminism. One of the most expansive and relevant definitions comes from bell hooks’s *Feminism is for Everybody*:

“feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (1). hooks’s own words stand in defence of this definition: “Practically, it is a definition that implies that all sexist thinking and action is the problem... It is also broad enough to include an understanding of systemic institutionalized sexism” (1). Crucially, it is also much more inclusive than many “white” or “Liberal” feminisms, in that it targets oppression broadly, for all reasons; thus, oppression on grounds of race, class, sex, sexuality, ability, etcetera, are all in opposition to feminist thought.¹

By this definition, *Jane Eyre* can be considered antifeminist on the treatment of one character alone – the first Mrs. Rochester, Bertha Mason. Bertha is a “disabled female subject who is a casualty of patriarchal, colonialist, and ableist hegemony (Nygren 117); as a mad, Creole woman (Brontë 290), Bertha is placed at multiple intersections of oppression and depicted as an animal and dehumanized. On seeing Bertha, Jane thinks, “What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal” (293). Bertha is systematically

disempowered due to her race: “As a colonized body, brought to England by her husband, Bertha is without familial support or much power under the law” (Nygren 118). Moreover, Rochester seems to imply his treatment of her has something to do with her racialized body, telling Jane that if Jane herself had ever become mad, he would still love her (Brontë 301) and blames this difference on Bertha’s nature being “wholly alien” to his own (306). He says this was due to Bertha’s tastes and cast of mind, yet the use of “alien” also points to her otherness as Jamaican.

Regarding her mental illness, Bertha is literally left voiceless, unable to articulate herself beyond her growls and laughs. As Elizabeth J. Donaldson recounts, “madness itself offers women little possibility for true resistance or productive rebellion... Marta Camerino-Santangelo argues in her aptly titled, *The Madwoman Can’t Speak: Or, Why Insanity Is Not Subversive*, Bertha Mason’s madness only ‘offers the illusion of power’ (1998, 3)” (101). Her physical stature and strength do little to counter the constraints of her positionality, and Rochester can easily subdue her (Brontë 293). While Rochester protests that he is “bound” to Bertha (306), she is quite literally constrained; Rochester conjures the trope of the shackled husband while his wife is imprisoned away from her home and family in an attic. Alexandra Nygren further critiques Rochester: “[He] argues that Bertha’s mental illness is a product of her genes, but also that ‘her excesses had prematurely developed the germs of insanity’ (261). By framing Bertha in such a manner, he at once both excuses his own ill treatment of her and shifts the ‘blame’ of

disability onto Bertha herself... refusing to acknowledge his own culpability” (118-9). He thus blames Bertha for her own madness and disregards her trauma, of which he is a part, as a factor in her mental illness.

Beyond Bertha’s direct treatment, there is also violence in the symbolic interpretation of her as Jane’s “dark double” by Gilbert and Gubar (360). They see Bertha as “the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress” (360). This reading not only deprives Bertha of agency, attributing her actions to Jane’s desires (359), but also posits Bertha’s story as a cautionary tale rather than a tragedy: “while acting out Jane’s secret fantasies, Bertha does... provide the governess with an example of how not to act” (361). This becomes more problematic with Bertha’s death, as Jane’s anger “will not be exorcised until the literal and symbolic death of Bertha frees her from the furies that torment her and makes possible a marriage of equality [and] wholeness within herself” (362). In this reading, Bertha “must play out her role, act out the transformation of her ‘self’ into that fictive Other, set fire to the house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction” (Spivak 251). This negates a feminist reading, or at least one within a feminism of a united fight for change, rather than the raising of one woman at the cost of another.

Finally, Bertha Mason “and the madwoman in general, [becomes] a compelling metaphor for women’s rebellion,” but “when madness is used as a metaphor for feminist rebellion, mental illness itself is erased” (Donaldson 100-2). The novel’s depiction of Bertha’s madness not only silences her but



increases the stigma around mental illness. Donaldson foregrounds the “matrilineal legacy” of Bertha’s madness, as well as her ethnic identity and physical disorder, as her madness is attributed to her mother, a Creole (106). This “is in keeping with the novel’s anxious relationship to female and to disabled bodies,” as also evidenced in Adèle’s inherited defects from her mother (106). “Psychiatry... unfairly pathologizes women” (100), and Donaldson makes clear that *Jane Eyre* does the same. As such, Bertha’s representation erases disability at the same time as it situates it in the female body; it is antifeminist in both its ableism and its anxiety about gendered bodies.

Gilbert and Gubar describe Jane as a heroine who refuses “to submit to her social destiny” (338), and her story as

a “distinctively female *Bildungsroman* in which the problems encountered by the protagonist... are symptomatic of difficulties Everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome” (339). While the previous discussion questions whether these problems might be better phrased as the difficulties of Every-white-able-bodied-Englishwoman, we might also ask, what of the other women? How are the female characters in *Jane Eyre*, other than Bertha, portrayed?

Adèle Varens, Blanche Ingram, and Grace Poole are described as “important negative ‘role-models’ for Jane” by Gilbert and Gubar, “and all suggest problems she must overcome before she can reach the independent maturity which is the goal of her pilgrimage.” Adèle and Blanche both represent Jane’s struggles in a “society that rewards beauty and style,” while Blanche has the additional advantage of a “respectable place in the world” (350). Grace might pose similar questions given Jane’s musings that she may have once had a relationship with Rochester, though from the reverse perspective, making Jane question the value of appearances (351). Jane certainly feels no comradeship or solidarity with Blanche or Grace; she thinks, “Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy: she was too inferior to excite the feeling” (Brontë 185), while she reassures herself that she is different from Grace – a lady, not a servant (157). Georgiana and Eliza, Jane’s childhood enemies, grow up to be polar opposites and call one another “vain and absurd” (235) and “selfish, heartless... the spy and informer” (236) respectively, neither an unreasonable accusation. While a reader might look to

Miss Temple or Helen Burns for positive examples for Jane, Gilbert and Gubar call both “impossible ideals,” one a Victorian “angel-in-the-house,” and thus hardly a feminist role model, the other an ideal of “self-renunciation, of all-consuming (and consumptive) spirituality” (345-6). These unattainable archetypes are thus unable to have lasting comradeship with Jane and disappear from her story early; they cannot walk the path towards “mature freedom” with Jane (Gilbert and Gubar 339).

