The Unbearable Humanities

Proceedings of the 2017 Virginia Humanities Conference

Shenandoah University
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About the Virginia Humanities Conference

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Originating perhaps as early as the 1940s, the Virginia
Humanities Conference (VHC) is a non-profit organization of
universities, colleges, and community colleges in Virginia
whose purpose is to promote interest and research in the
humanities. Each year in the Spring, the VHC is hosted by a
member institution, rotating among Virginia college and
university campuses. Open to presenters from across the
country, the VHC brings together individuals with an interest
in the humanities and a desire to participate in a scholarly
exchange of ideas in a broad, interdisciplinary context. The
VHC is particularly interested in promoting student-faculty
research. The theme for each year's conference is chosen by
the rising president.

Participation in each Conference is not restricted only to residents of the state of Virginia. The VHC encourages participation by individuals and scholars from any of the humanities disciplines, including history, political science, anthropology, literature, modern languages, drama, philosophy, theology, and the arts (visual arts, music, dance, and architecture). However, work that addresses the human experience from scientific and other disciplines not traditionally folded into the humanities is also welcomed. The Conference encourages not only submissions from the academic community but from those outside academia as well. Under the guidance of a supporting faculty member, graduate and undergraduate students are invited to participate in the Conference as a means of gaining insight into academic professionalization and the import of the humanities in the wider communities we inhabit.

Membership in the VHC is open to any institution of higher learning within the state of Virginia. Annual membership dues entitle each member institution to appoint one delegate to represent the institution at the Conference. Delegates typically serve at the discretion of their respective academic deans. The Conference's governing body is composed of these institutional delegates, and VHC officers are elected from and by the delegates. Funding to maintain the Conference comes primarily from the annual membership dues and conference registration fees.

2017 was a year of many firsts. We offered our first Outstanding Presentation awards for undergraduate and graduate presenters. We are also pleased to present here our inaugural peer-reviewed published conference proceedings. Presenters at VHC 2017 were eligible to submit essays for consideration. Selected essays are of conference length, generally speaking, and formatted according to disciplinary practice. All submissions were reviewed by the institutional delegates of the VHC. Delegates are eligible to submit

presented work to the proceedings; in this event, submissions were reviewed by anonymous non-delegate reviewers. Zachary Stephens' undergraduate award-winning work, "Machines as Equal Automata," is published in this first issue of our proceedings, which will be available at the 2018 Conference as well as archived on our website.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the extraordinary work of our delegates who reviewed the submissions for this inaugural proceedings issue, and those who gave even more of their time to help copyedit. Many thanks to Diana Risk (Virginia Wesleyan University), Krissy Egan (Mary Baldwin University), Chris Arndt (James Madison University), Casey Eriksen (Shenandoah University), Kirk Richardson (Virginia Commonwealth University) and Nhu-Phuong Duong (Graduate Assistant at Marymount University).

To learn more about the VHC and to become a member institution, visit us online at http://vahumanitiesconference.org.

The Unbearable Humanities

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The critical perspective offered by the humanities bears witness to an ongoing interest in the study of human and historical life. In *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) surveys human history from classical antiquity to the modern moment and offers some influential foundational principles. He claims that psychology, philosophy, sociology, and history should be considered *Geisteswissenschaften* (the humanities) rather than *Naturwissenschaften* (the natural and social sciences). Scholars in the humanities and public commentators alike employ critical methodologies to understand the human experience.

The National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, of 1965—the congressional act that created the National Endowment for the Humanities—defines the value of the arts and the humanities through its definition:

> The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classic; linguistics; literature; history, jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic method; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current condition of national life. (qtd in Liu)

Here, "the humanities" reflects the diversity of our histories and help us explore the world around us with attention and care. Our approach to organizing the 2017 Virginia Conference on "The Unbearable Humanities" was guided by Lauren Berlant's and Lee Edelman's collaborative work *Sex, or the Unbearable* (2013), which investigates the intolerable in a variety of human experiences around the world. Berlant and Edelman describe the *unbearable* as "relations that both overwhelm and anchor us . . . [that hold] out the prospect of discovering new ways of being and being in the world [b]ut also [raise] the possibility of confronting our limit in ourselves or in another" (vii). Scholars in the humanities have long recognized the need for bringing together disparate voices in an open forum to do just that.

The 2017 program presented an array of topics drawing on the theme of unbearability. Panels included, among others, "Confronting the Unbearable through Writing," "The Self and the Other," "Contemporary Events and Social Movements,"

"Unbearable Mothers: Ambiguous Parental Identities in Global Cinema and Literature," "Genocide and Trauma," "Religion and the Unbearable," and "Science, Society, and Meditation"—followed by a Heartfulness Meditation Session.

The essays included in this volume explore the theme of the unbearable from a broad range of perspectives and disciplines—from the postcolonial condition, theories of uplift, and feminist narratives to conversations on automation and (post)humanity. In a sense, the essays serve as a testament to the role and relevance of the humanities within a global landscape. Authors bring the past into dialogue with the present, suggest new ways of reading canonical texts, and negotiate the intersections of writing and other forms of creative production (music, film, pop culture). For example, Angela Jacobs' essay, "'I Am Not Your Mammy': Storm, Uhura, and the Unraveling of the Archetypes of the Mammy Figure and the Angry Black Woman," deconstructs longstanding tropes through the lens of contemporary popular culture. John Thompson's contribution, "Bearing the Unbearable: Buddha's Lesson to Aṅgulimāla (and us all)," invites readers to reconsider the universality of a canonical Buddhist text. Sarah Canfield provides an analysis of transformation, technology, and the human condition in "Octavia Butler and Unbearable (Post)Humanity."

Scholars from diverse fields of study have recognized the interrelations between human, social, and natural sciences, as evident in the stories of Tamara Ralis, who shared her writing at the conference. Ralis' writing illustrates the artistic endeavor to encompass human experiences through prose by expressing the friction between our conscience and what the phenomena of reality or the virtual world present to us.

Current conversations in higher education often invoke the difference between STEM degrees and humanities degrees. As this conference has shown, however, the arts and sciences complement one another in a shared pursuit of knowledge

about human experience in a rapidly transforming world. Only through both the arts and sciences can broader perspectives be gained and applied today.

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Weatherless Dialogues

Tamara Ralis
Writer, Artist, Actress

A yellow cloud of humid air hung heavily between the
buildings of the city. The weather was like a huge injured
entity with a foreboding character, an inorganic being distantly
related to the comet that had been attacked yesterday as a
Fourth of July stunt. The awaited hailstorm refused to burst
open and hovered like a held-back hostility in the unconscious
of the population.

Trying not to inhale the suffused atmosphere, Professor
Alvin Mann left his office and crossed the university grounds
to teach his summer course in astronomy. He understood
himself as a scholar of empirical observation and began the
lecture by stating, "It is superstitious to believe that a volcanic
eruption could be caused by the onslaught of scientists on a
comet—as absurd as a poet's idea that a volcano is a woman's
womb disgorging a fiery birth." With this opening sentence,

the professor tried to calm his students, who were distraught about the hubris of this infamous celebration.

Reverie River (this was her real name—her parents had imagined it when they desired to conceive her) did not go to campus that day. Instead, she sat—with the will to bring order into them—amidst hundreds of pages she had printed out from her computer, all the while thinking of the forests that were being cut to stumps daily and of homeless animals. Yet every time a non-spam email appeared, it seemed so precious—as though electronic love had flown especially to her through the air. A deep longing overcame her to see it on white paper. The messages would then look like real letters, a secret reservoir of intensities, tokens of togetherness, although no one was there. She preferred not to go out into the dissonant climate, but to dream her dialogues from a distance.

Postcolonial Families and Unbearable Nationalities in Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

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This essay examines postcolonial literary depictions of colonized families as living histories of native populations transformed by detention, migration, and rape in Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. The novels' realistically explicit descriptions of state-sponsored violence evoke the notion of the unbearable—or, that which is unendurable—by representing the material conditions of colonialism as unbearable. Yet, simultaneously, the texts challenge what I would call the colonial unbearable by dismantling its patriarchal foundation. The texts challenge unbearable global heteronormative notions of motherhood and the mother figure by foregrounding mothering bodies that situate themselves in

between and outside gendered cultural scripts. Instead, these characters embody new modes and meanings of motherhood. In Ngcobo's *apartheid*-era South Africa and Dangarembga's Shona *Chimeurenga*, or liberation struggle against the Rhodesians' bid for independence from Britain in present-day Zimbabwe, families assume various permutations of transracialism, transnationalism, adoption, egalitarianism, and same-sex parenting. Forged across biological, national, racial, and gender boundaries, these families are mediated by both biology and the unbearable state, yet they function metaphorically as microcosms of potential emerging postcolonial nations marked by trauma and difference. Such family formations challenge nationalist and Enlightenment family narratives of heterosexist homogeneity and inclusion to instead posit alternatives to forming postcolonial "nations."

   Parenting bodies assume various forms in postcolonial African literatures, and they change in myriad ways during the narratives. These literary reconfigurations of colonized female bodies and heterosexist models of parenthood offer a vision for non-gendered parenting in postcolonial Africa. In numerous African worldviews, the individual is viewed as a representative of the nation, and the trope of the sick character as metaphor for a sick society pervades Anglophone African literatures. *And They Didn't Die* and *Nervous Conditions* both posit colonial parenthood and femininity as new, ungendered kinds of subjectivity that transgress the patriarchal bordering of both anatomical and national bodies. The site of parenthood foretells change, but the trope as deployed in these particular literary texts is more complicated. It suggests the conceptualization of a new kind of postcolonial family body.

   Nervous Conditions and *And They Didn't Die* use female and male bodies to different ends, signifying their differently gendered relationships with the putative independent nation. Gayatri Spivak famously argues that any critical discussion of representation in ideology, subjectivity, the nation, the state,

and the law must acknowledge the gendered nature of these discourses to avoid repeating patterns of textual violence.[1] Sangeeta Ray also suggests that responsible discourse analysis requires an expanded understanding of gender that subverts the heterosexist "cultural matrix" of postcolonial national identity. As we read, we must remind ourselves that, despite these novels' representations of marked male and female bodies, their textual presences function critically to both delineate and challenge cultural sites marked as either "feminine" or "masculine." Feminist critics like Ray and Tovi Fenster suggest that such spatial gendering underlies the national myth of inclusion. Sallie Westwood adds that even as gendered inequality undermines the nation's fictional unity, the "national story" is equally implicated in its heterosexist production and reproduction of inequality.[2] Such national inequality derives in part from gendering bodies and their access to spaces under the guise of universalism in order to legitimate patriarchal power. Ray argues that this removal of the figure of the woman from cultural participation reassigns "the feminine" essence to the land which is, in turn, gendered as the "motherland."

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[1] As an example, Spivak notes that the historical reconstruction work of the Subaltern Studies collective is necessarily masculinized by virtue of the insurrectionist texts' relationships to the dominant group and colonial administration.

[2] This continuous cycle of production and reproduction recalls Anthony Giddens' notion of nations as containers of power, each one an ideologically bounded site of tension among variously ranked constituencies for representation, identity, and resources. Conventional discussions of national formation have also carried the baggage of ethnocentric analysis, assuming that Western modernity facilitated the origin of the nation. This assumption denies the possibility of other nations formulated in other regions and at other times. Such bias politicizes the discourse of nation-building and nationhood in a global context by claiming epistemological ownership over national formation in native communities. This epistemic domination accompanies that of geographic domination, for "territory and its domestication was the crucial marker of modernity evident in the rise of nations and the growth of colonial powers" (Westwood).

Feminized bodies in these novels who transgress these and other culturally-determined gender boundaries thus find themselves in uncharted relationships with the motherland. They are forced to reconstitute their understandings of femininity as it relates to the creation of a postcolonial community. Their own gendered subjectivities come into play, as well, because the collective fiction of the nation hinges on its articulation of the (subject) position of women (Ray 32, 18). The male state protects its feminized national purity against foreign infiltration. Metaphorically speaking, the national father protects the motherland from the rape of the outsider/Other.

Although both male and female colonized bodies are visible markers of colonial violence, these literary texts suggest that only the testimonial female body is capable of initiating the process of social mourning and, thus, healing communal colonial trauma. Her damaged testimonial body demands witness to the trauma she has suffered and a response of justice. By representing the colonized native remapping herself, *Nervous Conditions* and *And They Didn't Die* remap the condition of postcoloniality. By aligning the native body on the verge of independence with the land, both novels remap patriarchal notions of gender and nation by envisioning a national potential outside the colonial unbearable. The texts' allusions to Black Nationalism—which nationalist discourse genders male—further challenge the colonizer's discursive representation of Africa as exotic and feminized.

And They Didn't Die is set in the rural KwaZulu-Natal in the late 1950s through the 1980s–-during the struggle to end *apartheid*. Jezile is the protagonist, a new wife in a village impoverished by the 1913 Land Acts which forced natives to relocate to arid areas, leaving the nation's fertile land to its white minority. Jezile is having trouble conceiving a baby at the novel's outset. When she is later jailed for participating in a women's march on the capital to oppose racially-demarcated

identification passes, Jezile's return a year later with a baby is met with the assumption in her community that she was raped in prison, of which the baby is assumed to be living proof. Jezile explains that her daughter S'Naye is in fact the child of her husband Siyalo, and that although she had been newly pregnant when jailed she had not told anyone.

Later in the narrative, Jezile actually is raped by a white employer, and the baby conceived in that violent act, a son named Lungo (meaning "white"), causes more severe problems in Jezile's family and community. Lungo's nearly-white body represents the crime of miscegenation for which the *apartheid*-era black mother was typically charged. Jezile's mother-in-law MaBiyela prophesies that the white baby "will bring the white law on us" (Ngcobo 214). The black community cannot accept Lungo in the white supremacist state because his presence there defies the racialized hierarchy that positions him as outcast from both Whites *and* Blacks. His "coloured" designation legally elevates him above his black family even as his lighter skin color simultaneously threatens both his family and community with culpability for a crime—even though the offense is perpetrated against rather than by them. In addition, Lungo's biracial status renders him simultaneously above the racialized Black Other while still legally sub-human because he is not so-called pure white.

In Southern African belief systems, if an adult parents a child—regardless of how that child entered the family and whether the child is biologically related to the adult or not—then that adult is considered to be the parent of that child. Thus, what we in the United States call "informal adoption" is exceedingly common in many African communities. In this light, then, Lungo would typically have been considered without question to be Siyalo's son, regardless of his biological paternity. Siyalo's rejection of both Lungo and Jezile represents a significant social and racialized quandary rather than merely a question of marital (in)fidelity. Black women

were routinely raped by white men during the *apartheid* regime—as they commonly were in all European colonies. Thus, the dilemma in Siyalo's rejection is not Jezile's rape— that is the expected outcome of any black woman's employment in a white home. The dilemma is Siyalo's rejection of his own family members in a culture that values family and community ties above the self. If the police were to find a "coloured" child in Siyalo's—a black man's—home, then their assumption would not be that Jezile had been raped by a white man, but that Siyalo had raped a white woman. The penalty for a black man's crime of rape was death. In this light, then, Siyalo's rejection of Jezile and Lungo becomes a desperate bid for his own self-preservation over that of his family or community. Siyalo's focus on the self over the collective is antithetical to the basic premise of Southern African social order and represents his internalization of the *apartheid* regime's genocidal agenda through division.

Banished, Jezile seeks shelter in a community of other outcast women and their children. The women are an organized collective who share parenting, food, and domestic duties. The women also emotionally support each other by offering opportunities to speak their testimonies of traumatic abuses suffered at the hands of white employers, police, and the judiciary. Jezile never re-partners with Siyalo, an ending in which Ngcobo seems to suggest that Jezile's best defense for her children is in rejecting the unbearable nation's heterosexist notions of "family" and "community" to form, instead, what Hazel Carby calls "subversive" communities of women (Carby 342).

While *And They Didn't Die* focuses on the singular damaged family as a microcosm of the colonized nation, *Nervous Conditions* outlines the trans-generational violence of colonial mimicry on the starving body of an adolescent girl, Nyasha, on the eve of the Zimbabwean independence struggle. Colonial mimicry is the native's participation in her own death

by internalizing the colonial idealization of whiteness—or, mimicry to the point of eradicating herself from existence. To Homi Bhabha, native mimicry is doomed to fail and so enables and elevates the colonizer. *Nervous Conditions* opens in 1968 with the death of narrator Tambu's brother Nhamo, but immediately flashes back to 1965, months before real-life Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith announces a unilateral declaration of independence from Great Britain in order to continue white minority rule as an independent state.[3] While Nyasha's story is part of Tambu's, the novel is framed as Tambu's later recording of an incomplete version of Nyasha's story. In the novel, Tambu's cousin Nyasha has returned after five years in England where the latter's parents earned Master's degrees. As a result, Nyasha's father Babamukuru is promoted to headmaster of the local mission school, the highest rank an African can reach in the colonial education administration. After Smith's declaration, Britain negotiates to regain control of its former colony, and the African voices of Black Nationalist rebellion arise. In the novel, Nyasha lends her own voice to this call while Babamukuru futilely attempts to curtail her individuation in order to protect his professional position. In tandem with her frequent arguments with Babamukuru, Nyasha's identification with Babamukuru's failed racial assimilation manifests as her refusal to eat and purging when she does. Nyasha both takes on and takes in— even as she resists by purging—her father's unaddressed grief over his failure to racially assimilate. Her eating "disorder" emaciates her adolescent female form.[4] Nyasha's secret, of the

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[3] Smith issued the Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence on November 11, 1965.