Feminism, in contrast, does not strive for the betterment of one individual woman at the expense of others; it endeavours to create systematic, structural change for the improvement of all peoples’ lives.² Jane’s story is one of exceptionalism in which she leaves all these “lesser” women behind. Comparatively to contemporary critiques of 90’s discourses of “Girl Power,” Brontë presents Jane as an exceptional individual that stands apart, which is highly problematic from a feminist perspective. As Jessica K. Taft explains concerning various advertisements,

These examples, on the positive side, emphasize girls as potentially powerful people... However, in failing to address the social factors of race, class, gender, sexuality, and physical ability, the ads and articles mobilize Girl Power discourse to hide current injustices rather than helping girls to analyze oppression or even acknowledge social problems. Instead, *they place the responsibility for achievement on the shoulders of each individual girl.* (Taft 74, emphasis added)

Jane Eyre does involve issues of class but as highlighted previously, handles other listed frames of oppression very poorly. Crucially, Jane’s success is her individual responsibility and achievement; because of her willpower in leaving Rochester to be with him at the right time and her determination to follow her own assigned spiritual course, Jane attains her great happiness. While class issues are present, the story dwells little on the power of Jane’s endowment from her uncle to enable her marriage of equals with Rochester. Jane says, “I told you I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress,” (Brontë 435) but this fortuitous turn of fate is hardly credited as facilitating her happy ending. Jane’s success in attaining all she desires is depicted as purely her own.

Perhaps the only women Jane has solidarity with are Diana and Mary, whom Maria Lamona calls her “models of divinely-inspired womanhood” (254). Unfortunately, their literal familial connection undercuts their potential for abstract “sisterhood” with Jane; a feminist text might be expected to have sisterly ties between many women, consistent efforts to lift one another up without resorting to familial responsibility, and yet Brontë does the exact opposite. She gives Jane women to look up to, whom she can educate herself with, then makes them her cousins, such that their ties belong to the family and not to shared womanhood. In fact, the female character with the most potential for a feminist reading is Adèle, for while she begins “spoilt and indulged” (108), she is nurtured and guided by Jane: “As she grew up, a sound English education corrected in a great measure her French defects; and when she left school, I found

in her a pleasing and obliging companion: docile, good-tempered, and well-principled” (450). Adèle best suggests the potential that women have when given the necessary opportunities, though within the imperialist, pro-British frame of the novel.

Nonetheless, the success of two women, one described as singular and exceptional, and the other gaining moderate standing with the assistance of the former, stands against a cast of female characters variously insane and violent, vain and inferior, gluttonous, silly and spiteful, and unattainably perfect. *Jane Eyre* contains no suggestion that the lot of women as a whole should be improved, or that there are structural factors contributing to the faults these women possess or the ideals they are forced to uphold. Jane has her own happy ending then retreats into “spiritual isolation in a world where such egalitarian marriages as [hers] are rare, if not impossible. True minds... must withdraw into a remote forest... in order to circumvent the structures of a hierarchal society” (Gilbert & Gubar 369). She does not attempt to promote such marriages or egalitarian ideas generally. As Gilbert and Gubar astutely observe in the case of Grace Poole, “women in Jane’s world, acting as agents of men, may be the keepers of other women. But both the keepers and prisoners are bound by the same chains” (351). Women in this story are complicit in the subjugation of other women, Grace Poole through her job detaining Bertha, Blanche Ingram in her disdain for the lower class, and Miss Temple in her implicit lesson to Jane to control her emotions and rage and behave as a respectable lady ought. Through the example set by its characters, *Jane Eyre*, like

the advertisements against which Taft warns, has the potential to “inhibit girls’ connection with one another, reduce the possibilities for social analysis and critical thinking, and thus hinder girls’ social and political engagements (74).

The third overarching reason *Jane Eyre* is an antifeminist novel is how it handles religion, specifically in an imperial context. In “Jane’s Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in *Jane Eyre*,” Maria Lamonaca says the novel “could be considered a message of radical spiritual autonomy for women... Jane’s spiritual *bildungsroman* requires that she develop a moral and ethical agency independent of male control. Yet *Jane Eyre*’s conclusion leaves open the possibility that Jane, despite her efforts, has failed to reconcile the conflicting demands of domesticity and faith” (247). Jane is able to resist religion as a vessel for male domination and control, although “both Rochester and St. John cloak their agendas in religious language – that is, both presume that their desire to control Jane is compatible with God’s will” (247). She shows that women “must experience God directly, ‘through the heart’” (252), defying conventions of Brontë’s time that “represented women as incapable of discerning God’s will for themselves,” capable of connecting with God only through a male spouse (247-8). However, the “redemptive, Evangelical overtones” of her renewed relationship with Rochester suggest Jane is responsible for his spiritual salvation, (257) complying to the trope of women “saving” bad men. Moreover, despite finding her own spiritual independence, saving Rochester requires her to lead a Victorian domestic role,

becoming the angel-in-the-house she saw in Miss Temple and thought she could never uphold. “Like any good household angel, Jane ‘delights in sacrifice’... Jane has forfeited her ability to perform heroic, *visible* acts of self-renunciation” (258).

Herein lies the imperial element, for while Jane cannot visibly perform heroic, spiritual acts, another character can. In contrast to Jane, St. John’s “spiritual destiny” is much more visible as a missionary:

If Jane and St. John have each discerned God’s will for themselves, why is St. John “called, and chosen” (502) to his heroic missionary endeavours... while Jane, called to “mind [more] earthly things,” is presumably relegated to the second or third rank of God’s faithful? If Jane’s religion is... merely a strategy for personal empowerment, then clearly this religion has failed her by the novel’s end. (258)

Not only does the ending minimize Jane’s supposed “God-given” path with Rochester, and privilege St. John’s masculine, heroic destiny, it also raises the British Christian imperial mission to the highest standard. As Gayatri Spivak argues, “it should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England’s social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English” (243). While Bertha brings this topic into play as an imperial subject, it is through St. John that Christianizing imperialism is presented as an essential “good” in *Jane Eyre*, and at the expense of Jane’s own feminine, unobtrusive, Christian vocation.

To neglect the imperial, exceptionalist, racist, and ableist elements of *Jane Eyre* would be to fail to consider the novel as a whole and the context in which it was written. In light of them, Brontë’s work cannot be considered a feminist text, particularly according to bell hooks’s definition. Through the treatment of Bertha Mason, the colonized, pathologized female Other, Jane’s relationships with the other women she encounters, and the advancement of St. John’s religious destiny over Jane’s, it is clear that *Jane Eyre* is antifeminist. Considering the novel as a product of its time shows Charlotte Brontë to be forward-thinking and independent, yet mired in the imperial notions of her era; to consider the text a feminist one would be to limit the possibilities of radical feminist ideologies today and their potential to unravel systems of oppression globally.

¹ An overview of the various definitions and types of feminism is beyond the scope of this paper, and I will refrain from debating what constitutes “feminism” aside from assuming it to be anti-oppression, intersectional, and invested in systemic change, as per hooks.

² This is not to suggest that feminist movements have never been problematic in this regard, but that (especially radical) feminisms recognize the issue of sexist women as well as men. See Susan Brownmiller’s “The Enemy Within” in *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Barbara A. Crow (New York University Press, 2000, pp. 117-21) for further discussion, and “Feminist Class Struggle” in bell hooks’s *Feminism is for Everybody* (pp. 37-43) for an account of divisions based on class, race, and sexuality within feminism.

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*please refer to thegardenstatuary.com to see the full Works Cited for this essay.

AN ODE TO THE WORLD

NOOR ANWAR

the girl with the black rimmed glasses and red leather skirt waves at me. it is a ritual done every friday at approximately nine forty-five in the morning when the children have filled their cubby holes and business men with pinstripe suits have been seated. it is a daily occurrence that is witnessed only by the birds nested above and every friday i return the gesture with a tight lipped smile and a nod of the head.

it does not matter
who she is what
she does or where
she is going

while tracing circles on my wrist, my mother tells me that at the time of one's birth, a part of the soul is broken into a million little pieces. like a potluck, they are shared, and passed and promised. to your doctor, your mailman, the first boy that had ever touched your lips, and to the girl with the red leather skirt and black rimmed glasses.

my mother tells me that our shared recognition is an ode to the world.
An ode to the first brick thrown, igniting the raising of fists. an ode to the little ways in which we give ourselves to others, an ode to the million versions of ourselves, waiting to be known.
among the chaos, and muted destruction, this ode
- it sings out.



SELF-PORTRAIT AS A BLEACHING CREAM

AVANTIKA SIVARAMAN

I am the apartheid in a tube.
minting money off your reservoir of melanin, blithe bleach like bullets until you
slow-bleed brown.
Or quieter - like a virus
infecting Indian society's opinion until they believe they are hostages of their own
skin.

The chemical chromium in my white paste, carcinogenic,
but I advertise: the colour of your skin is worse than cancer.
Do you know that you are prettier than your 'dusky' sister because you were born
a hue paler?
Birthing swells of thoughts just like that one.

Denying that the colour of your skin is the tint of the earth - mother to every
lineage of sunflowers.
That you cannot be marred by the blood-red ripe South-Indian sun - only kissed.
Condemning you for being as dark as the night,
I don't tell you that the constellations form in just that shade.



SHE DOESN'T LOOK HERSELF

EMMY PEHRSON

My grandpa didn't live past seven,
 and my grandmother didn't, either,
 so I don't believe
 in that pseudoscience anymore.
 "Cells die and are replaced every seven years"
 feels a lot like a way
 to diminish death.

"It happens all the time," that sentence says,
 "why does the final time matter?"

If they died at seven, I think,
 standing over her casket, now,
 ten years separated from myself
 standing over my father's father,
 I would never have met *them*—

that couldn't be the case. Here I am,
 tears filling eyes, spilling,
 no stoppers in this flood, father
 and mother and brother huddled tightly around,
 next to that cold body, her

sleeping, or is it sleeping:
 if experience matches experience
 does a dead metaphor determine a dead human?

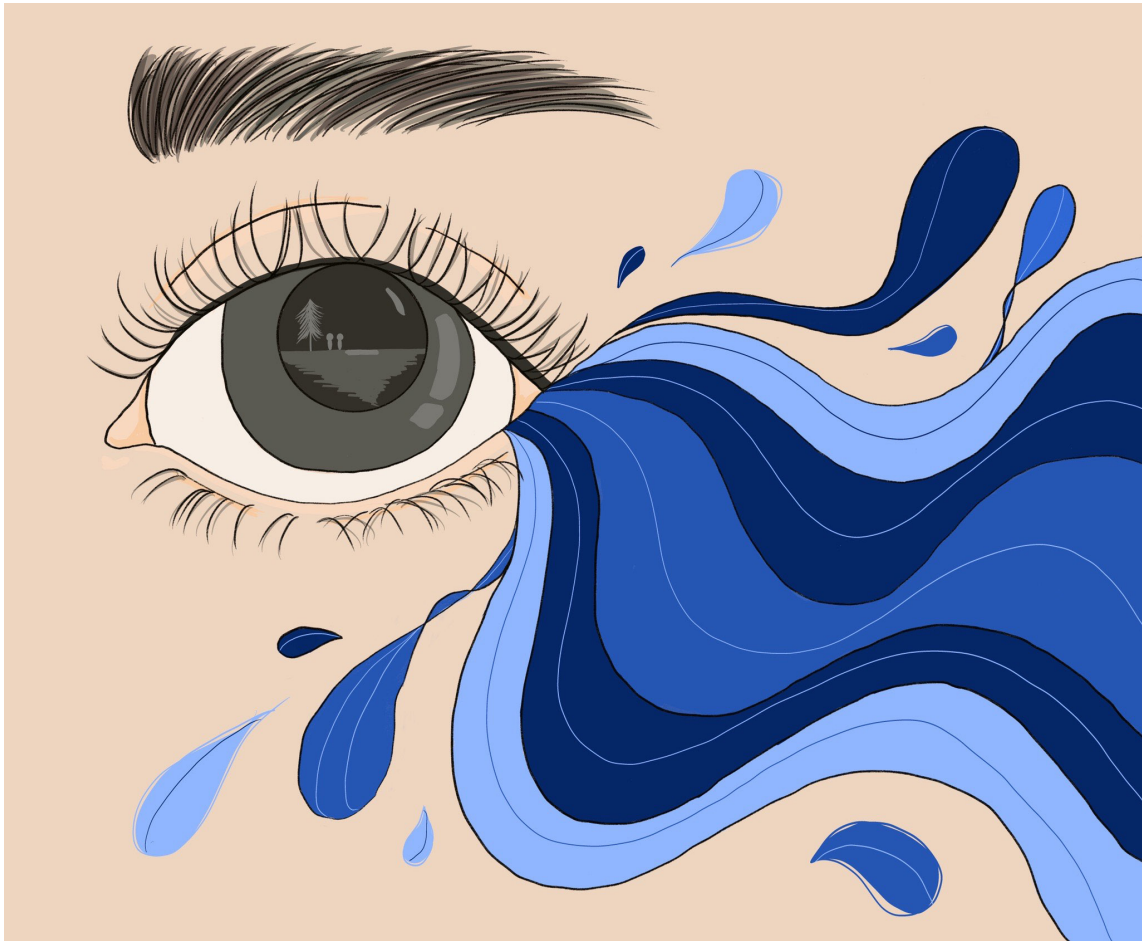
I played my music twice,
 both times for her,
 even though I pretended

the first was for my sake.