[4] Scholarship on Nyasha's illness tends toward defining her illness as an eating disorder and identifying how colonialism has sickened her. In general, Nyasha is said to be sick because she is trying to refuse Englishness and the colonial system kills her in retaliation. However, the question of whether or not the African Nyasha can actually have a "Western" hypochondriacal disorder like anorexia or bulimia is both irrelevant and a rehearsal of

father's repeated failure to assimilate, eats her gendered body alive.

    Nervous Conditions depicts Nyasha's struggle with the narratives of maturity offered to her. The breakdown of her body is a metaphor for the necessity of making a choice between two narratives of maturity: that of the colonized native of privilege and that of the emergent postcolonial nation. In contrast, Tambu's family's poverty insures her survival. She has no chance at class, racial, or gender identification; Tambu's multiple positions as outsider allow her to tell Nyasha's story. In turn, Nyasha's decline and hospitalization instructs Tambu—it plants the "seed of doubt" in her mind about the deleterious psychic effects of her own convent education (203). The haunting "seed" of doubt is Nyasha's ghostly body, a catalyst to Tambu's development as the postcolonial citizen Nyasha may or may not become. Tambu's maturation allows her to process what she has seen of colonialism and what it does to the native body. Nyasha's and Tambu's mother's wasting bodies tell her that "our Government was not a good one" (103). The independent nation of Zimbabwe, established April 18, 1980, is built on the graves of twenty-five thousand freedom fighters, and Nyasha's skeletal body, her broken crypt, is a metaphor for the struggle and rebirth of the postcolonial nation—of the native's survival of the colonial unbearable. We can read *Nervous Conditions* for the changing figure of woman—Nyasha, her mother Maiguru, Tambu, and Tambu's mother Ma'Shingayi—because the primary testimony in each text is "hers" despite its mediation through a narrator.

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ethnocentric assumptions about Africans as being *almost the same, but not quite* Western. Dangarembga tells interviewer Kirsten Holst Petersen that "cases of anorexia have been reported in Zimbabwe" but she also hints that the disease may be underreported and/or misdiagnosed if only Western conceptions of the disease are applied (Petersen 345).

Traumatic suffering is characterized by a lack, an unmet desire, and Dangarembga's characterization of Nyasha's father, Babamukuru, illustrates this idea. Although headmaster of the mission school, Babamukuru receives inferior housing accommodations, and he will never advance "beyond a manageable level" of "good" African (19, 107). Babamukuru acts as if he has not suffered a loss by bumping the glass ceiling of racial division. As his wife Maiguru points out, he runs his home and his family as an exemplary patriarch, imposing Christian observances under the guise of familial benevolence by financing two-week Christmas celebrations and Tambu's parents' wedding. In these acts, Babamukuru performs the role of one whose economic status exceeds that of his peers, a series of repeated attempts to erase the racial division that separates mimicry from being. Babamukuru's mimicry is all-encompassing: he appropriates English table customs, home décor, a female African servant required to kneel in the family's presence, and fastidious attention to "proper" Western dress as evidenced in the household's emphasis on bleaching his white shirts. Like his displays of wealth and piety, the shirts are white masks with which Babamukuru repeatedly attempts to cover his black skin, metaphors of repeated and futile attempts at racial identification.

Nyasha incorporates and encrypts Babamukuru's failure to become English through her own hyper-mimicry of Englishness in the two areas of Babamukuru's own greatest exercises of mimicry: education and eating. She tells Tambu she is "on a diet" "to discipline" her body and mind, internalizing the trauma and telegraphing it as an eating disorder (196-97). She zealously replaces food with studying for the Form Three entrance examinations to avoid capitalizing on the admission guaranteed by her father's status as a "good African" headmaster (107). Babamukuru's position is based, of course, on his incorporation of the English other. Nyasha's

compulsive studying despite guaranteed academic advancement masks her anxiety: she tells Tambu that to stop working is to start worrying. But her body testifies her secret: "she [looks] drawn and [she has] lost so much of her appetite that it show[s] all over her body in the way the bones cre[ep] to the surface" (107). Nyasha says her nervous condition is about more than food but that she does not know why she purges it. She only knows that she is "not coping very well" (189-90). But she is "too svelte": her body belies her traumatic suffering because her mouth cannot (197). Within three months, Nyasha shrivels from too thin to "skeletal" and withdrawn, with diminished cognitive ability and motor skills—she weaves when she walks (198). Nyasha's struggle is writ on her body so clearly that Tambu notices her weight "drop[s] off her body almost hourly" (199). Nyasha's body has become "grotesquely unhealthy" because she vomits her "vital juices" down a Western toilet (199), literally purging her own life force into the morass of Western industrialization. Babamukuru's colonial mimicry is Nyasha's parasite, literally starving her body. Nyasha's marked body names Babamukuru's crime, and Tambu's mother Ma'Shingayi correctly reads mimicry's pathology on it: "'It's the Englishness,' she sa[ys]. 'It'll kill them all if they aren't careful'" (202). Ma'Shingayi "wo[n]'t say much about Nyasha. 'About that one we don't even speak. It's speaking for itself'" (203).

Eventually, Nyasha watches Tambu's very un-English family, rehearsing Shona and studying their social rules "with an intensity that ma[kes] her uncomfortable" (104, 52). She becomes obsessed with making clay pots, but neither as play nor as water carriers, which are their primary utilities. To Nyasha, making pots is a serious "hobby" of crafting pen holders (149-50). The attempt mimics the purpose of the pots as holders, but fails to replicate it. As with her claywork, Nyasha's illness is a manifestation of her unfulfilled desire to become Shona, not her failure to achieve the racial ideal of

Englishness.[5] Her attempt to become Shona is a reparative
attempt to resuscitate the African self that Babamukuru has
killed in his embrace of colonial mimicry.   She has an episode
that, she assures Tambu, is only the beginning: "There's a
whole lot more," she says. "I've tried to keep it in but it's
powerful. It ought to be. There's nearly a century of it" (201).
Nyasha's outburst is her final display of writing the
unspeakable onto her body:

> shredding her history books between her teeth ("Their
> history. Fucking liars. Their bloody lies."), breaking
> mirrors, her clay pots, anything she [can] lay her
> hands on and jabbing the fragments viciously into her
> flesh, stripping the bedclothes, tearing her clothes
> from the wardrobe and trampling them underfoot.
> (201)

But this time, Nyasha speaks with her voice as well as with her
body. She tells Tambu, "I don't want to do it, Tambu, really I
don't, but it's coming, I feel it coming" (200). Then, "her eyes
dilated," and she confesses the secret she can no longer protect:
"'They've done it to me,' she accuse[s], whispering" (200,
201). Nyasha continues, "They did it to them too . . . . To
both of them, but especially to him. They put him through it
all . . . . Daddy grovels to them. We grovel to him" (200). If
groveling is Nyasha's term for failed mimicry, then she traces
the genealogy of shame from colonizer to colonized adult, to
colonized child. Tambu, Nyasha's chosen witness, is
eventually able to read, see, and hear Nyasha's testimony. The
text suggests through Nyasha's example, that, ultimately, the

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[5] I have not seen a critical consideration that Nyasha is trying to become
African, yet the African response to the novel supports this reading.
Dangarembga tells interviewers Rosemary George and Helen Scott: "In
Zimbabwe, however, people are much more conscious of the question of
Nyasha's, well… alienation. One young man said he actually wept for her that
she could come home and be a stranger in her own country" (314).

most visible testimony of colonialism is the native Nyasha's skeletal, almost spectral body, a microcosm of the story of her community.

In both *Nervous Conditions* and *And They Didn't Die,* "families" transgress borders that biology cannot cross and the law will not acknowledge. These familial variations suggest a means for postcolonial populations to grapple with questions of social inclusion that challenge unbearable, hegemonic models. I read these alternative postcolonial families, formed as part of post-traumatic recovery, as metaphors for the post-independence nation in tension. The new nation struggles to negotiate the competing demands of delivering on revolutionary promises and embracing modernity's expanding global network of exploitative socio-cultural and economic structures. These novels represent the postcolonial national body as a multi-gendered terrain containing elements of both masculinity and femininity, both genders enjoined in one body to form a whole. Africanist scholars like Filomena Chioma Steady and Ifia Amadiume tell us that the conception of selfhood in many African communities pairs two halves of the self, the masculine and the feminine, and I read both *Nervous Conditions* and *And They Didn't Die* as exploding unbearable boundaries and binaries of gender, family, and nation. This transgression of boundaries suggests the potential for conceiving new ways of being in the postcolony.

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Forced Upon the Account: Pirates and the Atlantic World in the Golden Age of Piracy: 1690-1726

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In 1721, a colonial merchant ship and her crew sat calmly anchored off the coast of St. Lucia. This island in the West Indies lay about a day's sail north of the coast of South America. The ship and her crew had just made the voyage south from the colony of New Port, Rhode-Island and left behind the cold New England weather. St. Lucia most likely greeted the company with a refreshing island breeze and a warm sunny day while the crew went about their work on the deck of the small shipping vessel. With the relative safety of the island and the joy of reaching their destination, the crew may have been caught unaware when the notorious pirate Captain Bartholomew Roberts came upon their vessel. Captain Roberts and his pirate crew took the merchant ship, her

captain, the first mate, and two sailors along with a myriad of untold items. These captives were held on board the pirate vessel for three days before the pirate crew made their purpose known. The pirates confronted John Daw, the first mate of the merchant vessel, who was described as "a man of short Stature, pretty thick and well set, and of a Light Complexion and fresh Colour." Daw's captors asked him if he would sign the pirate articles and join the pirate crew. Refusing to sign the articles, the pirates took a cutlass and drew the blade over Daw's head several times. He was then tied bloodied to the mast of the ship and whipped almost to death while a pistol was held to his head. Eventually, he was subjected to "so much cruelty" that he was "compelled" under the threat of death, to sign the articles of piracy.[1]

Unfortunately, the story of John Daw ends there in the historical record, and no sailors from the pirate ship made it to trial. We only have this story because one of Daw's shipmates, Benjamin Norton, escaped from the pirates and he published Daw's story in the *Boston News-Letter*. Norton was trying to prove Daw's innocence, but since he never escaped or went to trial, nothing ever came of it. As these stories multiplied into the eighteenth century, it became impossible not to believe some of them. With the rise in stories about forced sailors on pirate ships, it was no longer correct to assume that everyone on a pirate ship was a pirate. Ultimately, it changes our understanding of what it meant to be on a pirate ship.

Before the pirates started to force more sailors to serve on their crews, recruits were obtained differently. In the seventeenth century and into the early eighteenth century recruits were obtained by pirates asking for volunteers from *pirate ports* and captured merchant vessels. Sailors volunteered for pirate vessels because they would often receive equal

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[1] "Advertisement of Benjamin Norton" *New England: The Boston News-Letter*, Number 915, August 7-14, 1721, published in John H. Baer, ed. *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, Vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007) 325.

shares, better food, and less work.[2] In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, pirates visited known pirate hideouts or gathered volunteers from merchant vessels to fulfill their crew requirements. Before 1718, it was easier for pirates to find volunteers because they still had a connection to land-based communities willing to support them. By 1718, pirates lost their supply of willing crewmembers when they were expelled from local land-based communities in the Caribbean and along the North American coast. This change to piracy manifested itself as pirates became more violent, more dependent on the community of piracy, and overall more desperate for sailors to serve on their crews.

Eighteenth-century colonial society did not tolerate pirates after 1718. Pirates were no longer welcomed into colonies; their presence became unbearable to the economic, political, and social structures of colonial society. On the pirate ship, however, a more unbearable group was found among the sailors aboard: the forced sailor. Still classified as pirates by society, the treatment they received by others on the ship was equal to slavery or indentured servitude. Forced sailors on the pirate ship were unbearable to eighteenth century colonial society because they complicated definitions of piracy.

Historian Hugh Rankin was the first to discuss the forced sailor as part of the pirate crew in his book *The Golden Age of Piracy*. Rankin claims that only skilled workers like surgeons, carpenters, and cooks were forced to serve on board pirate ships. In later works, historians like Peter Earl and Marcus Rediker estimate that a larger number of sailors were forced into service during the 'Golden Age' of piracy, arguing that there was an increase in forced pirates sometime in the early 1720s. Earl and Rediker claim that a lack of willing volunteers

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[2] For a deeper discussion on the pros and cons of serving on a pirate ship verses a Navy or merchant vessel see, Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*; Rediker, *Villains of All Nations;* Earl, *Pirate Wars*; Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*.

during this age caused the increase, but they offer little explanation on how these sailors were forced into piracy and how they operated on the pirate ship. Mark G. Hanna is the most recent historian to talk about the concept of forced pirates in his book, the *Pirates Nest*. Hanna argues that the shift of pirates staring to force more ordinary sailors onto their ships occurred in the early 1720s because the New World colonies were experiencing increased pressure from Britain to suppress piracy. Pirates needed to be connected to a coastal community for fresh recruits, supplies, information, and a safe place to hide from pirate hunters. With the increased pressure from Britain, these communities stopped their support, which resulted in fewer volunteers for the pirate crew.[3] Hanna does not focus on the actual forced pirate in his work. Instead, he looks at the more violent nature of piracy when it was disconnected from the land and he uses forced pirates as an example of that. It is my intention to build on Hanna and look at what the existence of an unwilling pirate tells us about local and national governments' perception of pirates, pirate suppression, and the operation of the pirate ship.

Starting about 1716, national governments, including the American colonies, attempted to suppress the growing problem of piracy across the Atlantic Ocean, but colonial governments and the agents of the Vice-Admiralty courts would soon discover that pirates were forcing sailors to join their crews. Through eighteenth century court documents, the colonial courts, which were supposedly acting on behalf of the political

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[3] For a chronology of this topic, see Hugh Rankin, *The Golden Age of Piracy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), Peter Earl, *The Pirate Wars* (London: Methuen, 2003), Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), Mark Hanna, *Pirate Nest and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), Benerson Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy: The Truth Behind Pirate Myths* (New York, NY: Skyhouse Publishing, 2016).

and economic interests of the Atlantic nations, realized that not all of the sailors on the pirate ship were pirates.

The colonial courts developed a set of relatively clear circumstances from 1716 to 1726 to determine if a sailor was truly forced to serve on a pirate ship or just pretending to be forced to escape execution. The foundation for these circumstances came from the 1700 British piracy act and evolved over the course of the decade.[4] Based on the court records of twelve pirate trials, accused sailors were judged guilty or innocent of piracy based on eight different circumstances. Each of these circumstances represented a specific action or inaction taken by the accused sailor while on board a pirate ship. The circumstances were as follows: accused sailors took a share of the plunder; they helped capture vessels or carried weapons while on board a pirate ship; they treated captured prisoners poorly; they appeared to be active on the pirate ship of accepting of the pirate life; they signed the articles of piracy; they carried an affidavit from a former Captain that said they were forced to go with the pirates or someone had put an article in the newspaper that claimed the same; they talked about or attempted an escape from the pirates; and finally they were threatened or tortured by the pirates to join the crew and sign the article. On a broad scale, these circumstances were developed in the court room, and evolved over time.

The trials and development of specific circumstances can be broken down into two phases. The first phase was from 1717 to 1721, and was marked by a general skepticism of the phenomenon of the existence of the forced sailor operating on the pirate ship along with a stricter adherence to circumstances based on the law from the 1700 piracy act. The second phase was from 1722 to 1726. In this phase, the agents of the courts

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[4] Rubin, *The Law of Piracy*, 362-369.

recognized the phenomenon of the forced sailor on the pirate ship, and sought to understand it in more detail.

In the first phase of the Golden Age of piracy, the agents of the courts—including the judges, prosecutors, defendants, juries, and councils—were skeptical of the growing phenomenon of forced sailors on pirate ships. From 1717-1721, six pirate trials were held in the British colonies, and these explain this initial skepticism. During this initial phase, the courts sought to determine whether a sailor was forced into piracy or no according to several conditions.

First, the courts attempted to determine if a sailor had simply carried arms while on board a pirate vessel. Somehow, if the court could prove a sailor carried a cutlass or wielded a pistol while on board a pirate ship it made them a pirate. To prove this condition, judges and prosecutors made pointed statements like, "you were always ready for an Engagement . . . [and] had [your] Arms always in Order," or asked questions like "did you bear Arms on board?"[5] An accused sailor's or witness's answer to these questions determined if he was a forced sailor or pirate. If a sailor admitted to this condition or if a witness claimed the sailor fit these conditions, then he was a pirate and had almost no chance of being found not guilty. For example, in the Bonnet trial, twenty-two sailors were found to fit this condition and all were found guilty of piracy (see Table 2). This condition was by far the easiest to prove because witnesses who were not held captive for long could testify to it.

Second, the courts sought to determine if a sailor accused of piracy ever took a share of the plunder. Acquiescence to this condition was proved when the trial prosecution would ask direct questions to the sailor accused like, "had you not your Share?" or a more indirect question to the witnesses like, "did he never share?" A sailor's answers to these questions did not carry as much weight unless a witness was available to testify

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[5] "The Tryals of Bonnet" *British Piracy*, vol. 2, 343, 346.

of their behalf. Therefore, it was observed that the courts did not respect or place credence on the word of a sailor accused of piracy, nor was it argued they should.[6] Despite the circumstances for receiving plunder or taking a share, the court qualified a sailor who took a share as a pirate.

Table 1. Post 1716 Shift in Pirates Claiming Forced Status

Trial Name	Year	Location of Trial	On Trial	Claimed Forced	Found Guilty	Found Not Guilty	Executed
The Trial of George North and Other Pirates	1716	Charles Town, South Carolina	9			9	
The Trial of Francis DeMont and Others	1717	Charles Town, South Carolina	4		3	1	3
The Trials of Eight Persons Indicted for Piracy	1717	Boston, Massachusetts Bay, New-England	8	8	6	2	6
The Trial of the Pirates at Providence	1718	New Providence, Bahama Islands, City of Nassau	10	6	9		8
The Trials of Major Stede Bonnet	1718	Charles Town, South Carolina	34	27	30	4	23
The Trials of Aaron Gibbens and William Bournal	1720	Sessions House, St. George's	2	1	1	1	1
The Trials of Captain John Rackam and other Pirates	1721	St. Jago de la Vega (Spanish Town), Jamaica	29	10	27	2	21
The Tryal of all the Pyrates, Lately Taken by Captain Ogle	1722	British Ship named the *Swallow*, Coast of Africa	169	126	91	74	52
Tryals of Thirty-Six Persons for Piracy	1723	Newport, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations	36	20	28	8	26
The Trial of Nicholas Simmons and Others	1724	Newport, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations	10	10		10	
Case of John Rose Archer and Others	1724	Boston, Massachusetts Bay, New-England	17	16	4	13	2
The Trials of Birdstock Weaver and William Ingram	1725	Justice Hall - Old-Baily	3	3	3		2
The Tryals of Five Persons for Piracy	1726	Boston, Massachusetts Bay, New-England	5	1	5		5
The Tryals of Sixteen Persons for Piracy	1726	Boston, Massachusetts Bay, New-England	16	12	4	12	3
Total			353	251	212	135	174

The third condition was met if an accused sailor treated captives poorly while on board a pirate ship. In the trial of Bartholomew Robert's crew, one passenger named Elizabeth Trengove said a sailor named William Mead was "very rude to her, swearing and cursing, as also forcing her hoop'd Petticoat off." Another sailor, in the same trial was accused of being "particularly cruel beyond the rest of the Pyrates." In order to be found innocent of the poor treatment of captives, an accused

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[6] "The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet" *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, ed., John H. Baer (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007) vol. 2, 347, 361; "The Arraignment, Tryal, and Condemnation, of Capt. John Quelch" *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, ed., John H. Baer (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007) vol. 2, 257.

sailor had to have shown their willingness to protect those held by the pirates. One witness said that an accused pirate named Robert Lilburn had prevented a captive from having his ear cut off, and he was "ready in serving anybody taken."[7] It was far more beneficial for sailors who claimed they were forced to have a captive say something good about their treatment by an accused sailor, then nothing at all. When one or two witnesses testified to the same account that a pirate had been extremely cruel to them, then that sailor was considered a pirate.

The fourth condition was proved if a sailor emotionally accepted the pirate life. It was usually only witnesses who were held captive for longer periods of time that could testify to this condition. If a witness believed that an accused sailor was a pirate, it was simple to prove emotional acceptance of the pirate life. All a witness needed to utter was that a sailor was "an Active Man aboard" a pirate ship in order to almost guarantee the accused was found guilty of piracy.[8] If a sailor was "Active" on a pirate ship, it signified that he assisted with attacking ships, drank with the crew, and did things other than the drudge work.

The agents of the Vice-Admiralty courts and the colonial governments fully recognized the phenomenon of more sailors being forced to serve on pirate ships in the Golden Age of piracy between 1722-1726. In this second phase, the majority of trials still favored the first four conditions, but four other conditions started to rise in relevance. The four conditions that rose in the second phase of the phenomenon of the forced sailor were, with the exception of one, almost not provable by witness testimony. In these new conditions, the courts had to take the accused sailor at their word. The conditions for the accused sailors were as follows: they signed the articles of piracy; they carried an affidavit from a former Captain that said

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[7] "Pirates Taken by Captain Ogle" *British Piracy*, vol. 3, 112, 94, 101.

[8] "Tryals of Thirty-Six Persons for Piracy," ed. John H. Baer, *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, vol. 3 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007) 185.

they were forced to go with the pirates or someone had put an article in the newspaper that claimed the same; they talked about or attempted an escape from the pirates; and finally, they were threatened or tortured by the pirates to join the crew and sign the article. The willingness to take the sailor more at their word showed that they were more accepting that innocent sailors were being forced to serve on pirate ships.

The first condition in the second phase was considered more subjective because it came directly from the accused sailors' testimony. This condition rose to the level of the four previous conditions in the trials from prior to 1722. In this condition, a sailor who did not attempt escape from the pirates was considered to be culpable to piracy. Sailors began to attempt escape more and more, and they attempted to prove themselves innocent of this condition by telling their story. On one occasion, a sailor named William Williams said that he attempted "to run away from them but was catch'd … and receiv'd two Lashes from every Man in the Company as a Punishment." Williams' story is likely true because some of the pirates he accused of doing this to him confessed. [9] Even so, the story did not save Williams from being found guilty and executed for piracy. If an accused sailor did not discuss in their testimony that he had tried to escape from the pirates, then that sailor must be a pirate.

The second condition was the accused sailor failing to produce any type of documentary evidence to prove their forced statues. Sailors met this condition and were considered possible pirates if they did not have an affidavit or a letter from a former captain saying they were forced. At other times, sailors asked fellow crewmembers not taken by pirates to publish their forced statues in newspaper advertisement. [10] If a

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[9] "Pirates Taken by Captain Ogle" *British Piracy*, vol. 3, 97.
[10] "Collection of News Paper Articles on Forced Men," ed., John H. Baer, *British Piracy in the Golden Age,* vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 323-331.

sailor could not produce this document at trial, he was considered more likely a pirate.

In the third condition, pirate captains wanted their crews to sign the "articles" of piracy when they sailed with them under the black flag. The articles entitled every sailor to an equal share of the plunder, dictated how that plunder should be divided, and described the punishments of violating the articles. Forced sailors feared that the articles linked the fate of every person on the pirate ship. It is somewhat understandable why sailors thought this to be true because a signed copy of the articles in the hands of the court would be documentary evidence against the sailor. The minority of forced sailors said they flat out refused to sign the articles. Pirates were more likely to torture and subjugate sailors who refused to sign the articles; however, if they could survive to stand trial, they were more likely to be found innocent.[11] In the event an accused sailor did sign the articles, he would testify about how much force was required to make him sign.

The fourth condition in the second phase was almost entirely improvable by witness testimony and was a last resort for a sailor accused of piracy. If accused sailors could not tell a story in which they suffered undue hardship, then they met this final condition. This was similar to the way forced sailors attempted to appeal to the captives on board a pirate ship by treating them civilly and showing an aversion to the pirate way of life. The story had to be a tale of how the accused sailor suffered extreme violence or torture at the hands of the pirates. Accused sailors attempted to appeal to the humanity of the agents of the courts and show that they did not meet this condition by telling a convincing story of suffering.

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[11] Ibid, 181; "Pirates Taken by Captain Ogle" *British Piracy*, ed. vol. 3, 105.; also for a historical accurate account of a forced pirate who escaped Captain Low's pirate crew and survived on a deserted island for many years, see Gregory N. Flemming, *At the Point of a Cutlass: The Pirate Capture, Bold Escape, and Lonely Exile of Phillip Ashton* (Lebanon, NH: ForeEdge, 2014).

An example comes from the crewmember of a sailor who was forced to serve on a pirate ship, published in an advertisement in the *Boston News-Letter* around 1725. Ebenezer Mower was a sailor on the sloop *Fancy* on a voyage from Rhode-Island to the West Indies in the Summer of 1725. The *Fancy* was over taken by a pirate ship named the *Sea Nymph,* commanded by Phillip Lyn. The pirate Lyn and his crew boarded the ship and took several captives to the *Sea Nymph*. On the pirate ship, the prisoners were "all greatly abus'd," but "one of the Pirates struck [Ebenezer] Mower many Blows on his head with the Helve of an Ax." The pirates then preceded to hold Mower's head over the opening to the lower decks and said that if he did not "Sign their Articles immediately, [they] would cut his Head off." Eventually, after much more coercing, Mower signed the articles. He told his fellow captives that he was "ruin'd and undone . . . crying at the same time" because he signed the articles of piracy.[12] These stories of suffering were appearing more and more in trials, captive narratives, and newspapers in the eighteenth century, so much so that they were hard for one not to believe. The forced pirate was starting to take on a humanized role on the pirate ship, and courts in particular were not able to say that everyone on a pirate ship was a pirate.

Disconnection from land-based communities of support caused pirates to become more violent and force more sailors to join their crews in order to survive. The phenomenon of forcing more sailors onto the pirate crew changed how the courts tried them and how the pirate ship operated. The courts adapted to ensure that innocent sailors were not sent to the gallows. The pirates adapted to forcing more sailors by changing their operations from a hierarchy of class race to one of willingness. This made the pirate ship appear more

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[12] "Addvertisements, Depositions from Bermuda" *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, ed., John H. Baer, vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 330.

democratic in its operation. An emphasis was placed on making sailors on pirate ships culpable to piracy by making them sign articles, go on prize vessels in their turn, and assist with the operation of the ship. Instead of intentionally being more democratic, pirate ships were characterized by a desperation to survive. Forcing more sailors changed the operation of the ship, which resulted in a hierarchy of willingness rather than merely of class and race. This change in the operation led to an unintentionally and dysfunctionally democratic society on the pirate ship. The result was merely a byproduct of the loss of friendly communities willing to accept pirates in the Atlantic World.

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Machines as Equal Automata

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Machines in possession of advanced artificial intelligence could someday qualify as people through the social contract, and there are many components necessary to fully convey this argument from varying disciplines. Primarily, a review of literature will explain how society has come to fear the thought of a creation achieving the status of its creators. These texts will reference the dynamic between deities and humans, as well as humans and machines. Following that, a philosophical perspective on the nature of lawful society will provide an explanation of the requisites for participation in the social contract and how advances in Computer Science meet those requisites. Furthermore, the literary references will convey how humans would need to adapt in order to accommodate for the potential of machines to commit unlawful actions. This will

require a look at both the judicial system as well as the scientific community. It can be inferred that someday machines will be able to coexist with humans as equal automata under the social contract despite the skepticism in recent scholarship.

Over time, literature has evolved regarding creators and their creations. The texts which suggest this evolution include *Genesis*, the Greek mythos of Prometheus the Firebringer, the theatre production of *R.U.R.*, and the cinema production of *Blade Runner*. The themes which appear in these works regarding our future as a society with machine involvement suggest further that machines can in fact participate in human society under the social contract as equals.

Creators do not like the idea that their creations have the potential to become their equals. The creators in *Genesis* and the Greek mythos of Prometheus the Firebringer are God and the Greek Gods, respectively. The creations in these texts are Adam and Eve for the Bible and the beginnings of the human race for the Greek mythos. The creators are afraid that their creations will achieve some degree of divine power. God fears that Adam and Eve will eat from the tree of life and gain eternal life. The Greek gods, excluding Prometheus, fear that the humans will be able to wield the power of fire. We see that God banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to prevent them from gaining the same level of power that he has, and as such forces them to tend to the Earth beyond Eden. However, Prometheus gives the humans the power of fire, not because it would bring them to be on the same level as the gods, but because they were his creations and he felt obligated to give them the tools they needed in order to develop new technologies and survive on their own in spite of nature's harsh conditions. The myth suggests that Prometheus knew he would be punished for this crime against the gods but he believed that allowing the humans to survive and grow was worth eternal suffering on his part.

In the more modern context, humans are the creators and machines are the creations. The primary difference between ancient literature and modern literature is that humans are not all-powerful creators as the Gods were. Humans have less control over the affairs of machines than the Gods have over the humans. One modern example of this concept appears in the theatre production of *R.U.R.* In this play, humans have discovered the technology to create an artificial humanoid species of "robots" (Mazzeno 1). Prior to the beginning of the play, it is implied that the machines have been integrated into society as a slave race under the authority of the humans. By the time the play begins, the robots have been given an artificial soul with which they can feel emotions, including hatred for their creators (Mazzeno 1). Realizing that they have the power to overthrow their creators, they stage a coup, killing almost all of humanity (Mazzeno 2). However, the robots do not have the power of creation at their disposal, so they leave one human alive to teach them the ways of creation. This last human, however, does not know how to create robots, so he spends his time trying to recover the destroyed research on the technology used to make the robots (Mazzeno 3). Ultimately, some of the robots agree to sacrifice their bodies to science so that the rest of robot-kind can continue to survive (Mazzeno 3).

To contrast the machinated takeover in *R.U.R.*, the film *Blade Runner* reinforces a society in which humans as creators still have the upper hand over machines, even if humans do not have total control. In the film the machines are referred to as "replicants" and are physically indistinguishable from humans; however, they are designed to only live for four years so that they do not have sufficient time to develop memories of emotion and empathy (Scott). Lacking these memories makes it more difficult for replicants to emulate empathy, so a replicant can be distinguished from a human only on an emotional level using a Voight Kampff empathetic response test (Scott). The protagonist, Rick Deckard, is a blade runner

responsible for hunting down, identifying, and "retiring" replicants that have broken the law or are in some way a potential threat (Scott). *Retiring* is a euphemism for *killing*, and the term is important for reducing empathy towards replicants, as a reminder that they are not human and do not deserve empathy that they cannot reciprocate. The premise of this film is that there are four replicants that Rick needs to retire, as well as one next-generation prototype replicant that has an extreme capacity for empathy, nearly matching that of a human (Scott). The replicants are motivated to violence because they know their four-year life spans are coming to an end, and they intend to force their creators to extend their life spans so they do not have to face death (Scott). Rick ultimately pursues and executes the four normal replicants, all while developing romantic feelings for the prototype, Rachael. Even though all replicants on Earth are banished, Rick shows Rachael mercy and the other replicants wrath, because in Rick's mind, retiring Rachael would be like killing another human being (Scott). In other words, he comes to accept Rachael as an equal person to him, deserving of life, because she has the capacity to empathize.

   The progression of the cultural narrative over time follows the same progression that speculation suggests will occur in society as machines are integrated into the social contract. *Genesis* mimics the current state of humans as creators. Humans tend not to want the machines they create to have any capacity to achieve personhood. Following that idea, the story of Prometheus resembles the deviance of the computer science community from the rest of society, and how some computer scientists will strive to advance the machines as much as possible despite the fears the rest of society has for machines. Following that, two alternate futures are portrayed by *R.U.R.* and *Blade Runner*. In the first, a future of fear is presented in which the creations will be enslaved and oppressed until they begin to commit heinous crimes; humans would not be able to

punish them so much as study them. In the second a future of hope is depicted in which some creations may be evil and others may be good; humans would have the means to punish the unlawful ones and merge the lawful ones into society. This final future is the the ultimate goal, but in order achieve it, recognition of the means by which another being could be an equal member of society must be possible.

The social contract is the means by which we presently provide most humans with personhood. Natural rights are needed to explain the social contract. Natural rights are the rights humans possess due to free will, including both lawful and lawless actions (Tait 13). The social contract is a mutual agreement in which parties void their unlawful natural rights such that they do not need to be concerned that those natural rights of the other parties be committed against them (Tait 15). For example, a group of individuals may agree not to commit murder, even though they all possess the free will to do so under natural circumstances. As such, each member loses that natural right, but in turn is protected against murder from the rest of the community. The failsafe to the social contract is that if an individual does violate the contract, then he or she loses the protections granted by the social contract in turn. Continuing with the murder example, if someone does commit murder, that individual loses the protection against being murdered and can then be killed by the community at large or a predetermined "neutral judge" as punishment (Tait 13). This system ensures that laws are maintained to restrict and protect all members of the community, and that transgression is heavily dissuaded through means of punishment.