But how could I be
practicing to play for her
when her body lies there,
so close beneath the loft?

White snow covers white linen,
coat over coat
in this midwest winter.

O, my God, her God,
how those luminous drifts blind
me to this world.



BEFORE THE RAIN

IRIS ZHANG



Nature is something that frequently captivates me; I enjoy using photography to capture the beauty I see. This photograph, *Before the Rain*, was actually a lucky mistake. I had forgotten to adjust the manual settings before taking my photo; the aperture was not large enough and it lacked exposure. I had to leave right after taking the photo, but fortunately something convinced me to keep it. Later that day, I sat down to edit it, and after bringing up the exposure and enhancing parts of the photograph, it turned out to be more than I expected. To me, this piece elicits a certain mood – a sense of calmness and surety in knowing about the rain to come. The flowers' bright, deep colours help bring about a feeling of tranquility, and the dimness present in the photograph alludes to the light, oncoming rain shower.

TECHNOLOGY XIAO JIE

MARILYN SUN



As a child, I was always aware of the space I occupied as an Asian female. I lived in a mostly white neighbourhood, so the only thing that I yearned for was to assimilate and be like my Caucasian friends. I cast away my Chinese heritage in hopes that I would be accepted not only by my peers, but by myself. Since then, I have been on a journey of self-discovery, and am trying to regain the culture that I had lost and turned away from as a child. My work is heavily influenced by my adoration of traditional Chinese art and performance. Now, I explore and mesh traditional artistic themes with futuristic motifs through art, in an effort to try to better understand how my Chinese culture fits into my past and future self. Specifically in my piece, “Technology Xiao Jie”, my inspiration was the performers of Chinese opera. In this piece, I explored how the traditional

practice of opera might fit into a futuristic setting of robots, circuits and automation. The subject of my piece is both an opera performer and an automated droid, and she exemplifies the poise and aesthetics that are needed for both characters. The juxtaposition of the past and the future can often reveal how these entities are not so different.

I am looking forward to creating more pieces that reinvigorate past customs by fusing them together with utopian elements and aesthetics. Through this journey, I hope to inspire others to look to their past to guide them towards an innovative future.

WEEKEND I.

MARIANNA SCHULTZ

We burn the needle over a lighter Mimi found in her mom's purse. Then she lies on her pink sheets, facing away from me as I kneel next to her head. With clean hands I tuck a dry bar of soap behind her ear and poise the needle over the dot she drew. I don't really want to pierce her ear, but it's a friendship thing, she assures me. An earring instead of a bracelet. A more permanent promise.

I tell her to breathe in and her small chest rises, then I sink the needle through the cartilage. It goes straight through the mark, but comes out at an angle at the back. I'm disappointed, I wanted to impress both of us with a natural talent.

"Is it done?" Mimi's face is screwed up hard.

"I guess so."

"That wasn't too bad," she says. She goes over to look closer in the mirrored door of her closet. The needle is still lodged in her ear. "Gimme the earring." She opens and closes her hand at me, not taking her eyes off her reflection. I pick up a tissue holding the sterilized rhinestone stud and exchange it with the needle.

It's my turn after that. I lie down and crush a fistful of bedsheet as Mimi drives the needle into my ear.

We admire our new reflections. Mimi has on a fresh face of drugstore makeup, even though it's six p.m. and we don't have plans for the rest of the day. She just likes to practice, I know, and I think she wants to be ready in case something happens. We're always ready for something to happen.

I lean into the mirror to look at my ear. Mimi missed the mark I drew, it went a bit too high and now it's hot and I can feel my heartbeat there. Some blood has congealed around the earring, which makes me feel better about the job I did on her.

Mimi wants to take photos, so I tuck my hair behind my oozing ear and put my cheek next to hers. She grins at us in the mirror, then looks herself in the eye as she takes the photo.

In the picture her gaze is fixed and unnatural, but a soft light happened to fall across my face.

"Why do you look so good in pictures?" she asks, pleadingly, like it's something that I'm inflicting on her.

"I don't," I say. "Look," pointing to my ear on the screen. "Disgusting."

I know the comparison isn't quite equal but she still accepts it in return. This kind of exchange is something we're still working on perfecting.

We pick at a bag of individually wrapped rice crackers and green grapes that Mimi washed for us. It's the same snack we've eaten since we were kids. I hold an ice cube wrapped in a paper towel to my ear, and keep taking it off to check if it's still bleeding. The melted ice drips in pinkish lines down my forearm. Mimi scrolls through her phone and holds it up to me every few minutes, showing me different pictures of outfits and asking me if I think she'd look good in them. I look up from taking mindless history notes and say yes to the one with punky heels and no to the spandex skirt set.

This is how we spend a lot of our time, in her room, on the floor.

Downstairs the door opens and closes. It's seven. This is when Mimi's older brother comes home from university on Fridays to stay the weekend.

"Ugh," she rolls her eyes as we hear him come upstairs.

I scoot away from the mirror and back to my open binder on the floor.

He pauses in the hallway on the way to his room, duffel bag in hand.

"Hey Jason," I say.

"Hey kiddos." He turns to come into the room.

"Shut up, don't call us that." Mimi reaches a foot to the edge of the door to try to close it in his face. He pretends to fight back against Mimi's genuine efforts, grinning at me like it's just us in on the joke.

I laugh, but I'm not sure if I'm supposed to.

"How's the studying going?" he asks, his elbow lodging the door open.

"It's good," I reply before Mimi manages to kick the door shut.

"Bye!" she yells. "God he's such a loser." She sprawls onto her bed.

"Wait, how is it, actually?" She leans over and grabs a sheet of my notes. "The quiz is on Monday, right?"

Mimi's always said I'm the smart one. I feel guilty when I don't deny it, which I rarely do. I know in the past she's only said it because I don't hand in late assignments or fail homework checks, but this year I've been trying to live up to the title. I took a summer camp at the university this summer and saw the sweatshirts with embroidered crests, the soft piles of unread student newspapers, the coffee chains glowing with open laptops and knew it was what I wanted. So, I've started skimming political articles on the front pages of news sites and staring at random pages of my mom's copy of the Iliad between classes.