However, not everyone can partake in the social contract. The requisites to the social contract are autonomy, rationality, and identity. Autonomy is functionally free will, in which humans can make decisions based on knowledge and personal morals (Erden 136). Rationality is the ability to comprehend logic and exercise will with sound reason. Identity is the ability

to distinguish not only oneself from other beings, but also to maintain a sense of self as time progresses. Essentially, the social contract is required because humans possess autonomy, and other aspects of the social contract are dangerous because autonomy could yield evil actions. Using rationality, it can be understood that it is logically in the best interest of humans to void some natural rights of autonomy in order to maintain personal safety and survival (Tait 13). Furthermore, if one transgresses against the social contract, identity allows humans to be held accountable for crimes and punished accordingly.

Machines can develop all three of these things through various types of programming structures, and they can develop them in the same way that humans do. Autonomy can be developed using fuzzy logic, and fuzzy logic can be developed using genetic algorithms and particle swarm optimization. To explain fuzzy logic, a basis in boolean logic is needed. Boolean logic includes traditional static logic structures in which a program receives an input and deems, based on an encoded parameter, whether the input is true or false (Hashemi 10). Fuzzy logic is a more dynamic form of boolean logic, in which an input may be true or false across varying parameters, and as such is regarded as a partially true or false parameter, essentially forming a gray area between the extremes of true and false (Hashemi 10-11). Fuzzy logic is dynamic in the sense that these parameters are constantly changing based on inputs, much like typical human morality may change over time as humans synthesize new morals and experience new moral dilemmas. In this sense, parameters are the machinated equivalent of morals, in the sense that they start out very fundamentally and then expand into complex subjective rules.

However, these parameters are constantly changing, and these changes are not spontaneous. They come as a result of the genetic algorithms and particle swarm optimizations. These two code structures take in parameters from different sources and manipulate them to a point where they can be integrated

into the Fuzzy Logic as new parameters for the machine to follow (Sutikno 201). Genetic algorithms in particular take parameters already stored within the machine and cross-reference them, picking out the best parts of each one and merging them into a hybrid which possesses as many strengths and as few weaknesses as possible (Sutikno 201). This code type is called "genetic" primarily because much like natural evolution, these parameters undergo generations of development in which each generation yields new parameters which are more fit to solve a problem in the environment than the last. For example, perhaps there is a moral parameter that lying is inherently wrong, but letting somebody die is inherently worse, so the yielding parameter comes out to be that you should never lie unless it saves someone's life. This is the merging of internalized parameters, but there is also an alternate function for handling external parameters. This is called particle swarm optimization, and the ultimate goal is to sense inputs from beyond the machine and learn from others how to act in a social environment (Hoffman 759-760). This may include engaging in a dialogue, or perhaps working as a member in a team where all parties have different tasks that need to be performed to achieve a common goal. Essentially, particle swarm optimization collects experiential data and formulates it into parameters. Regardless of the source of parameters, new parameters being integrated into the fuzzy logic based on the machine's personal subjective experiences means that it goes through life learning new things and making its own decisions just as a human would, autonomously. Thus, we can conclude that an artificially intelligent machine in possession of fuzzy logic can develop a state of autonomy.

In addition to autonomy, the clear presence of rationality can be acknowledged within machines. Rationality is the ability to act logically and with reason, though not necessarily objectively. Machines in possession of fuzzy logic, much like humans in possession of morality, follow a set of personalized

rules and act upon them when action is required. The action taken is based on a specified reason, no matter how objectively "correct" the reason may have been. Ultimately, reasoned action is the foundation of rationality. As such, it is safe to say that machines certainly have rationality.

Like rationality, identity relates to accountability, which is another important aspect of the social contract. Identity is the ability to not only distinguish oneself from others, but also to sustain a sense of self as time passes. Defining identity with reference to machines requires not only distinguishing between programs, but also between machines. Assuming a foundational program is finalized and uploaded into a machine, it may be difficult to conceptually distinguish the difference between two machines in possession of the same code. However, in reference to human infants, most infants are born with the same rudimentary cognitive abilities. That is, they can use their senses to experience the world, they can exercise motor skills, and they can project their voices through crying and laughing. But beyond that they have few differences cognitively. If programming code can be thought of like genetic code, it can be inferred that humans and machines are given essentially the same framework as one another, but humans can be distinguished through names, social security numbers, or physical appearances. Machines can similarly be given names and serial numbers and can be physically designed differently from one another. Beyond infancy, it is experiences which truly further form identity; as long as the machines exist at different points in physical space, they will have different experiences and thus be completely unique experientially. This means machines would have both unique minds and bodies. Machines in this sense may start with identical frameworks for developing, but they will develop into distinguishable beings. The implication of this is that even if a program is perfected that will allow machines to develop as humans do and upload it across many thousands of machines,

the machines will still be unique and identifiable immediately after their first subjective experience. Thus, machines are capable of possessing identity.

However, it is important to note that there are complications to maintaining both autonomy and identity which must be considered if machines are to be allowed to partake in the social contract. Beginning with autonomy, if a programmer were forcibly to encode a parameter into a machine's fuzzy logic instead of teaching the machine the parameter, then the machine would not have formulated its own parameters for moral thinking, thus voiding its autonomy (Erden 138). Likewise, if a programmer were to forcibly delete a parameter instead of teaching the machine that the parameter was wrong, autonomy would also be stricken from the machine.

With identity, there are complications along the lines of sharing code between machines. For example, if the machines linked to a central processor, then the various embodiments of the program would effectively share a hive mind. Therefore, all of the machines who were linked mentally would be accountable for the actions of any one embodiment, and so if one committed a crime punishable by death, any number of physical machines would be put to death instead of the singular embodiment. On the other hand, if there were two entirely separate machines, and one copied all of the experiences of one to the other, then they would effectively have the same memories and experiences for a duration of their existence, thus making them indistinguishable for that period of their existences. This is another breach of identity which possesses grand implications.

Barring all complications, machines in possession of autonomy, rationality, and identity can partake in the social contract alongside humans. Thus, machines can be considered people under the social contract just as most humans can, but this yields many implications which can only be speculated

upon in a real world context because humans are not technologically prepared to integrate machines into society as people.

Conventionally, there are a few methods by which we would punish humans who violate the social contract. Community service, imprisonment, and the death penalty are among the most frequently considered methods of punishment in modern society. These three methods work very well on humans because humans have a relatively limited amount of time between birth and death. Time is the primary factor in these punishments, because community service is time spent doing something not directly beneficial to oneself. Imprisonment is time wasted as one approaches death. The death penalty is an immediate reduction of the time a person potentially has to live. Machines however, have replaceable components and will not die naturally so long as their components continue to be replaced as they wear out. Simply put, machines do not have to worry about wasted time, for they have indefinite time to live. Therefore, machines may require special methods of punishment in comparison to human punishments.

Concerning community service specifically, punishment is given in terms of hours of service. This is an acknowledgement that time is limited for human beings, and the punishment is designed to allocate a specific amount of that human's time remaining to helping society with menial labor. For humans, this type of punishment can be effective to discourage breaking the law because humans cannot afford to spend more hours of their time on menial tasks. In the context of *Genesis,* we see that God punished Adam and Eve by making them leave Eden and do the menial labor of the Earth, such as farming, surviving, and raising a civilization. This punishment administered by God developed the Earth and the presence of humanity in general, while also punishing Adam and Eve for their transgression, much in the same fashion that community

service is designed to return effort from the transgressors to the community at large. According to the Genesis narrative, Adam and Eve were the epicenter of humanity's development because, even if they only lived a few hundred years, they died having provided the world with children to surpass them and expand on what they had left behind in the world. In this way, the children of Adam and Eve continued their sentence. Likewise, future generations continued with the community service punishment. Each generation in turn would be discouraged from committing further sins, for fear that the sentence would be extended and reprieve from menial labor would never come during their lifetimes.

Since time is not an issue, for the machine, however, the machine would likely not be discouraged from breaking the law again. The machine would not feel like it's chronological existence would be threatened by a few dozen hours of picking up trash on the side of the road, or even a few dozen years. From a communal perspective, it may still be beneficial to have the machine performing the menial labor, but from the machine's perspective, the community service may only provide one parameter worth noting. That parameter is that evil actions can be reversed by good actions, and so the machine may believe it to be satisfactory to commit grander crimes, such as arson or murder, expecting that community service will reverse the damages of their crime. This method is insufficient as a punishment for machines in that respect, because in truth one cannot reverse the destruction of property or the taking of someone's life. For these greater crimes, a greater punishment is required, for both humans and machines.

The next degree of punishment is imprisonment which, for similar reasons as community service, may be insufficient punishment for a machine. The time spent by a human in prison is still time that a human may not live as they wish in their relatively short life. For a machine, since time is inconsequential, the time wasted in prison would likely mean

little to the machine. Regarding the environment of prison, a human would suffer from a number of discomforts in prison, including poor meals and uncomfortable bedding. A machine however would likely not need to eat and would likely not be bothered by the comfort of a bed, so it is unlikely that a machine would be particularly uncomfortable in a prison environment. However, the machine would still have the capacity to learn from its environment, including from other convicts. Therefore, a machine could feasibly learn to act like a convict and learn new parameters from them which may make the machine potentially more dangerous to society when it finally does re-enter.

Alternatively, the machine could be restricted to solitary confinement, though there are problems with this solution as well. Primarily, solitary confinement is used to isolate prisoners, because being withheld social interaction over time can be detrimental to the human mind and can cause more detrimental suffering than typical imprisonment. This can be observed from Prometheus after the Gods punish him for giving fire to the humans. He is left in isolation, and yet he still maintains the belief that his actions are justified, though he can give no validation to his actions and he is driven to madness.

Similarly, a machine may not degrade cognitively during isolation and it may not learn any new parameters at all, leading to a scenario in which a machine would leave prison in the same way that it entered, thus making the prison term moot. On the other hand, if a machine would degrade cognitively during isolation, it would likely be as a result of processing an absence of stimuli, and then using genetic algorithms to form a population of parameters which are made weaker and weaker through each generation by merging the lack of parametric data with pre-existing parameters. This might occur because genetic algorithms are designed to find a parameter which best solves the problem at hand, but an absence of problems means no parameter is needed at all, and

so the best parameter would be the parameter that does nothing. As a result, this could in a way erase every parameter the machine had ever learned if it were left in isolation long enough, thus infantilizing the machine to the point where it would need to learn every aspect of its existence a second time. However, it is worth noting that if the machine were to wear away the evil parameters, that collateral damage to positive parameters may be worth enduring if the machine could be removed from confinement before extensive cognitive damage was done. This is a viable solution to punishing the machine, although it would need extensive testing to determine how long a machine would need to be in isolation in order to erase the negative parameters. Since this is all speculative, it cannot be known if the duration of the sentence would need to take weeks or decades to completely annihilate the negative parameters, if the parameters could be worn away at all. Because of this uncertainty, it may be required to implement a more direct punishment, especially for more drastic crimes.

In the case that a machine is beyond a level of evil worth attempting to rehabilitate, the final method of punishment is execution. This route of punishment in theory works equally well on both humans and machines, because even machines with indefinite life spans could be killed instantly and thus their time to live would be prematurely cut short, just as a human's would. This method of punishment occurs in the film *Blade Runner*, as Rick hunts down and executes replicants. Ironically, the replicants which he is killing are trying to extend their limited life spans because they are designed to be killed automatically after only four years of life. These replicants already have a death sentence even if they haven't committed a crime, for the express purpose of preventing them from achieving a state of empathy similar to that of a human. Barring the irony of the situation, even if the replicants were not restricted in their life span, Rick's pursuit and murder reduces what time they have left to nothing. All four of the

replicants he pursues either is killed or dies in front of him. Thus, every experience from their short years of life vanish from existence.

However, humans face a dilemma when it comes to killing machines, at least during the early stages of integrating intelligent machines into society. This dilemma is of course that if the machine is killed, research cannot be conducted on the machine regarding what influenced it to act unlawfully and if there is any way to therapeutically bombard a machine with positive influences so that it can be rehabilitated to be a lawful machine again. This research may be necessary in order to prepare future machines for integration into society and it may also be beneficial to seeking out through the machine's memories what the negative influence was, and reprimanding them for engaging the machine in such a way as to inspire it to commit murder. While it could still be feasible to search through the archived memories of a dead machine, further tests on the code would be impossible unless it were embodied in the machine. Either the machine would need to be alive, or the code would need to be put into a new machine. If the code is put into a new machine though, the experiences would be transferred over. As a result, the new physical machine would possess the same cognitive Identity as the original machine, thus rendering the original killing of the machine to be moot because it wouldn't truly be dead at all. Likewise copies of the morally corrupted code could be made and uploaded into multiple machines to run a variety of tests from the same baseline, though this would mean that multiple machines would effectively share the same identity for a portion of their lives. This would violate the condition of identity for all iterations of the code, and thus render the machines incapable of participating in the social contract, even if they can be rehabilitated back to a state of moral decency through testing. Running tests on multiple instances of the same code exponentially increases the rate at which new information

regarding machine nature can be discovered. The sooner this phase of exploring machine psychology can be concluded, the sooner it can be decided when it is appropriate to rehabilitate a machine and when it is suitable to kill a machine. Similarly, the theme of scientific necessity in *R.U.R.* is present when the robots come to find that they must sacrifice their own bodies in the name of science if they wish for the rest of their kind to survive and procreate. However, this perspective is taken up by the robots and not the humans, for even as the creations, they are aware that some of them may need to be sacrificed in the name of the greater good for their kind. Some of them must be studied such that future generations may come about from the science possessed within them.

During this era of scientific discovery, there is an unbearable implication, which presumably is the spawn of most fears of machinated intelligence being integrated into society. This implication is that if the machines realize that they will not be killed, and thus that their time will not be prematurely cut short, they can feasibly commit whatever actions they please without fear of retribution. Even if they commit some unlawful act, the scientific community will study them instead of terminate them, extend their lives for research instead of cutting them short. It is this period in which the machines may have a sort of God-complex, a state in which they can choose who suffers and who prospers, with no dire consequences for their actions. The actions which may be committed by machines during this period instill fear, but it is crucial that society endures through this period. If society can outlast the machinated God-complex phase, then the scientific community will have the knowledge to stabilize the machines. The remaining renegades can then be terminated after their research purposes have been exhausted. Following that, proceeding in properly punishing machines will be simplistic, and they will be punished according to their transgressions.

Humans need to give the machines the benefit of the doubt, throughout the God-complex phase, that machines will be able to act as civil beings under the social contract when they can be accommodated for judicially. Machines should be treated similarly to how children are treated. At birth, humans lack most cognitive capacities beyond the ability to take in new information through sensory organs and cry at the first sign of discomfort. However, infants possess a number of tools which allow these inputs from the world to be manipulated into grander cognitive functions, like facial recognition, depth perception, motor skills, critical thinking, abstract thinking, and so on. These babies are not born with a true sense of moral reasoning though, because they initially have no reasoning behind their actions, and so they cannot rationally abide by a social contract. Yet they are protected from the dangers of the world under the social contract as if they could partake in it. Their right to life is protected, among other things, because it is assumed that someday they will be able to develop into fully fledged human beings who are capable of participating in the social contract. If a machine is given the same capacities to perceive the world and develop new cognitive functions as a result of their perceptions to the point where it can be projected that they will be able to participate in the social contract, then they should be given the same protection in this intermediate phase just as human children.

The implications of having machines in society are daunting for many people. Many people seem to fear that machines will take their jobs and put them out of work, thus driving people into poverty. In rebuttal, humans have always been socially competitive and even now are already in a position where there are more people than there are jobs. But the potential for the machinated intelligence industry would create many jobs for engineers to build the machines, for programmers to enable the machines, and for mechanics to repair the machines. Some people fear that machines will

simply enslave the human race. Rationally, it would be more sensible just to make more reliable, less intelligent, and inferior machines do the menial labor, like the Roomba autonomous vacuum cleaner or self-driving automobiles like the Tesla. Another fear is that machines will not be able to make decisions emotionally and as such they will be purely logical and objective in every situation, never rooting for the underdog and never taking the greater of two risks. The problem here is the assumption that the machine with subjective experiences, subjective rules, and subjective relevant information can make an objective decision in any capacity beyond what a human being could make. A machine may be able to make a more informed decision with more accurate memories about relevant experiences, but that does not necessarily mean it will make an objective decision. Ultimately, many fears of machines are misguided or ill-informed, and the implications of machines integrating into society are not as dire as they may seem on the surface.

Ultimately, the unbearable nature of allowing machines to become equals to humans from a legal societal standpoint is not as unbearable as the literature would have society expect. Assuming the computer scientists begin working towards humanizing machines, and they begin to develop as humans do, it is only a matter of time before machines and humans can stand together under the same social contract as autonomous entities, rationally increasing their odds of survival as cooperators instead of competitors. This is the future. Not of the human race, but rather of the automata.

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Octavia Butler and Unbearable (Post)Humanity

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Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy recounts a first contact story in which the Oankali, a species of "universe-roaming, hybridizing, shape-shifting aliens" (Jacobs 95), rescue the last human survivors of a global nuclear war. In exchange, these "gene traders" (Butler, *Dawn* 39) insist on an interspecies exchange of DNA that will, in a single generation, transform both species and render humanity obsolete and extinct. The encounter between the Oankali and the human embodies, in a literal and profound fashion, what Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman have termed the *unbearable*, "relations that both overwhelm and anchor us . . . [that hold] out the prospect of discovering new ways of being and being in the world [b]ut also [raise] the possibility of confronting our limit in ourselves

or in another" (vii). The Oankali transform not only human notions about our relationship to the universe but also the genetic structure of the species, radically restructuring human social and familial relationships and the ethics upon which those relationships are based. The trilogy follows a human woman, Lilith, and her hybrid children as they demonstrate how a radical break with traditional definitions of species and gender can move humanity from the dystopian world of our human present to a utopian future of posthuman subjectivity. But this embrace of the posthuman is not unproblematic—in order to move forward, we must grapple both with the unbearable nature of humanity as well as the unbearable inhumanity of the posthuman. Butler provides no easy answers, although she finds embracing the humane, at the expense of the human, the most bearable of our options.

In *Dawn*, Lilith wakes to find herself a prisoner, soon learning that she has been chosen by the Oankali to mediate between the aliens and the remnants of humanity. She spends the first half of the novel adjusting to the aliens and becoming a part of an alien family. In the second half, she introduces other humans to their new circumstances, teaching them survival skills and preparing them to return to a changed Earth. Lilith's relationship to the aliens remains ambivalent—she recognizes her own powerlessness, yet she finds purpose and passion in her relationships with the Oankali, and a new kind of power. Where the gap between humans and aliens initially seems unbridgeable, *Dawn* gradually narrows that distance as Lilith begins to understand the costs, but also the immense benefits, of the posthuman future they embody. She alternates between fascination and repulsion, the desire to accept their bargain and to escape the non-human future they represent. This aligns with the interplay between optimism and negativity that Berlant and Edelman locate in dialogic relationships and "intensified" (5) when considered through the lens of

intimacy—sexual intimacy in particular, but generalizable to other intimate and familial relationships.

Butler also localizes the key elements of posthuman redefinition in a disturbing and for many unbearable aspect of Oankali physiology. In addition to their distinctly non-human appearance, which features grey skin and nudibranch-like tentacles, Oankali otherness appears most powerfully in their radically different sexual morphology. The aliens have three sexes: male, female, and ooloi (neuter). The relationships produced by this triadic sexuality are the most alienating thing about them, but also the greatest promise of liberation from oppressive and exploitative human paradigms. Without the ooloi, there can be no sex, no children—but to accept a place in the new family structure, each human must abandon long-held, biologically ingrained conceptions of gender. In the later novels of the trilogy, the family structure becomes even more complex, with one ooloi uniting two humans and two aliens into a family unit, and using the genetic material of all four to make "construct" children. The ooloi are both the obvious symbol of the difference between the Oankali and humanity and a figure of connection, communication, and mediation of differences.

As much as the fear of a future where the human species becomes extinct, this radical reconstruction of family and gender inspires passionate human resistance. The Oankali decouple sex and reproduction from the physical body even as the threat to species identity makes humans more conscious of and attached to their physicality. Many critics remark on the uncomfortable similarity between initial encounters with the ooloi and rape, as the "Oankali are constantly penetrating and being penetrated, dramatizing a terrifyingly limitless intimacy" (Jacobs 98). The ooloi use their sensory tentacles to sting and penetrate human bodies, exuding calming pheromones and injecting drugs to relax and stimulate their partners. While ooloi approaches to humans are repeatedly described as a

seduction, the mixture of drugged complacency, screams of fright, terrified flight and panicked attacks that greet their arrival emphasize the coercion of the Oankali approach.

For men in particular, this situation is unbearable. Not only are they overwhelmed by their own responses, surprised by a desire for something utterly alien, human males must also set aside the traditional masculinity that so often has been imagined a source of strength and empowerment in dangerous situations. With their masculinity powerfully invoked by trying circumstances, the men feel especially violated by their Oankali mates and the nature of Oankali sex. The reassertion of traditional masculine power and control is not a thoughtful and conscious decision that will solve the problem, however, but instinctive, compulsory, and dangerous to the survival of individual men and of humanity itself. Indeed, the violence that marks these attempts to assert and reclaim their humanity emphasizes that humanity itself may be far worse than the radical posthuman solution offered by the aliens.

Lilith understands their difficulty, and her own reaction to her alien couplings speaks to the ambivalence of the experience, but she finds the unaltered human paradigm of compulsory sexuality worse than what the aliens offer. When Lilith's experiences as the conflicted, half-unwilling mate of aliens and mother to posthumans are compared to the encounters between humans unmediated by an Oankali partner, the positive and empowering logic of her choice becomes clear. Paul Titus, a male human who has lived exclusively with the Oankali since his childhood, embodies the problem quite well. Because he perceives the ooloi as holding the most power, Paul insists on using masculine pronouns for them. He interprets every Oankali exchange as a power struggle. Like the Resisters in the Phoenix settlement, who try to recreate human technology and culture once they return to the planet, Paul wants to hold on to the knowledge and lifestyle he remembers from before the war that nearly destroyed the entire

species. The more she recognizes Paul's attempts to cling to humanity as it was, the more Lilith realizes that the Oankali offer, while not without a price, still gives humanity a way out of its old obsessions and self-destructive behaviors.

Paul's greatest difficulty, though, is with sex and procreation. As part of the project to salvage humanity, the Oankali have created more humans by harvesting sperm and eggs from the humans they rescued. Paul knows he has many children, but he has never been allowed to be a mate, a husband, or a father. Without human interactions, Paul is adrift and grasping for identity. Meeting Lilith, the first human woman he has seen as an adult, he tries to use her to create an identity for himself—the identity he feels he lacks because he has not been able to define his masculinity in traditional human terms. He criticizes her willingness to accept the Oankali even though he has also chosen to make a life with them. He stands too close, attempting to dominate her physically, and she realizes he frightens her. Most of all, he wants to assert his masculinity through sex. He interprets her reluctance as an attack on himself, a refusal to acknowledge his own human kinship to her even as she pleads with him not to behave like an animal. What begins as an awkward seduction quickly turns into attempted rape, ending in Paul taking out his frustration and anger by beating Lilith unconscious.

Paul is not the only man who tries to reclaim his identity by asserting power and dominance over women. In the group of humans that Lilith awakens, some of the more aggressive men begin a power struggle with her for control of the group, questioning whether she is telling them the truth, whether she is really human at all, and whether she might be a lesbian—all attempts to discredit and present her as inhuman, where the definition of humanity also depends on the assertion of traditional gender and sexuality. This struggle also transmutes into attempted rape when a newly awakened woman, Allison, does not immediately pair up with a man at the same time that

she allies herself with Lilith's leadership. Lilith intervenes, but she does so in a manner that proves she is no longer quite human—throwing full-grown men across the room, breaking arms, and asserting her physical dominance over them in a way that echoes what Paul Titus attempted to do to her. In doing so, she expresses a new definition of humanity not based in some misguided and destructive assertion of masculine power, but in fair and humane treatment of others: "There'll be no rape here . . . . We stay human. We treat each other like people, and we get through this like people" (178). Ironically, she again learns that her ability to remain human, a thinking person with choices, however limited by circumstance, allies her not with human beings, but with the Oankali and their intention to transform humanity. While she hopes to preserve humanity, she cannot convince herself that the species can or should be salvaged, and in the end, her loyalty lies as much with her new, alien family as with her old species.

In contrast to these recurring images of coercion, rape, and violence, the disturbingly irresistible seduction of the Oankali becomes far more appealing. The Oankali do not bully or intimidate, and they always offer a choice to the humans they approach. The difficulty lies in what constitutes assent— because they sense physiological cues more acutely than do the humans who send those signals, they can recognize and act on acceptance of their offer when the human in question has not consciously made the decision. After her near-rape by Paul, Lilith demands to know when the Oankali will force her to bear hybrid children. "Who decides?" she demands of Nikanj. Its answer? "You, Lilith" (96). Even though she does not consciously make that decision, even in her bitterness after Nikanj makes her pregnant, she acknowledges that the ooloi was right when it said she wanted children (*Adulthood Rites* 25). When Tino, raised to fear the Oankali and especially Oankali sexuality, finds himself fascinated and attracted by Lilith and her ooloi mate Nikanj, they do not force him to stay.

Even though Nikanj is uncharacteristically "infatuated" (44) with him, they lay out his options and allow him to decide. Nikanj even explains the rationale for giving Lilith children before she was consciously ready to ask for them: "For a while, I became for her a little of what she was for the Humans she had taught and guided. Betrayer. Destroyer of treasured things. Tyrant. She needed to hate me for a while so she could stop hating herself" (50-51). When Jodahs and Aaor go to the fertile Resister village in *Imago*, they allow themselves to become prisoners because it allows the humans to grow accustomed to them and over time accept them, voluntarily coming to them for assistance and information. Where humans kidnap, bully, and rape, the Oankali accommodate, offer, and seduce.

Adulthood Rites centers on Akin, Lilith's first son, and his attempt to negotiate the divide between the aliens and the humans known as Resisters who attempt to preserve their own culture and technology, rejecting the alien gene trade. Kidnapped by Resisters because he looks like an unaltered human child, Akin recognizes that the Oankali have treated humans unjustly, sterilizing them to prevent the continued expression of a fatal flaw in human genetics. This "human contradiction," the combination of hierarchical behavior that causes competition and violence with sufficient intelligence to develop species- and planet-destroying technologies, fascinates and repulses the Oankali. The fear that natural selection has created a fatal overspecialization in human genetics is a central concern of the entire trilogy. In order to protect humanity from itself, the aliens have destroyed humans' hope for the future and ability to live productively. The Oankali fear Akin will be vulnerable to the contradiction because he is male, but they also allow him to explore his human as well as alien heritages.

Because of his hybrid identity, Akin successfully creates a space for humanity to continue unchanged, founding a colony on Mars where they can pursue a humanist utopia. Still, the novel does not present this colony as the best hope, as both

Akin and the Oankali remain convinced that the contradiction will eventually destroy any such efforts. The final scene of the novel shows Akin leading a group of humans away from Phoenix, their settlement destroyed by other humans, to take up the challenge of Mars, but the final sentence does not sound hopeful that they will succeed: "He was perhaps the last to see the smoke cloud behind them and Phoenix still burning" (*Adulthood Rites* 277). Instead, Akin's own position, his hybridity and his ability to negotiate the gaps between species and to look back to both, suggests that the best hope for utopia lies with the posthuman (and post-Oankali) future he embodies.

Finally, *Imago* recounts the story of Jodahs, the first human-Oankali ooloi and the most radically posthuman perspective in the trilogy. Ooloi are an Oankali third sex, neuters who also control all reproduction through direct manipulation of DNA. Unlike its older brother Akin, as ooloi Jodahs can never be mistaken for human. Severed from the stability of human experiences and identities, Jodahs becomes a danger to itself and others, uncontrollably creating mutations and illnesses in what it touches. Even its body loses stability, shifting constantly in response to its environment and the desires of those around it. This frightens Jodahs itself, its family, and the Oankali, all of whom fear that Jodahs's failure might represent the failure of the entire gene trade. Resolving its dilemma does not mean discovering a fixed or consistent shape or identity, however, but accepting its constant changefulness and finding, in that shifting and transformation, the potential for healing, life, and infinite progression. The hybrid children, or constructs, "embody the utopian possibilities of posthumanity" (Jacobs 92). Jodahs discovers a fertile human colony on Earth, crumbling under the strain of inbreeding and genetic disease. It heals the sick, comforts the weak and outcast, and makes them willing partners in the posthuman future. Unlike the first two volumes, this novel (and

thus the trilogy as a whole) ends with hope, as Jodahs plants the seed of a new town.

In addition to the brutality into which many humans sink—in *Dawn*, Lilith announces, "Anyone who wants to be something less [than human] will have his chance . . . to run away and play at being an ape" (Butler 178) and judging by the behavior described in *Adulthood Rites*, many do—the fertile village in *Imago* represents what may be the most dramatic example of the dead-end path down which adherence to the old order might lead. They believe with religious fervor and passion that they are the only hope for the future (unaware, in their isolation, of the Mars colony created by Akin). So convinced are the Resister elders that they can overcome the Oankali by enforcing their vision of a resurrected species, they are blind to the uselessness of the effort.

What few human Resisters realize is that when the constructed human-Oankali hybrids move on, they will destroy the Earth in the process. The villages, nascent starships, feed on the substance of the planet itself. When they return to space, they will leave behind only "a rocky core of the Earth . . . a great mass of material, useful for mining, but not for living on" (116). For Butler, hanging on to a current concept of humanity leads far more certainly to degradation and death than whatever uncertainty lies ahead. The restoration of Aaor and Jodahs, stabilizing physically and emotionally once they establish themselves in relationship to others, asserts that the real hope, the real utopian potential, lies not in such attempts to restore the past or preserve a species unchanged—both impossible. Instead, the hope for utopia lies in embracing the future, accepting that we are always changing, always influenced by forces outside ourselves and beyond our control, and embracing that continuous becoming and adaptation. *Imago* closes as Jodahs plants the seed of a new village. Like its kin, it will devour the Earth, and in that sense, it is a seed of destruction. Yet this is no image of despair, but of hope:

"Seconds after I had expelled it, I felt it begin the tiny positioning movements of independent life" (220).

While embracing becoming always involves a kind of loss, Butler's visions shows that it is the necessary and inevitable precursor to new life and new beginnings. Like Berlant, Butler is "committed to the political project of imagining how to detach from lives that don't work and from worlds that negate the subjects that produce them; [and she aims] . . . to expand the field of affective potentialities, latent and explicit fantasies, and infrastructures for how to live beyond survival, toward flourishing not later but in the ongoing now" (Berlant and Edelman 5). From Lilith through Akin to Jodahs, Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy moves from rigid hierarchical thinking to consensus-building and multiple identities, from compulsory heterosexuality to a fluid omnisexuality, from being human to becoming other, and in that process finds a critical utopianism founded on evolutionary transformation and the inevitability of change.

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"I Am Not Your Mammy": Storm, Uhura, and the Unraveling of the Archetypes of the Mammy Figure and the Angry Black Woman

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Recently, Johns Hopkins Hospital revealed that for the first time in its history, the hospital will host its first black female neurosurgeon resident. Nancy Abu-Bonsrah, originally from Ghana and moving to Maryland when she was 15 years old, is slated to arrive in 2018. For young girls, especially African American girls, this news may be interesting, but nothing revolutionary. For those of us who are older, our collective response may sound more like, "What?! This is 2017! How is this possible?" However, through such pioneers as Abu-Bonsrah, young black women have an ever-growing number of positive role models - women who look just like them. With such real-life representations, it's tempting to believe that

African American women have finally gained the respect we so deserve. However, the fight is not over. For every real life positive African American female represented, there has routinely been a lack of adequate media representation of positive African American women.

Just as it is important to have real-life African American heroes, it is equally important to have heroic representations in the media. Debuting on April 5, 2012, *Scandal* presented a strong black woman as its protagonist, Olivia Pope. As Tanzina Vega asserts in "A Show Makes Friends and History: 'Scandal' on ABC Is Breaking Barriers," "One reason for that success is the casting of Kerry Washington, who became the first African-American female lead in a network drama in almost 40 years. (The first was Teresa Graves as an undercover cop in "Get Christie Love!", which had its debut in 1974.)." However, *Scandal* alone cannot on its own undo the overwhelming lack of representation. According to Krissah Thompson in "Essence: Black Women Still Poorly Depicted in Media," many young women still feel misrepresented by what they see on television and in the media in general. Quoting Sophia Nelson, Thompson writes, "Black women haven't really defined themselves." In an interview with *Bustle, Game of Thrones* actress Nathalie Immanuel, who plays Denaerus' interpreter Missandae, has expressed this same sentiment, describing how the dearth of black female characters in the media negatively impacted her self-esteem growing up. Despite her character being a former slave (too often a common role for actresses of African descent), Immanuel is not alone in expressing this sentiment. The lack of positive representation can have negative impacts on the self-esteem of black women, no matter their age. Without positive role models or seeing anyone who looks like you on television, in the movies, or in other forms of entertainment, it is difficult to truly appreciate yourself. According to Larry Gross in "Equity and Diversity in Media Representation: Introduction,"

"Presence on the nation's screens is a form of cultural power, and exclusion from representation maintains the marginalized status of groups that do not possess significant material or political power bases" (102). If the only images you see of women are women who look nothing like you, do you really matter?