Mimi does well in school too, but in her own way. In class her comments are always obvious but so earnest that the teacher will thank her and graciously twist her answer into the point they were really trying to make. Last year she entered the talent show and played something on the piano. The music was trudging and clumsy but she wore a dress and played so confidently through her wrong notes that she came in second.

"Do you wanna do something? Wanna go out?" she asks, lying half on her bed and half on the carpet.

Going out means walking along Sixth, the strip of shops and restaurants a few blocks from her house. This is a Friday night activity. The goal is that we'll run into kids from school doing the same thing as us. I'm not sure what is supposed to happen after that.

I pretend to be finishing a problem in my homework. "I guess so."

It's a straight walk to Sixth. It's only seven but it's already dark and the night feels hollow and dry as we move through it. A year ago, I would have been skittish and walked quickly with my arms crossed over my stomach. I've only stopped worrying about being kidnapped now that I stomp around in severe boots with loud heels, carrying a shoulder bag instead of a backpack.

As we walk Mimi texts some people from school and chats to me at the same time. She keeps answering her own questions and making herself laugh. When someone texts her something she finds funny she reads it out to me. I don't mind it like this at all.

Sixth is yellow with street lights and scattered with adults on their cellphones trying to find the people they made plans with. There's a restaurant on the first corner we turn. I walk past it often, but on weekends there's outdoor seating with soft lights and music. It's full of people with their work friends or fiancés eating and making noise together. The air around them dissolves with the gas from the heaters and their breath. I feel a rush of desire to be one of them, comfortable and sure and ordering appetizers and desserts.

"There they are."

She's talking about the three figures across the street. Our friends. They're really Mimi's friends who I hang out with. They're nice enough, but every time Mimi leaves me with them to go to the bathroom I quietly panic as my mind clears of any thoughts or opinions.

They like to talk about other kids at school but mostly about this crime show I don't watch. I don't have the provider it's on so I used to watch it with Mimi until she started catching up without me.

They're sitting on the concrete steps outside the library. One of the boys is drinking from a coffee cup and the other from a plastic bottle. Ramona is smoking.

We all say hey to each other and start talking about school. Ramona offers us each a cigarette from the pack. I accept without thinking and regret it instantly. Mimi says no thanks and smiles.

I'm wondering if Jason will be around when we get home. Sometimes if I'm reading a book, he'll ask me about it and relate it to a recent essay of his, or recommend a new one. I don't always get what he's talking about, but I don't think he does either. I don't mind though. It's nice to talk like an adult sometimes.

Now all I can concentrate on is not coughing as Ramona and Mimi talk about how they're worried about Frankie Ling's cryptic posts on Instagram and the guys talk about the trailer of this horror movie they both want to see.

"What do you think?" Ramona says turning to me.

"Huh?" I blow some smoke from my mouth.



“About Frankie.”

“You’re not even inhaling,” one guy says to me.

I feel a rush of shame, then a second one for caring what he thinks.

Ramona frowns at him and continues. “Have you seen her account? All this kinda emo, cry for help poetry. It’s dark shit. Not even very good. I feel like someone should reach out to her, though.”

“Oh right, I saw it. I dunno. I think if you actually needed help you’d just talk to someone in real life, right?”

“Harsh,” says the other guy.

“But it’s not like she has a best friend or anything,” Mimi says. I know she doesn’t mean to side against me, but I’m still annoyed.

“Then maybe you should try talking to her instead of gossiping about her life with us.”

My words come out harder than I meant and suddenly I feel very ugly.

Ramona and Mimi look at each other again. I should probably apologize or laugh it off but I don't want to have to acknowledge that I just spoke. I feel Mimi's looking at me while I stand silently, and for a wild second I imagine that maybe no one heard me.

I feel something on the side of my neck, and when I touch it my fingers come away smeared with blood. I feel relieved as I hold up my hand in front of everyone. "Ew, look."

"Oh! What the fuck, are you okay?" asks Ramona.

I push my hair back to show them and they all lean in towards me. Mimi takes a photo so I can see too. There's a dark red line from my ear down my neck except for the spot I'd touched it. It looks like someone found a tab under my ear and peeled it back, pulling a thin, neat strip of skin off my neck.

"Does it hurt?"

"Not really. It's just kind of warm. And itchy."

"Maybe it's infected," says Ramona.

"But it's new."

"We should probably go," Mimi apologizes.

They nod coolly and we turn to walk away. The three of them fill the space we leave.

I find myself talking more than Mimi on the way home which is unusual. I run out of things to say after a couple of blocks.

"Is it cool if I stay at yours tonight?"

"Yeah, obviously." Her voice sounds flat and deeper than normal.

I look at the side of her face, she's blinking a lot and it looks like she might cry. I can't tell if she's working not to or if she's about to say something.

"I feel like you don't try with my friends."

I know that they're not my friends, but I didn't think that Mimi knew too. I thought even if she did know, she wouldn't point it out.

"Sorry, I thought I was."

Mimi presses her palms to her cheeks and sniffs.

"Can I still sleep over?"

"I said yes."

The house is quiet when we get back. Mimi's parents are still out. Jason creaks in his room upstairs. Mimi wipes the dried blood from my neck with a towel she wet in the sink and gives me a fresh pack of ice.

We're settled into the couch with a sitcom on TV. I'm watching it with an open book on my lap, and Mimi's asleep, curled between the leather cushions.

It's ten when Jason comes downstairs in sweatpants with an empty plate in his hand. I have to twist around in my seat to see that it's him.

"Hey," he says.

"Hi. How was your week?"

“So busy. Enjoy high school while you can.” He says it like he’s the first person who ever has.

I agree.

“What about you? What are you up to?” His plate clatters into the sink.

I hold up my book in response. It’s one of his recommendations. “It’s good.” I’ve only read the first chapter but I don’t say that.

“Oh, nice.” He gives an affirmative nod. “It’s good that you’re already so well read.”

“I don’t read that much,” I say truthfully, turning back to the TV.

“Sure you do. And you have good taste. That’s why you’re smarter than the girls in my classes.”

I know that’s not true. I feel a pang realizing he thinks I’m dumb enough to take the compliment.

“Prettier, too.”

I turn around again. It occurs to me that he doesn’t realize Mimi’s on the couch with me. He looks smug and expectant from the kitchen. I’m not surprised, but I feel a drowning disappointment in him. I had been happy with banter and recommendations. I thought that was the agreement.

His stubble is sparse and too long, his skin is washed out in the light, and he seems pathetically old. I hold his gaze blankly for a couple seconds, and frown a bit to show I’m rejecting him. I go back to watching the show, but I hear him walk up behind the couch.