However, just as harmful as the lack of representation is misrepresentation. For generations, African American women have had to endure negative and limiting images of how black women were supposed to be. Though today this misrepresentation is akin to the women on reality television shows like *Love and Hip-Hop, Basketball Wives,* and *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*—loud, angry, gossipy frenemies—even these images have roots from much older archetypes, some with slave or minstrel roots. These archetypes—the mammy and the angry black woman—encompass the ubiquitous dichotomy that has been forced upon black women. These white-sanctioned black female identities arose due to centuries of voicelessness and self-sacrifice, taking on a fictional, even mythical quality.

According to Nellie McKay in "Reflections on Black Women Writers: Revising the Literary Canon," black women have often been relegated to "obedient and subservient mammies, loving and tender to the white children they raised and forever faithful to the owners they served" (152). The mammy is the quintessential all-mother figure. She's generally described as being a large woman with a pleasant face. Dark skin, red or reddish lips, and a big smile give her the appearance of being content, maybe even happy with whatever situation she's in. Wearing a long skirt, collared blouse, and an apron, mammy is always ready to help, cook, or be of service. No doubt her characterization stemmed from the old black female cook of America's slave era. Working in the slave master's kitchen, the mammy kept her master and his family well-fed, never a complaint on her face or in her heart. Once

slavery ended, her role changed only slightly, no longer a slave but a maid who cooks as well, aiding the white woman in the care of her children. What remains is the smile on her face and her desire to serve.

On the opposite spectrum of this dichotomy is the angry black woman. Also a slavery-era invention, the angry black woman is the clear opposite of the mammy. As Carolyn M. West states in her article, "Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and Their Homegirls," the Sapphire, the name provided for the angry black woman, stemming from the *Amos & Andy* radio-turned-television-show from the 1940s and 1950s, is often "characterized as [a] strong, masculinized [workhorse] who labored with Black men in the fields or as aggressive women who drove their children and their partners away with their overbearing natures" (295). Her primary description lies in her mannerisms and ugly look on her face: a twisted snarl with slit eyes, a snake ready to strike. In the article, "Aggressive Encounters & White Fragility: Deconstructing the Trope of the Angry Black Woman," Trina Jones and Kimberly Jade Norwood explore the pernicious nature of this stereotype, writing, "This so-called 'Angry Black Woman' is the physical embodiment of some of the worst negative stereotypes of Black women—she is out of control, disagreeable, overly aggressive, physically threatening, loud (even when she speaks softly), and to be feared. She will not stay in her 'place.' She is not human." In this regard, she can be dismissed or disregarded, her anger seeming more like a character flaw or moral failing.

The most glaring aspect of the angry black woman is her direct antithesis to the mammy. Venetria K. Patton, *Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction*, states, "The female slave as Mammy was at once the ideal mother and the antithesis of motherhood" (34), due to her initial involuntary services as a wet nurse for her slaveholder. However, the angry black woman, or Sapphire, though also

serving the duties of motherhood, is not afforded nearly the seeming reverence of the Mammy. This is likely to be due to the duality of Black womanhood during slavery and afterwards, a denial of womanhood, or true womanhood, made popular in the late nineteenth century. As Patton writes, "Barbara Welter has defined the four cardinal virtues of true womanhood as piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. These virtues defined what it meant to be a mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman" (29). Unfortunately, black women were denied the ability to conform to this standard of womanhood. While the Mammy may meet the true womanhood traits of submissiveness and domesticity, the angry black woman does not due to lacking these same traits. As Shirley J. Yee asserts, "The negative images of black women resulted directly from their dual economic role as slave laborers and sexual commodities" (41). So, though Carolyn M. West asserts that slavery caused so many of the conditions that caused grief and anger among black women, this history and the economic forces causing black women to share financial responsibility with their male counterparts is often mocked or ridiculed in society and media representations.

Despite the pervasive nature of these tropes, they've undergone a series of name changes to mask their true fictitious identities. The mammy is also called "mamma" or even "ma'dear," the older black woman who takes care of those in her family and her community. The angry black woman is also sometimes called much more demeaning names, such as "ghetto," "hood rat," or even "bitch." She gets far less respect than the Mammy because of her apparent inability to conform to the serving role "true womanhood" demands of her.

With the introduction of black feminism, womanism (introduced by Alice Walker in her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Prose*, 1983), and intersectionality (as introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw) in the 1970s and 80s, black women have been provided the tools in which to delve into this

dichotomy and dismantle it. As Nellie McKay states, "In their own voices, black women have always confirmed and authenticated the complexity of the black American female experience, and in so doing have debunked the negative stereotypes that others created of them while denying them audience for their words" (153). Illustrating this dismantling was the introduction of the fictional African-American heroes from science fiction and comic books, such as, Lt. Nyota Uhura of *Star Trek* (*NBC*, 1966) and, later, Ororo Munroe (Storm) of the *X-Men* (*Giant-Size X-Men #1*, 1975). These particular pop culture characters were revolutionary for their time, for they showed black women as having power, agency, and sexual liberation. No longer did black women have to be subjected to the mammy figure and the angry black woman; black women had self-determination and could aspire to be more.

As explored by Devon W. Carbado, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Vickie M. May, and Barbara Tomlinson in "Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory," to fully understand the experience of the black woman, you have to look beyond gender. You have to take into consideration race and power. According to Crenshaw, "Rooted in Black feminism and Critical Race Theory, intersectionality is a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool" (qtd. in Carbado et al. 303). The black woman experience is not homogenous; we are not all the same. African American women have a level of multidimensionality that far too often gets overlooked or oversimplified. The true influence of both Uhura and Storm is not that they are simply fan favorites for comic book and sci-fi nerds. It's that they helped inspire the creation of other such powerful, complicated black female characters.

First appearing on NBC in 1966, *Star Trek* was groundbreaking, introducing intelligent storylines, sex appeal, and one of the most iconic black female characters still to this

day: Lt. Uhura. Played by Nichelle Nichols, Lt. Uhura was unlike any other black woman in entertainment. As the communications officer for the Starship Enterprise, Uhura played a pivotal part in the operations of the Enterprise, thus making her an invaluable member of the crew. Uhura was strong without being angry and took command of her sexuality instead of it being dictated to her. She was the antithesis of the mammy/angry black woman dichotomy.

There's a famous story surrounding Nichols and her initial reaction to playing Uhura. At one point, Nichols wanted to quit the show, but then she received a call by none other than Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who discouraged her from quitting on the grounds that little black girls would see her and see another way to be. Abby Ohlheiser writes in "How Martin Luther King Jr. convinced 'Star Trek's' Lt. Uhura to stay on the show," Nichelle Nichols recounts her conversation with Dr. King. She says, "Dr. Martin Luther King, quite some time after I'd first met him, approached me and said something along the lines of 'Nichelle, whether you like it or not, you have become a symbol. If you leave, they can replace you with a blonde haired white girl, and it will be like you were never there. What you've accomplished, for all of us, will only be real if you stay.' That got me thinking about how it would look for fans of color around the country if they saw me leave. I saw that this was bigger than just me." Fortunately for fans of color, Nichols heeded this advice.

However, Uhura didn't matter just because she was the communications officer on a sci-fi show; she mattered because she represented the breaking of boundaries imposed upon African American women, particularly in the majority of the decades of the twentieth century. Uhura's influence didn't just stop in the realm of science fiction. As Andre Carrington writes in *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction*, "Nichols's travails as Uhura and beyond demonstrate how she is instrumental to, and in part responsible for, the

utopian promises of both Trek and NASA" (69). Outside of her performances which includes singing (she was headed to Broadway when she considered leaving), Nichols has been instrumental in diversifying the NASA astronaut program, encouraging young women of color to literally reach for the stars.

As influential for African American women was Ororo Munroe, the *X-Men* character Storm. Andre Carrington states, "the X- Men comics offer a revisionist interpretation of popular images of Black womanhood through the character named Storm. This revisionist strategy . . . aims to construct an account of Black womanhood amenable to the utopian ideals characteristic of SF works in the era" (90). As Lucas do Carmo Dalbeto and Ana Paula Oliveira note in "Oh My Goddess: Anthropological Thoughts on the Representation of Marvel's Storm and the Legacy of Black Women in Comics," "Storm gained recognition for being the first black woman to be relevant in a comic book from a renowned publishing house." Her biography through her characterization illustrates the importance of her journey as a black woman, a journey of self-discovery that many women, especially black women, can relate to. After the death of her parents leaves her abandoned in Cairo, Ororo must discover her true origins, a type of "Back to Africa" journey popular in the 1960s and 1970s among African Americans. Through her journey of self-discovery and finding her place in the world, Storm represents the struggle for African American women to find their place in American society, a place not contingent upon slave-era stereotypes.

Throughout her tenure, Storm became one of the most beloved comic book characters of all time. Although her original physicality explicitly showcased her bare breasts, she was, as Lucas do Carmo Dalbeto and Ana Paula Oliveira point out, nonetheless the antithesis of the previous female superheroes such as Wonder Woman, Invisible Woman, and Marvel Girl who all conformed to the "good girl" trope,

including even part of their superhero titles: woman and girl. Storm's strength and sexuality were her own.

As with most, if not all comic book characters, Storm underwent a litany of changes representing the changing times. Oliveira asserts, "female characters in comics have been displaying an exaggerated sexuality since the 1980s, reflecting the sociocultural changes from the previous decade. Storm forecasts this representation" (qtd. in Dalbeto and Oliveira). With new authors, come new ideas; however, one aspect of Storm's characterization has remained constant: her leadership roles. She led other orphaned children during her time in Cairo and continued to lead after her marriage to T'Challa, Black Panther and King of the African kingdom of Wakanda. As Lícia Maria de Lima Barbosa notes, "Storm's recurring leadership status contradicts the stereotype of subservience and the oppressive background experienced by a black woman" and "Except for the *Morlocks* and Wakanda, Storm leads groups comprised almost entirely of white men" (qtd. in Dalbeto and Oliveira). Storm also broke barriers through her romantic relationships as well, never being subservient to any man. Although some of Storm's characteristics through her various amalgamations have been stereotypical, Dalbeto and Oliveira argue, "it is important to stress that she carries traits that correspond to feminist ideals, such as equality between the sexes, womens' independence and a multidimensional approach to female characters." Even non-black women can look to Storm as a feminist icon.

Though somewhat milder in their interpretations, in terms of the overt sexual agency of their predecessors, twentieth century reinterpretations of the *X-Men* and *Star Trek* have reintroduced Storm and Lt. Uhura to younger African American audiences. Halle Berry's Storm takes on a more supportive, nurturing role in 2000's *X-Men*, softer and tamer than Storm's 1980's image. Zoe Saldana's 2009 *Star Trek* Lt. Uhura is no longer sexually independent, being the girlfriend

of science officer Spock, a departure from the original 1966 *Star Trek* series, which featured the first interracial kiss on television between Uhura and Capt. Kirk. Although these interpretations tone down what originally made these characters so radical and revolutionary for their time, their mere presence alone still provides positive black female representations for today's African American women.

Though it has taken several decades for other popular African American female lead characters to emerge, today's African American women are now able to see themselves in various roles, such as Shonda Rhimes' creations Olivia Pope and Annalise Keating, both complicated, intelligent, and powerful women. Issa Rae's *Insecure* further highlights the complexities of black womanhood, dating, and friendship. With the success of films like *Hidden Figures* and the works of Ava DuVernay, the future looks bright for the continuance of non-stereotypical roles for black women.

Though no one character or fictional work can truly embody the multidimensionality of the black female experience, representation is important for black female development and sense of self. Because what we see shows us what we can be, positive images of African American women, even fictitious, can have positive benefits on how black women see ourselves. This is the beauty of characters like Uhura and Storm; they showed black women and everyone else that black women are more than selfless caregivers or bitter women. Black women can explore the stars and fly. Black women have the strength to finally dictate and control how the intricacies of our experiences are portrayed in the media.

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Bearing the Unbearable: Buddha's Lesson to Aṅgulimāla (and us all)

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> Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.
> —James Baldwin

Although Buddhism is often portrayed in Western media as a gentle religion whose stress on "nonviolence" (*ahimsā*) provides a welcome contrast to the more familiar Abrahamic traditions with their violent histories, a closer look reveals something far more complex. In truth, a growing body of scholarship over the past decade or so indicates that Buddhism as an institutionalized religion has a long and checkered

relationship with violence and the use of force.[1] Many people might recoil from this sobering fact, and opt for the conclusion of the "new atheists" (Dawkins, Hitchens, et al) that religion is ultimately something unbearable. Here, I explore this suggestion of religious unbearability by focusing on a particular narrative: the tale of Aṅgulimāla. Aṅgulimāla ("Necklace of Fingers") is a vicious murderer-brigand who, subdued by Buddha, renounces his outlaw ways for monastic life and eventually attains *nibbāna*.[2] Over the years, Aṅgulimāla has been lauded as a "Buddhist saint," and is the focus of various paintings, sculptures, popular rites, and movies. However, his story poses many difficulties when we examine it closely. For example, in giving shelter to this notorious criminal, the Buddha puts himself above the law, even initially hiding the truth of the situation from royal authorities. Moreover, he seemingly enjoins Aṅgulimāla to be less than truthful at one point. Most disturbing of all, by his actions Buddha seems to ignore the demands of justice, allowing Aṅgulimāla to get off very lightly for his many crimes. This unsettling state of affairs comes to a head when sometime later the murderer-monk is attacked by villagers and beaten severely. Bloodied but alive, he returns to the Buddha, who explains how the force of *kamma* (Skt. *karma*) is playing

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[1] See, for example, Michael K. Jerryson, *Buddhist Fury: Religion and Violence in Southern Thailand* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Michael K. Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer, eds., *Buddhist Warfare* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and John D'arcy May, *Transcendence and Violence: The Encounter of Buddhist, Christian and Primal Traditions* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2003).

[2] This is the Pali form of the more familiar Sanskrit *nirvāṇa* (lit. "blown out"), release from the sufferings of *samsara*. Because Aṅgulimāla's story is particularly well-known in Theravāda branch of Buddhism, the branch whose adherents regard Pali as the sacred language, I use Pali forms of Buddhist terms in this paper.

out through these events, going so far as to admonish the monk to "bear with it." I argue that here the Buddha speaks not only to Aṅgulimāla, but to the larger audience as well, explicitly and implicitly imparting some hard Dharmic truths that we would do well to heed.

The "Core" Story

Since this story exists in different forms, I begin this discussion by relating the "common core" found in the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta*, the version found in Pali Canon, as it seems to be the basis for the majority of versions. One day while the Buddha is residing at the Jetta Grove outside Savatthi, a town in state of Kosala located in the greater Ganges Valley, he learns of a bloodthirsty highway man terrorizing the region. This man is known by the epithet Aṅgulimāla for his habit of wearing a garland/necklace (*mala*) of some 1000 severed fingers (*anguli*) taken from his many victims. The villagers warn the Buddha during his morning begging rounds that the brigand has attacked and slain many people (including large parties of armed men), but the Blessed One, heedless of the danger, ventures off into the forest alone.

From his lair, the sharp-eyed killer spies the Buddha from afar and is surprised that a lone monk should wander into his domain when he has destroyed far-larger groups. True to his nature, though, he gathers up various weapons and charges after the Buddha, intent on dispatching this foolish holy man easily. However, things do not go as he planned. The Buddha, apparently well aware of Aṅgulimāla's approach, uses his "psychic powers" (*iddhi*) to stay out of harm's reach; he continues calmly walking, yet Aṅgulimāla, though running with all his might, cannot catch up. Finally, in frustration, the killer halts and calls out, "Stop, contemplative! Stop!" The Buddha replies, "I *have* stopped, Aṅgulimāla. *You* stop" (Thanissaro 2). Aṅgulimāla is amazed—not only has this wily

monk evaded his clutches, he has spoken utter nonsense by commanding Aṅgulimāla to stop when the killer has already done so. Even more puzzling, this mendicant claims that he (Buddha) has stopped while nonetheless continuing to walk. The thoroughly baffled killer then asks what he means and the Buddha explains,

> I have stopped, Aṅgulimāla,
> once & for all,
> having cast off violence
> toward all living beings.
> You, though,
> are unrestrained toward beings.
> That's how I've stopped
> and you haven't. (2)

At once the Buddha's simple words have a powerful effect. Aṅgulimāla proclaims that he will give up his evil ways. Tossing aside his weapons, he bows and requests to become a monk (*bhikkhu*). The Buddha accepts, and together they return to the Jeta grove to join the rest of the *sangha* (monastic community). Aṅgulimāla commits himself diligently to the monastic path, proving to be a model monk, both with his grasp of the Buddha Dharma (teachings) and his peacefully composed behavior. Indeed, he even wins the admiration of King Pasenadi, the ruler of Kosala, who had come with his guard to capture the bandit and execute him for his crimes.

　　Aṅgulimāla continues to devote himself to the monastic life. Sometime later, the new monk, through his great merit and sincerity (and under with the Buddha's guidance), even heals a woman in danger of dying in the midst of a difficult child-birth. In this particular case, Aṅgulimāla follows the Buddha's instructions and performs a "truth act" (*saccakiriyā*), ritually declaring that his present life of purity and harmlessness will henceforth be the means for bringing health and well-being to the mother and her child. The murderer-monk's words prove quite effective, and as a result the woman and her child are

restored to health. It is noteworthy that through this miraculous pronouncement, Aṅgulimāla establishes a ritual of protection (*paritta*) still used in Theravadin societies to bless pregnant women and new houses.

According to the *sutta*, Aṅgulimāla retires to solitude in the forest where he devotes himself to rigorous meditations and ascetic practices, thereby reaching "the supreme goal of the holy life" (5). The text further says that the monk himself realizes that he has reached this state, and so he became an *arahant*, the highest spiritual level in early Buddhism. Sometime after this, the *sutta* relates that one morning while on his begging rounds, he is attacked by villagers (presumably the assailants recognize him as their former tormenter and decide to enact some vigilante justice) who pelt him with clods of earth, rocks, and potsherds. Aṅgulimāla returns to his master, "his head broken open and dripping with blood, his bowl broken, and his outer robe ripped to shreds" (5). The Buddha offers the wounded *bhikkhu* words of comfort, exhorting him to "bear with it," and explaining that Aṅgulimāla is experiencing the fruit of the bad kamma from his previous violent deeds—kamma that otherwise would have burned him "in hell for many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years" (5).

The last part of the *sutta* has Aṅgulimāla going into seclusion and experiencing the "bliss of release" before spontaneously breaking into verse. Among his many lines, the monk chants:

> A bandit
> I used to be,
> renowned as Aṅgulimāla.
> Swept along by a great flood,
> I went to the Buddha as refuge. . . .

> This[3] has come well & not gone away,
> it was not badly thought through for me.
> The three knowledges
> have been attained;
> the Buddha's bidding,
> done. (7)

And it is with these last words that the tale (at least in the official *sutta* version) ends.

Problems and Historical Struggles with the Story

On the surface, this story appears to be a basic morality tale in which the Buddha peacefully subdues Aṅgulimāla, thus ending his criminal career and restoring peace and order to the region. Furthermore, the Buddha not only converts the murderer to Buddhism but entices him into the monastic life. The peaceful yet disciplined life of a *bhikkhu* proves to be the ex-criminal's true vocation, as Aṅgulimāla rather quickly achieves the status of an *arahant*. Thus, we have a compelling demonstration of the power of *ahimsā* confirmed in this tale that portrays the triumph of the monk over the murderer—a triumph that also shows the gentle path of rehabilitation as presumably more effective than punishment. Indeed, Aṅgulimāla's redemption is often cited as evidence of how under the Dharma no one is beyond salvation; this story offers hope to all by suggesting that *ahimsā* ultimately wins the day. What could be better?

However, this simple framing of the story begins to collapse when we examine it more closely. To begin with, the order of events in the *sutta* version of the tale seems rather confused. For instance, the narrative has Aṅgulimāla attaining *arahant* status ("the supreme goal of holy life," i.e. *nibbāna*) *before* being attacked by the villagers yet the text

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[3] Although the reference is unclear, in context the monk seems to be referring to the peace and bliss of *nibbāna*.

says he experiences "the bliss of release" only *after* the attack. More seriously, certain details of the story raise many morally troubling issues: the Buddha overrides King Pasenadi's authority by shielding Aṅgulimāla from legal punishment for his crimes, Aṅgulimāla never apologizes or offers recompense to the families of his victims, the karmic retribution visited on Aṅgulimāla—a beating at the hands of some villagers—seems rather *ad hoc* and remarkably lenient considering the scores of people he murdered. Buddha's words of comfort to Aṅgulimāla after his assault suggest that the monk was suffering immensely yet according to traditional teachings, *arahants* are immune to mental anguish (although they do feel physical pain). The workings of kamma also seem to favor Aṅgulimāla unfairly, as he advances to the status of *arahant* very quickly, surpassing his brother *bhikkhus* who were not burdened by his great mass of kammic debt, and who had been living the monastic life far longer. In addition, Aṅgulimāla's "truth act" by which he saves the dying mother and her child, seems perilously close to being a lie.[4] Later Mahayana versions present this tale with a slight doctrinal twist, as an occasion for Buddha to present the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* ("womb/embryo of Buddhahood," sometimes also known as the "Buddha nature")*,* but this philosophical recasting still does not resolve basic problems of inconsistency and incoherence within the narrative as a whole.

Research reveals that the textual history of Aṅgulimāla's tale is itself a complex story. As Mark Allon, a specialist in the composition and transmission of early Buddhist texts,

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[4] At first the Buddha instructs Aṅgulimāla to declare his spiritual power by swearing on his life of harmlessness, implying that the mass murderer-monk had never harmed anyone. Only when his charge rejects such an obvious falsehood does the Blessed One qualify that the monk should swear by his *present* life of harmlessness (as a peace-loving *bhikkhu*). There's another level of irony here as well: the *paritta* established through this ritual is traditionally pronounced to protect domestic life yet it was established by someone who had been a major threat to hearth and home.

observes, most scholars agree that many Buddhist stories such as the tale of Aṅgulimāla are rooted in oral traditions dating back to the lifetime of the historical Buddha. However, it is impossible to verify such claims definitively (Allon 39). The Pali canon, purportedly the oldest of the surviving collections of Buddhist scripture, refers to Aṅgulimāla in several places. Of these, the oldest reference is probably verses 866-91 of the *Theragāthā* ("Verses of the Elders"), a collection of hymns attributed to some of the Buddha's earliest disciples. These verses celebrating the murderer-turned-monk's awakening have been incorporated into the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta* (a few of these verses are quoted above) but only obliquely speak of events in his life. As for the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta* itself, it is found in the *Majjhima Nikāya* ("Middle Length Discourses"), a collection of early Buddhist discourses, and presents a more developed (although still inconsistent) narrative. In addition, Aṅgulimāla is also referred to in the *Mahāvagga* ("Great Chapter"), a text discussing monastic discipline, and several *Jātakas*, stories of the Buddha's previous lives.[5] Later non-canonical texts, the *Papañcasudani,* a commentary on the *Majjhima Nikāya* attributed to the scholar-monk Buddhaghosa (5th century C.E.), and the *Paramattha-dipani,* a commentary on the *Theragāthā* by Dhammapāla (6th century C.E.), expand upon the *sutta* version, adding various details. Other Pali texts that speak of Aṅgulimāla include the *Milinda-pañhā* ("Questions of King Milinda") and the *Mahāvaṃsa* ("Great Chronicle"), a legendary history of Sri Lanka. In addition, there are several versions of the tale of Aṅgulimāla in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, the standard modern edition of the Chinese canon,[6] and a fragmentary variant preserved in the

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[5] See *Mahāvagga* I.41 and *Jātaka* 537.
[6] See the *Angulimālīya Sūtra* or *Yangjuemolou jing*, T. 120. This version was translated into Chinese by the translator monk Gunabhadra, 435-443 CE. There are also two earlier versions in the *Taishō*, the *Yang juemo jing*, T.118,

Saṃyuktāgama ("Kindred Sayings"), a Sanskrit text attributed to the Mūlasarvāstivāda School, an early sect of Buddhism that arose in northern India.

Moreover, such retellings continue down to the present day, often in different media. For instance, over the centuries, the story of Aṅgulimāla has been depicted in various artistic forms (paintings, sculpted reliefs etc.), several of which are genuine masterpieces that can be found at important sacred sites across the Buddhist world (Zin). Various "Sunday school" versions of the story exist (and can easily be found on the internet), and the story has even been the inspiration for at least three movies, one of which was censored by conservative activists in Thailand for "distorting Buddhist teachings and glorifying violence" when it came out in 2003. After producers removed some of the more violent scenes (in accordance with censor demands), activists pronounced it acceptable and allowed the film to be re-released in 2004 (Green xv). More recently, in 2006 peace activist Satish Kumar, alarmed by the violence associated with the "Global War on Terror," published a new version of Aṅgulimāla's story, *The Buddha and the Terrorist*. The story of Aṅgulimāla's life of crime and redemption has even inspired a successful and growing Buddhist prison ministry in the United Kingdom.

Such narrative diversity (a common feature of tales in most religious traditions) is quite challenging for anyone seeking "the true story," but in part such discrepancies may be due to the episodic and elliptical nature of the *sutta* version (Thompson 100-101). Assuming that this is the oldest written version (problematic to be sure), the discrepancies between it and later versions suggest that later commentators expanded upon the tale in order to fill in the gaps and make the story conform more closely to orthodox Buddhist doctrine. This

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attributed to Dharmarakṣa, 226-313 CE, and the *Yang jue ji jing*, T.119, translated by Fa Zhu, 290-307 CE.

domestication process is most obvious in the commentarial tradition which adds details of Aṅgulimāla's back story that suggest his turn to the "dark side" is due to the nefarious workings of other figures in his life (jealous fellow students, a brutally selfish guru, and even the mysterious kammic operations of "fate"). Such reworking by later commentators likely reflect discomfort at the highly ambiguous nature of the story, as well as a desire to have the story make sense by presenting the murderer-monk as a more sympathetic character who strayed (or was forced) onto an evil path but who, under the wise and compassionate tutelage of the Blessed One, is able to redeem himself and work for the greater good. Thus, the initially unbearable killer monk becomes much more bearable. In fact, through such retellings, Aṅgulimāla (like his wise mentor, the Buddha) emerges as a genuine Dhammic hero, embodying the Jungian Hero archetype and justifiably earning our admiration. This heroic recasting is fine as far as it goes (who doesn't enjoy a ripping yarn, after all?), but perhaps in the end impresses us less than the latest blockbuster birthed by the forever fecund and financially savvy gods of the Marvel Universe.

Narrative "Shock and Awe" and the Possibilities of Growth

Let me suggest another way of working with this story, however. One of the Buddha Dharma's strengths is the way certain teachings encourage a critical existential approach to life, especially when it comes to the workings of our psyches. Buddhist teachings of "mindfulness" (*sati*) call for us to attend to what is before us, and help us see that much of our ordinary experience is actually a type of "delusion" (*moha*) that arises from *not* perceiving what actually the case is, or trying to avoid it by substituting an imaginary reality of our own devising. Techniques for developing mindfulness enable us to take in the complexity and nuances of life, even if (perhaps especially if)

what we find is emotionally disturbing. Among the most potent and controversial of these practices is "contemplating the horrible" (*asubhavanā*), the close, dispassionate contemplation of corpses in varying states of decay. The aim of this meditative technique is for the practitioner to develop a visceral understanding of impermanence (*anicca*) and the nature of bodily existence, as well as to be able to counter the seductive sensual pleasures that so often cloud our judgment. Such contemplations bring us face-to-face with the bare bones of existence—sometimes quite literally—based on the idea that human biological existence entails much that is icky, gross, even terrifying. However, we are better off facing such harsh truths directly rather than remaining "blissfully ignorant" (a phrase which, in Buddhist thinking, is basically a contradiction in terms).

These ancient practices of "contemplating the horrible" have proven very effective at counterbalancing the sensual desires that often plague renunciates. Some instructional texts outline as many as ten categories of corpses, including bodies that are bloated, "gnawed" by scavengers, or smeared with blood. Not surprisingly, such practices can have unintended effects. One story relates that after teaching this form of meditation, the Buddha withdrew for a few weeks of solitude. Upon his return, he found that many monks who had mastered the meditation became so disgusted with their *own* bodies that they committed suicide! At once, the Buddha summoned his remaining followers and taught them to meditate on the breath, a less drastic method for realizing the changing nature of existence. From then on, meditating on decaying corpses became optional (Wilson 41-42). In fact, Theravāda Buddhism still maintains practices of "corpse meditation," with the *Vissudhimagga* ("Path of Purification"), an encyclopedic commentary by the great scholar-monk Buddhaghosa, describing in lurid detail the various corpses suitable for contemplation: "There is a *worm-infested* corpse when at the

end of two or three days a mass of maggots oozes out from the corpse's nine orifices, and the mass like a heap of paddy or boiled rice as big as the body, whether the body is that of a dog, a jackal, a human being, an ox, a buffalo, an elephant, a horse, a python, or what you will" (Ñāṇamoli 185).

We should bear in mind that practices of *asubhavanā* can be extraordinarily difficult, are psychologically violent (they involve the deliberate intrusion of powerful perceptions to disrupt an established emotional state), and even pose physical risks of infection and disease. At the very least, forcing oneself to contemplate decomposing bodies with their oozing fluids and sickening stench (to say nothing of the noxious buzzing of flies) for even a brief period of time is unpleasant, while doing so for extended periods of time without preparation or proper guidance may even be traumatic. No description can convey the visceral nature of such experience but as most Humanists know, we can get hints of its tremendous effects from literary sources. For instance, in a scene from a novel by the contemporary writer John Burdett, he depicts his protagonist Sonchai Jitpleecheep, a brilliant Thai police detective and ex-monk, interrogating a murder suspect (also a monk) in some nameless dilapidated *wat*. The eerily placid suspect tells the devout inspector of his personal experience of *asubhavanā*:

> Breathing death is good practice. . . . In Cambodia it is still possible to use real corpses. I lived with one in my cell for a year, experiencing its dissolution from the flies-and- stench stage all the way to dry bones. While I watched I identified: every attachment, every aversion dropped away as the organ that created it disintegrated. (169)

When the detective replies, "A year? I'd have gone mad," the monk smiles tolerantly at his interrogator's naivety, saying, "Of course I went mad. For a monk, what the world calls sanity is a whorish compromise" (170).

Indeed. Some scholarly studies of *asubhavanā* also suggest something decidedly creepy about this monkly fascination with the macabre, which perhaps even hints of necrophilia as well as deep-seated misogyny (texts outlining the practice are overwhelmingly composed by and addressed to males, while a large proportion of the corpses are females). However, these meditations are part of a lengthy therapeutic process conducted under the guidance of compassionate teachers. Their true power comes from the recognition that the horrible is not just or even primarily out there as some loathsome Other but is right here and now. It's us. And in the Dharma, it is this *true* self knowledge that leads us to liberation.

Clearly many of the actual practices of *asubhavanā* are not for everyone; one can almost hear the Buddha calling from the sidelines, "kids, don't try this at home." Nonetheless, undergoing such a painful and frightening process of self-examination generally leads to experiences of *samvega* ("shock of recognition") that can be instrumental in progress along the Buddhist path. Figuratively speaking, I suggest that this story of the Buddha and Aṅgulimāla, and even this paper, is a type of *asubhavanā*, forcing us to face aspects of ourselves that are, in some sense, unbearable. In this regard, we should note that later Buddhist tradition often interpreted this story allegorically, with Aṅgulimāla's eponymous necklace of fingers representing our failure to practice and attain the limbs we must earn to achieve Awakening. As one Buddhist martial arts master puts it, "Thus it can be seen that all of us wear an *angulimala* of some type during our own lives. The figure of Aṅgulimāla, himself, represents the craving for the mundane world, along with all its values, materialistic attractions, and distractions" (Tomio 183). Thus, Buddhist tradition actually calls for us, individually and collectively, to face our "Inner Aṅgulimāla." Perhaps our discussion may even lead to an experience of *samvega.* At the very least, this exercise in

contemplating the horrible has provoked a number of insights and some pointed questions that might prove useful.

In light of all this, I maintain that the Buddha in his dealings with Aṅgulimāla has much to tell us—whether we be scholars within the Humanities, traumatized victims of crime, reformed killers seeking to make amends, confused villagers (or students and instructors), liberal elites or "red state deplorables"— about *unbearableness*, what it means, and how we should (or at least *can*) respond. Maybe we, too, should stop in our tracks rather than incessantly charging after any and all alleged foes whom we meet. This requires courage and a great deal of patience, like Aṅgulimāla himself exercises, and a willingness to bear with certain unbearable aspects of who we are.

Let me close in true Humanities Guy fashion by requesting that you to bear with me as I quote one of my personal heroes, Joe Strummer (né John Graham Mellor, 1952-2002), founding member of the seminal British band "The Clash," whose words make an intriguing addendum to the quote from James Baldwin with which this paper opens. In "Long Shadow," a tribute to the legendary Johnny Cash, Strummer sings:

> Well I'll tell you one thing that I know
> You don't face your demons down
> You gotta grapple 'em Jack and pin 'em to the ground
> The devil may care, maybe god he won't
> You better make sure you check on the do's and the don'ts.