Out of the corner of my eye, I watch his hand approaching my face. Reaching for my hair, or my shoulder. It bumps my ear and I wince.

“Mimi,” I say, louder than necessary, some panic cracking through my voice.

Jason’s hand retracts like a pen and Mimi opens her eyes.

“Uh, what?” Her eyeshadow is smudged on one side.

I don’t know what to say. I just wait as she looks up and notices Jason there, then makes a face.

“Oh my god, get your own friends.” She closes her eyes again.

He takes his time, filling a glass of tap water all the way to the top, and looking through way too many cupboards before choosing a bag of chips.

“Do you want to go sleep in your room?” I ask Mimi.

She shakes her head and shimmies deeper between the cushions. Jason passes behind the couch and thuds across the landing. I pull a fleece blanket over the two of us, tucking it around her shoulders and my knees. Upstairs the door clicks shut again.

I text my mom that I’m staying at Mimi’s tonight. Mimi tugs the blanket higher on her body which pulls it tight between us. I dig the remote out from the couch and click through some shows, looking for something good.

MY DAD IS JEFF PROBST

CAMILLE LEMIRE

I always knew Dad was handsome.

When I was five, I remembered the fluorescent hazy lights of the television flickering before my eyes. I saw people who looked like the kids in my class, and sounded like them. *Eing-lish*. A language I didn't quite understand yet. I remembered the softness of the couch, my mother's nails combing through my hair, nibbling on a cookie I did not understand came from plastic wrapping.

"Look, it's Dad," my older sister said. Or at least I think she said. She spoke in another language that I once understood but no longer do, but I still remember her point.

Now, I know the wavering blob on the screen to be Jeff Probst, the host of the wilderness adventure reality TV competition, *Survivor*. Jeff Probst had crisp black hair and a pearly grin, wore cargo shorts and a colorful button-up shirt. He spoke in a loud, proud voice on a beach he seemed to melt into, like a postcard he lived in. I used to live near beaches like that.

"Is that Dad?" I asked, looking up at my mom.

My mother's eyes were trained on the screen, her face lit up in the dark living room by the artificial sunlight leaking from the television screen. Under this light, her face relaxed, unwinding the wrinkles that lined her cheeks like the inner rings of a tree. I could imagine her on that beach with Jeff Probst.

"Mama?" I said, again.

Her black eyes snapped to meet mine, black like coal burning. "Huh?"

"Is that Dad?" I asked.

My earliest memory of my dad is him picking me up after the first airplane ride I remember taking to Canada. He wore a long beige trench coat and carried a small yellow box I would later recognize to be *Timbits*. He wore wireless glasses, with crisp black hair and the sort of pearly smile that you couldn't help but trust. I could not understand a word he said.

What I remember later was the small smile toying at the corners of my mother's mouth. "Yes, Cammy. That is Dad."

I thought Jeff Probst was my father for three years.

The night I learned otherwise was a turning point in my life. I learned, at the age of eight, that you have to be so careful with some memories.

There are some you put into the scrapbook, and there are some you must hold onto delicately. Like a secret. Like the air is glass and if you move too fast, it will shatter around you. There are some moments that are just for you, for the few that you happened to be bound to by fate, by destiny, by whatever the fuck it is that brings us together in this world.

Let me set the scene: three years later, and my mom no longer spoke to me in Spanish because I found the grammar confusing. The kids at school told me that my skin reminded them of the damp dirt hidden underneath all the beautiful, stark white snow December had to offer. My brother and I replaced our rock pets with the cat our dad got with our second mother at the house we visited on weekends.

This was a moment where the air is glass, where the hourglass contracts around you to remind you that the sand is coming, coming, coming.

"Get out!"

I woke up from a dream into a nightmare. My mother, leering over me like a ghost in the night, face squeezed with anger. She pushed me out of the bed onto the cold floor.

"Get out," she insisted again. I didn't move. She lunged at me. "GET OUT."

I crawled out of her reach, rolling into the hallway. My brother stood, a dark silhouette, wailing. He wore Spiderman pyjamas and clutched the blanket he has had since before I was born. He was just as small as I am. The air felt so tight around us.

We were small and she was a monster crawling out of our picture books. She roared over our cowering frames, "You have ten minutes to pack and then I want you out. Out. OUT."

I don't remember much of those ten minutes. It was not the sort of moment you put into a scrapbook. Your mother's angry tears. Layering winter coats because you knew it would be cold outside. Shoving your *Hello Kitty* suitcase with what you think are the bare essentials: your piggy bank, a change of clothes, some pencil crayons, and the first big kid book you are allowed to read. My sister's radio, for some reason, blared in the night. Of all things, Neil Diamond's *Welcome to America* played.

I saw the red and white stripes, the stars, behind my closed eyelids as I waited for my siblings at the bottom of the stairs, reminding me of a whole other day.

I waited for my sister to pick me up after school. I wanted to go across the monkey-bar set on the playground, but I wasn't supposed to try without some help. Yet no one would talk to me. Quietly, I approached the eight-bar monkey-bar set I had been eyeing up from my lunch breaks in the classroom. Some of the kids in my class eyed me warily, unsure of seeing me approach their territory. But I knew I could do it. I jumped up to reach for the first bar and-

Fell spectacularly, head first, onto the snow below me. Blood pooled from my nose onto the snow, red stripes on white. My head blurred from the fall, spots of black and stars bursting before my eyes. White stars melting into the gray sky above me. I heard my

classmates laughing as I laid there. They were always laughing.

Welcome to America.

"Let me call Dad!" I heard my sister plead from the top of the stairs. My brother cowered behind her sixteen-year old's thighs, trembling as if the cold from outside had leaked within.

My mother cowered too, but I did not know why. "I do not care what you do. I just need you to get out. *Get out* of my house. Do you hear me? *GET OUT!*"

And I was eight years old and scared and I did not really understand English television fully yet. I certainly did not understand *Survivor* yet, or else I would not have said:

"We can't call Dad, he has to run *Survivor!*"

My mother's coal eyes focused on me. Their heat permeated through the air.

My older sister grabbed my mother's arm. "Mom, Cammy is just a kid. She's confused. She doesn't understand that—"

"Seems perfect, doesn't it?" Mom hissed, down at me. Spit flew from her mouth, the drops bursting like stars in the air, before falling. "I bet you imagine your dad being the host of some adventure TV show, off exploring some unknown part of the world. I can tell you what he used to explore."

Tears streaked down her cheeks, like the waterfalls the contestants on *Survivor* went to for rewards. I wondered if my mom ever saw a waterfall.

Let's pause for a moment. I know now that my mother's words held a darker innuendo. I wonder if my dad thought of my mom as something he "explored."

When I ask my dad about when he met my mom, he tells me that he went for summer break in Mexico during university and came back with a wife and the promise of a baby. I don't know if he remembers exactly when he met my mother, or if she was just another golden-skinned vixen with an inviting smile.

Sometimes I want to pretend that my parents had some fantastical Meet Cute Love Story. I see the beaches of Cancún, faded with the ghosting breath of a disposable camera. I imagine that it was hot. I imagine my parents were hot. My mother with perfect brown greased thighs, the right sort of body to fill out a bikini, and perfectly poofed 80s hair. My dad with the smile of someone who has never been hurt and never will. I imagine her lying on her perfectly flat stomach on a big towel, fingers flipping through the glossy pages of an American magazine. I want him to approach her. I want him to say something kind to her, wax poetry about her smile, bring her flowers that remind him of her. Then I want him to fall in love with her because he's amazed at her knowledge of 18th century literature or loved the smell of her cooking or admired her resilience in growing up without a mother.

Instead, I imagine he smirked at her over a beer he just finished chugging with a friend, the piss-coloured liquid splashing down his chin. I imagine she looked at my dad over the rim of artistically-shaped glasses and said something smart or funny or sexy. I imagine

my dad took a picture with his eyes because my mother was like a postcard come to life. I imagine my dad like Jeff Probst, whispering about the wilderness and adventures, melting into the sand my mother laid on like it was the caramel surface of her olive-toned skin. I imagined he burped and instead of flinching, she laughed, because he was like one of the models from her American magazines.

But I don't know. My parents were not careful with this moment.

Here's another moment I was careful with:

"Cammy."

I blinked at the sound of my name, or the French accented pronunciation of my name. I was four years old and in kindergarten class. My mother, wanting to encourage me to immerse myself in Canadian culture, placed me in a French immersion program for English students. The only language I spoke was Spanish.

A pretty blonde woman held up a book in front of me. She pointed at words and said more words to me. The only word she taught me: *no*. My classmates laughed around me, and my cheeks felt hot. I never understood what was funny.

"Lunch?" I said, because that's one of the few things I could.

"No," she snapped, and she suddenly wasn't so pretty.

My classmates laughed again and I sank into my chair as they ran off for something I later understood to be recess. I was not allowed to join them.

I was alone in a classroom, with a monster crawling out of my picture book. She roared and I did not understand. I was alone, waiting for the minutes to tick by until I could go home.

This is a moment that was not careful with me, and it slunk around my ankles like seaweed in the ocean. A ghost breathing onto the back of my neck.

"Cammy," the monster cooed.

Maybe this moment never ended.

"Cammy," a monster coos, and I can still see my mother sobbing at the top of the stairs, my siblings trembling before her.

Here's another moment I was careful with:

I remember the wrinkled back of my mother's tee-shirt as she led me down the stairs. The faint aroma of the lemon dish soap that we used to wash our hands. The cool tiles of the kitchen beneath my toes, which were smaller than marbles at the time. My brother, tittering after me.

Mom didn't make me put on a coat, just ushered me outside onto our peeling white wood deck.

It was a rather insignificant winter night in Calgary. Our deck looked out upon our spectacularly shitty suburb, crawling with racoons and high teenagers. We heard them laughing in the distance, or maybe it was the coyotes howling. The air was biting cold, as if a snake had sunk its teeth into your flesh, only to have its venom turned to ice in your veins. My brother and I had lined the railings of the deck with pretty rocks we found to

replace the pets we were not allowed to own.

"Look," my mother breathed, her words like the sigh of a book as its pages flip.

Wavering emerald green and electric blue silk unfolded through the night sky, consuming the stars as if they were grains of sand, of time, that could be reclaimed. It was as if a bolt of lightning had streaked through the sky only to come to screaming halt—to let its magnificent rays of pure power charge us. I felt my skin electrified, brought to life.

"Did you know we are as old as history?" my mom inquired, her eyes locked on the colourful beams dancing above us.

I knew she was talking to me. I knew the story she was about to tell—it was one I had heard dozens of times before. But I do not remember her telling me it before this particular night.

"We are from *Me-hee-co*," my mother mused, like she often did. "We are from a land that has a history before there even was history. In you and me and your brother and your sister resides the blood of people who have existed as long as people were meant to exist."

"What people were that?" I asked, because I always asked.

"The Mayans," she told me. She went on to tell me fantastical myths and tales of the Mayan people, which I later found a little too conveniently on Wikipedia pages. My mother always said, "We are true Mayans, descended all the way back to royalty. Our bloodline has never been tainted."

The moonlight washed out all the colour in the world. I looked at my tiny hands, which were white under the liquid glow of the night sky. Like they are when we watch *Survivor* on TV. Like catching your reflection in glass, or a hazy mirage.

"We are as old as history," my mom said, again, still looking at the sky.

And here is the last moment I am careful with:

"Look here," my sister said, once. We were fifteen years older. We had found a box full of pictures of our parents when they were young, when they were still in love, or at least pretended they could be.

She held up a picture of my father from when he was only a couple years older than I am now. The picture was a snapshot of a hazy summer night, of a wilderness adventure from long ago. He was the only colour in a blurry, inky sky, his feet melting into dark sand. He wore a boxy mid-sleeve shirt, unbuttoned to show a few curls of chest hair, with mid-thigh striped shorts.

The picture is all too familiar for me. From the couch of my youth, of a screen I only one day came to understand. I said, "He looks like Je-"

But my sister laughed. "Wow. Dad looks like the villain out of an '80s teen movie."

I laughed, too, because it felt right. Because she was my sister and was ten years older and she somehow always knew better than I did. I laughed because I was stupid for ever believing that my dad was the host of some cheesy reality television show. I laughed because I imagine that this is what my dad looked like when my mom met him, and sometimes you have to laugh so it doesn't hurt.

We looked through these pictures, all hidden away in a box like a secret. An alternate reality, a different version of our parents, tucked away in some closet we only go through when we move. People put pictures like this in scrapbooks. These are not scrapbook memories. These are postcard memories.

Let's un-pause now.

Here is the picture again: my mother, a tired immigrant, sobbing at the top of the stairs in front of her three children. I'm not sure how long she had been tired for. I wonder if it started watching *Survivor* with her kids and realizing the host looked like her ex-husband when they fell in love. I wonder if it started on a beach somewhere in Cancún, over beers with my dad, who laughed too loudly over my mom. I wonder if it started long before she was born, when she was a mere idea, stirring in the womb of a grandmother I would never meet.

My mom used to tell me fantastical tales about the people who came before her. People from out of time, out of time like me. People who died and their story was about dying. I imagine my mother dying in a postcard like our ancestors died in history books. I can't tell you a story about another dying Indian.

This is the sort of memory hidden inside the box in your closet, a scratched postcard no one should ever see. The dark sand rising from the image, crawling out like a monster from a kid's book. This is not a memory, but a story. A story with multiple narratives: an immigrant who never belonged. A mentally-ill woman taken away from her family. A mother who had no means to support her kids besides a husband who never could understand her.

"I'm ... Oh, god. My babies. I'm so, so, so sorry," my mother suddenly whispered.

She knelt to the ground and wrapped her arms around my brother first. I saw him flinch beneath her touch at first, before melting into her arms like toes into sand. I bet she felt warm like a beach under the sun, like those beaches on *Survivor*.

I could not stop myself from running up the stairs. My sister stared at me with wide eyes, too knowing of all the pain and torment that stood before us in my mother's arms. I did not know—I still don't. All I knew is that I wanted a hug from my mom.

I wrapped my arms around her and my brother, and her cool tears hit my neck. Eventually, I felt my sister's arms around my shoulders. It felt like a surrender. I did not know what we were surrendering to yet.

I wish I could tell you what it was. I wish I could tell you so much more. But the truth is, I grew up with a postcard mother. A woman as beautiful and exotic as the beaches my father met her on—but she was so much more than that, and no one saw. No one sees. We do not understand.

I want to say something cool. Jeff Probst probably would've said something epic, though.



ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Aiden Tait is a fourth-year English Honours (Literature) and art history minor student. Their work is primarily interested in adaptation theory, thanatology studies, and children's literature, with a focus on the adaptation of horror and folklore in contemporary children's fiction and the history of necrobotanicals in the early modern period.

Alger Liang is a 4th year visual arts student and varsity track athlete at UBC. He is currently interested in exploring intersectionality, love, performativity, queer phenomenology, and emerging media technologies. He is grateful and privileged to be breathing, living, and learning on the land of the Coast Salish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam peoples.

amanda wan is a Han Chinese settler writing from the unceded, ancestral, occupied territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. It is on these lands that she feels her way through the sea of ancestral memory, daydreams about the collective freedom to be soft and strange without fear, and trusts in love and action as revolution/resolution. Meanwhile, she is completing her undergraduate thesis for a BA English with honours, with a minor in Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies (ACAM).

Avantika (Tika) Sivaraman is a third-year student who is currently in the Bachelor + Master of Management Dual Degree program. She is pursuing a major in English Literature and a minor in Creative Writing. She can often be found dancing at ungodly hours, eating an unnatural amount of

crêpes and preaching about the benefits of spending lengthy amounts of time underwater (scuba diving).

Camille Lemire is a fourth-year Creative Writing student with a passion for storytelling and all things ABBA.

Emmy Pehrson is a fourth & final year English lit/lang major and creative writing minor heavily involved in poetry, music production and composition, and psychological fiction. Ask him for music recommendations. Don't be too scared when a 100-song playlist gets dumped on you in fifteen seconds flat.

Francois Peloquin is a second time contributor to The Garden Statuary, a staged playwright, and fourth year UBC Creative Writing major born in Tokyo, Japan. He is the seventh of eleven missionary children who grew up wandering Asia, Africa, and Central America. He found work as a carny, brick layer, diablero, tap dancer, and religious proselytizer before entering UBC.

From Toronto, **Iris Zhang** is currently a second year student majoring in Asian Language and Culture (with a focus on Japanese) at UBC. She loves drawing (she especially loves painting with watercolours and sketching with pencils), reading, and writing – and recently has also been interested in cooking and practicing kendo. She enjoys hanging out with her friends over a nice, hot cup of americano.

Jade Liu is a English Literature (Hons) and Creative Writing double major currently completing her fourth year. An avid enthusiast of Leonard Cohen, succulents, and matcha lattes, she can usually be found in your local coffeeshop working very hard on procrastinating.

Lindsey Palmer is a double major in English Literature and Political Science with a healthy obsession for houseplants and a less-healthy investment in semi-colon use (particularly given her goal to become an English teacher). She is passionate about mental health and wellness and aspires to one day read all the books she owns.

Fuelled by irrational overthinking and wintermelon tea, **Lisa Liu** is a third year English major with a minor in Asian Studies currently studying abroad at National Taiwan University. Her excessive empathy and curiosity can sometimes be too much for her own good, but she claims it helps her become a better writer. Lisa hopes that through writing, she can help provide a sense of community for any individual that feels alone with their thoughts.

Mabon Foo is a fourth-year student in the Honours program for English Literature. He enjoys reading, writing and endlessly theorizing over speculative fiction of all kinds, and is currently interested in the wonderfully illuminating genres of cyberpunk and Indigenous science fiction.

Marianna Schultz is a fourth year student majoring in Creative Writing. She also spends her time refilling her water bottle and considering rebranding.

Marilyn Sun is a third year student studying English and Geography. She is passionate about art, tea and hoarding stationary. She hopes in the future to publish a “sketchbook” where she can showcase her art. More of her work can be viewed on her Instagram @homiemarilynart

Moira Henry is a third year English major and ACAM minor. Her interests include eating cake while drinking wine and rolling

around on stage singing "You Oughta Know" at karaoke. She gets easily attached and is bad at cooking.

Noor Anwar is a fifth year Language and Literature student of Muslim-Pakistani descent. Though she would not call herself an existentialist, in her free time she does enjoy having Frank Ocean's Blonde on repeat and is proud to be one of the ten people in the world who didn't absolutely hate *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Sagorika Haque is an angered and wandering second year Arts student looking to double major in Political Science and English Literature. Her passions include words, human rights, post-colonialism, art, satire, mental health literacy, spinach, Trevor Noah, and female empowerment. She finds constant inspiration in her vibrant hometown of Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh: the low-lying South Asian country set to befall catastrophic geographic, infrastructural, and cultural damage from climate crisis.

Vlad Krakov is a Tel-Aviv-born, Vancouver-raised rascal who really just hopes the ecological collapse destroys the Canadian monetary system before he has to start taking his student loans seriously. He is pretending to decide between a future in either North American indigenous archaeology or writing novels inspired by the most cloudheaded of anarchist pamphleteers, whilst actually secretly planning to move to the Gulf Islands and becoming some sort of menial labourer for the rest of his days. He is in the fifth year of his Anthropology degree.