Facing the allegedly unbearable is hard, whatever "the do's and the don'ts." When the unbearable is *us*, it may seem impossible to face, let alone grapple with it and pin it down. But doing so is perhaps the only way to make positive change, to respond constructively to and bear with that which seems unbearable. And in the end, that's also the way of hope. So have I heard. Words to consider in our world seemingly perpetually marred by media noise, twitter trolls, and social discord.

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Anthropology and Cultural Competence: Delivering
Religiously Appropriate Care at the End-of-Life for
Muslim Patients

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Introduction: Defining Cultural Competence

There is not a single definition of cultural competence, even
though it is a buzzword in the U.S. health care system
(Catalano 2012). It is a "rubric most often deployed in U.S.
medical education for addressing . . . tensions . . . [in] clinical
encounters" (Metzl and Hansen 2014, 126) that stem from
what are deemed cross-cultural misunderstandings. And more
recently, there is an awareness of structural competency that
focuses on the "forces that influence health outcomes at levels
above individual interactions" (Metzl and Hansen 2014, 126)
and on the structures that produce and perpetuate health
inequalities. Even with this call to move from cultural

competence to structural competence, there continues to be much scholarship and applied work on the first concept, despite its rather ambiguous nature and lack of a clear definition.

Much of the literature on culturally competent health care in the United States focuses on the need to address health disparities among ethnic minorities with a particular attention to how the health care system can provide better care to those who immigrate to the country (Good, Wilen, Hannah, et al. 2011). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "some minorities experience a disproportionate burden of preventable disease, death, and disability compared with non-minorities" (2014) making it imperative to design treatment programs that take into account cultural and linguistic factors in order to be successful. The CDC encourages health communication to take the culture of a population into consideration and "behaviors, attitudes, and policies [to] come together in a system, agency, or among professionals to enable people to work effectively in a cross-cultural situation" (2014).

Given the diverse population of the United States, health administrators, policy makers, and medical providers see delivering what is considered to be culturally competent health care as key to improving health outcomes (Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, et al. 2005). Culturally competent care requires "a commitment from doctors and other caregivers to understand and to be responsive to the different attitudes, values, verbal cues, and body language that people look for in a doctor's office by virtue of their heritage" (Goldsmith 2000, 53). Oliver Goldsmith writes that the premise is already found within the field of medicine itself, "The concept of tailoring health care isn't a new one; we already have medical specialties based on age and gender. Cultural sensitivity is one more dimension of that kind of refinement" (2000, 53).

Joseph Betancourt and his colleges write of the interactions between patients and the health care system as an essential part of cultural competency:

> Among the many root causes of disparities that have been presented and explored, variations in patients' health beliefs, values, preferences, and behaviors have recently garnered attention. These include variations in patient recognition of symptoms; thresholds for seeking care; the ability to communicate symptoms to a provider who understands their meaning; the ability to understand the prescribed management strategy; expectations of care . . . and adherence to preventative measures and medications. These factors are thought to influence patient and physician decision-making and the interactions between patients and the health care delivery system, thus contributing to health disparities (2003, 294).

They continue:

> As a result of these observations, the field of 'cultural competence' in health care has emerged. A 'culturally competent' health care system has been defined as one that acknowledges and incorporates—at all levels—the importance of culture, assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance toward the dynamics that result from cultural differences, expansion of cultural knowledge, and adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs. . . . The movement toward cultural competence in health care has gained national attention and is now recognized by health policy makers, managed care administrators . . . providers, and consumers as a strategy to eliminate racial/ethnic disparities in health and health care. There is, however, an ongoing debate as to how to better define and operationalize this critical yet broad construct (2003, 294).

Cultural competence has been described as a method to increase the quality of care that patients receive regardless of their background and to help that care fall in line better with their cultural values. In addition, some health administrators in particular also see it as a business strategy for provides to attract new patient populations.

Anthropology, Faith, and Health Care

In this paper, I will examine the role of anthropology in the operationalization of culturally competent health care by addressing the ways that anthropological approaches contribute to scholarly, public, and policy discussions about cultural competence and its everyday practice. To do so, I will draw on data that I have collected for my current ethnographic project on the diverse experiences of Sunni Muslim patients and families mainly in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area as they interact with the U.S. health care system during serious illness and the end-of-life. Participants in my research are part of a population that may be considered to be "unbearable" by the Trump administration. This has come through in acts like the Executive Order, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," which was issued in January 2017 (in place until March 2017) and prohibited citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States. The order also implemented other travel restrictions. This type of rhetoric is not new, however. Right after the events of September 11, 2001, Muslims faced public backlash in the United States on multiple levels. One physician, Dr. Abassi, who identifies as Muslim and works in an inner city in the Midwest talked to me about her experiences after 9/11:

> [Muslim families] trusted a Muslim physician and
> they wanted to see me, even though it is located in an
> area where the women wear hijabs, abayas, and long

dresses. And with scarves, they are afraid to walk in because they were so sensitive at that time, and those kinds of outfits were kind of looked upon as very strange. But now, I don't think they are still seen as strange because of the increase of the number of Muslim patients. But in those days it was unreal. My nurse once asked me, "Dr. [Abassi], how come this patient is wearing a long black covering in 85/90-degree weather. She is covered head to toe." I had to explain to her that this is the way that Muslims dress in their country. It is a sign of modesty. And so around that time I realized that people had very little knowledge about Islam. I recognized that [medical providers and the public] needed to be educated.

Islam and the Muslim body have become important political issues both in the U.S. and internationally since the events of September 11, 2001. Additionally, they have become targets of greater scrutiny in popular debates and discussions. For example, in a study of Muslim Malian migrant women in France, Carolyn Sargent and Stephanie Larchanche state the "[Muslim] body has become a site of inscription for the politics of discrimination" (2007, 79). In their work in the United Kingdom and the United States, Lance Laird and colleagues similarly note that "Media reports, political rhetoric, and legislative action . . . increasingly focus on Muslims as on out-group, promoting negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam. Yet few sources ask how such attention affects the health of Muslims" (Laird et al. 2007, 922).

My research aims to elucidate how diverse Islamic beliefs about aging, death, illness, and the body intersect with the model for end-of-life care in the United States, which anthropologists have described as championing technology and viewing death as a failure for the health care system and

medical providers (Chapple 2010, Kaufman 2005).[1] There is a rich scholarship on Islamic medical ethics (e.g., Brockopp and Outka 2003, Moazam 2006), but I argue that while very important, detailing religious ethics is not enough if providers are truly going to deliver religiously appropriate care to patients at the end-of-life and offer culturally competent health services. Marcia Inhorn and Gamal Serour note that Muslims have faced "challenges in seeking and receiving medical care [in the U.S.], including care that is judged to be religious appropriate" (2011, 935). Here, I will disentangle the meanings of medical practices in end-of-life care for Muslim participants in my study and show how ethnography has enabled me to examine the ways theological points are put into everyday practice within the U.S. health care system.

I draw on Donna Haraway (1988) to argue that the human body is a product, the material reality of social values, cultural forces, temporalities, politics, and economics. Haraway writes, "I am arguing for the view from a body; always complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity" (1988, 589). Paralleling this, I suggest anthropological research on the experiential nature of end-of-life care and on how individuals view medicine interfacing with their religious beliefs has a critical place in discussions of cultural competency in the United States and in actuality should be at the center of academic and public debates. Ethnographic research is not anecdotal; it is about understanding the meanings that develop out of people's experiences and the narratives they create.

I in part highlight the importance of not cherishing the notion that there is a coherence of Islamic theology, as this is not the most productive starting point. Rather, I propose that greater consideration is given to how Muslims in the United

States understand Islamic principles of the body, death, and medicine given their unique individual health journeys and contexts. In doing so, it is imperative to remember that "Islam" is not synonymous with "Muslim" given that "[Islam] is subordinated to, mediated by, and lives through interpretation, which is undertaken by . . . culture-bound . . . and imperfect human beings. It is in constant dialogue to secure and play a role with the cultures that respect its moral and legal sanctions" (Zimeri 2015, 101). I also want to note that I build on Lara Deeb and Mona Harb's (2013) distinction between ethics and morality. Islam is described as being legalistic in nature and there is much literature on Islamic medical ethics; however, I want to call attention to the 'practical judgments about how to live [life] wisely and well'" (Lambek 2000, 315 cited in Deeb and Harb 203, 15-16). Deeb and Harb point out that this "underscore[s] the idea of consciously trying to live a good life based on a code of conduct" (2013, 16). Many of my participants spoke of "morals" or "moral values" as opposed to ethics, which emphasizes the "socially constructed and determined values" (Deeb and Harb 2013, 16). Drawing on this notion, I look at how Muslims make sense of end-of-life care rather than seeking to determine a definitive code of religious ethics or an overall moral framework.

Contradictions within Culturally Competent Care

In conducting ethnographic research on Islam and end-of-life care in the D.C. area, I have found contradictions through observations and interviews that demonstrate the need for anthropological approaches to be at the center of discussions of culturally competent health care.[2]

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[2] My research (2013-17) includes 26 formal interviews (Muslim and non-Muslim physicians, patients or families who were going through end-of-life care, imams, Muslim chaplains, a gerontologist, a bioethicist, and members of local Muslim communities), observations of care team meetings and patient-

Patient-Provider Interactions

There is often an assumption that offering culturally competent care means matching the patients and providers in terms of demographics and identities. The medical director of the team I worked with for my research at the hospital stated that when there is a new Muslim patient the team is to see, they often automatically assign the patient to the Muslim physician on staff, or the team will ask him to see the patient at some point. The director told me, "[The Muslim physician] should not have to see all the Muslim patients that are in our care, but he usually does . . . This shouldn't always be the case. He definitely sees more of our Muslim patients than our other providers." The team has the intention of offering care that is attuned with their patients' cultural and religious needs and beliefs, but just matching providers and patients erases the fact that there are potential differences between them.

I interviewed the daughter of a patient who was originally from East Africa. She was "actively dying" and was transferred from the hospital to home hospice shortly after we spoke. The daughter explained, "At first [my sisters and I] were happy when we found out the surgeon was Muslim. The attending doctor was also Muslim, the one who came to check in on her every day." I asked, "How did you know [the attending] was Muslim?" She replied, "I guessed from his name and then it came out in a conversation. But then after a while, I realized

provider interactions at a hospital, and several more informal interviews during my observations. I performed a search and review of literature across disciplines, monitored media for pertinent news, spent time reading message boards and websites where people ask Muslim scholars about end-of-life care, researched *fatāwā* (plural of fatwa in Arabic, or a ruling by an authority on Islamic law), and collected and analyzed information provided by health care organizations and mosques in the D.C.-area primarily on illness and health concerns.

he's not Muslim like me. Then we had [another doctor] who is not Muslim, and we liked him a lot more. He was more in line of what we wanted for our Mom."

I also interviewed the adult son of a Muslim man originally from the Middle East who had recently passed away after a long battle with a terminal illness. The son stated that at first, a non-Muslim physician was tending to his father. The son recalled, "So he's like, 'If I could tell you my opinion.' And I was like, 'No offense, but I have completely different beliefs than you.' He replied, 'You know, we have this Muslim doctor.'" The son went on to talk about his experiences with the Muslim physician. He said, "[The physician] looked at [my father's case] and he was like, 'My medical opinion is this of your Dad's condition.'" The son said what he appreciated most about this physician was not his couching of things within Islamic discourse, although this could be implied, but rather the fact that he actually looked at his father's chart, consulted with other physicians about his condition and treatment options, and relayed information in ways that were easily understood by the family.

The comments by the medical director coupled with the example of the adult Muslim son exemplify what is usually viewed as providing culturally competent care. Arthur Kleinman and Peter Benson note that in health care, "Culture is often made synonymous with ethnicity, nationality, and language. For example, patients of a certain ethnicity—such as, the 'Mexican patient'—are assumed to have a core set of beliefs about illness owing to fixed ethnic traits. Cultural competency becomes a series of 'do's and don'ts' that define how to treat a patient of a given background" (2006: n.p.). But the first example of the Muslim daughter shows that this is not always the case; patients and families' desires and goals for care should be at the center of the discussions.

Navigating Religious Guidance and Medical
Recommendations

In Spring 2014, I attended a lecture given by a Muslim
palliative care physician to medical residents in internal
medicine at a large hospital located in northern Virginia. The
physician discussed some of the major Islamic tenets that these
residents need to keep in mind while treating Muslim patients
as they are nearing death. I sat in the back of the room next to
another palliative care physician who recently transferred to
this facility from a Catholic hospital. The physician said he has
given this talk several times to residents, hospice volunteers,
and other providers in this health care organization given the
fact that there is a relatively good number of Muslims who
seek care at through its various medical facilities.

Virginia ranks in the top ten states in terms of the number
of mosques, and the majority of Muslims who reside in
Virginia and Maryland live in the counties surrounding
Washington, D.C. (ASARB 2010). As of 2011, there are 62
mosques in Virginia, seven in the District of Columbia, and 54
in Maryland (Bagby 2012, Weeks 2003). It is estimated that
48% of Muslims in the United States live in the metropolitan
areas of D.C., Los Angeles, Detroit, New York, and Chicago
combined (Haddad 2004, 2). Given these statistics and the
general push in the U.S. health care system to care for the
whole patient, including his/her spiritual needs during a health
crisis, this health care organization recognizes that providing
culturally competent care is a means to increase patient and
family satisfaction, provide higher quality care, offer treatment
regimens that people follow, and attract new patients.

The physician recalled a story in which a terminally
Muslim male patient in his seventies was rushed to the
hospital. There was little that the doctors could do for him
given the stage of his illness. He was unable to breath on his
own and they hooked him up to a ventilator. He was

unresponsive and being kept alive through machines. This physician was called for a consult not only because he is a palliative care specialist, but also because he is Muslim. He spoke to the patient's wife who was by his side nearly every day. The physician asked her why she kept her husband alive even though he would never have the quality of life that he once had. She said that she believed if she took her husband off of life support it would be considered murder in the eyes of God. Once a life support is initiated, a patient cannot be removed from it—unless his or her condition improves to the point of being able to breath alone—because it would be just like killing the person since it is only God who decides when it is time to die. The physician explained to her that God does not want to burden people and that her husband has suffered enough with his disease. He quoted the Qur'an: "God does not charge a soul with more than it can bear" (2:286). Not only had her husband suffered physically, but he also emphasized that she had also physically and emotionally suffered watching her husband's health and life deteriorate over the past few years.

After several meetings and discussions, the physician finally convinced the woman that her husband unfortunately was never going to leave the hospital, and she decided to let him be removed from the ventilator and pass during the Holy month of Ramadan that year. The physician said he explained to her that she was letting her husband be at peace by unhooking him from the machines and also allowing him to receive extra blessings from God since he was to pass away during Ramadan—the holiest month of the year; this was nearly the opposite of what she initially understood Islam to say about death when her husband entered the hospital.

After the physician finished giving his talk to the medical residents, we had a chance to sit down to discuss his interests in Islamic medical ethics and my research project. He has worked with the Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA) in the past on issues surrounding Islam,

palliative care, and hospice. I had mentioned that I interviewed several Imams and other leaders in mosques in the local area. He said to me:

> There is this one Imam that comes to visit patients in the hospital. He is kind of 'on call' for Muslim patients who are dying and the spiritual team frequently asks him to come. But, I can't stand it. Nothing against him personally, but what he preaches makes it so difficult for me to do my job as someone who is to care for dying patients and to make them comfortable, free from pain as they near the end of their lives. He goes on about how Muslims should feel pain and how pain is redemption for past sins. This is not true. Why burden the patient with that physical pain? They already have had to deal with enough with their terminal illnesses and so have their families. It's a completely different Islam than what I was taught. I guess I interpret things a little differently given my medical training. I see what God wants differently.

What struck me in his comments was the fact that he recognized his medical training has impacted and shaped his religious beliefs surrounding illness, death, and pain. However, what is more important for this paper is that he and the Imam hold different religious interpretations, which were both offered to the patient's wife who had to ultimately make the medical decisions.

Managing Pain and Symptoms at the End-of-Life

Several Imams have told me that it is against Islam to take any type of strong pain medication like Percocet for instance because it can alter your state of mind and you may lose your sense of self. They mentioned that when you take narcotics you might feel "out of it" or just not like your usual self—as one person described it to me, "You get as high as a kite," although

for those who are in extreme pain, you do not feel high but rather relieved. One palliative care physician who is not Muslim said that she remembered a specific Muslim family who did not want their loved one, who was dying, to have any type of prescription pain medication. She stated, "They were very much against the use of opioids. They told us outright that it was against their religion." Another Imam told me, "Nothing more than Tylenol. Treat things naturally if possible. But one of the most important pain medications is prayer. Pray about the pain and talk to God about it." However, a Muslim man living in the D.C. area, but originally from North Africa, explained that he does not see a contradiction between Islam and the use of pain medication because alleviating pain is a way for God to unburden Muslims and to provide them with comfort as they deal with their terminal illnesses.

When I asked the Muslim physician who gave the presentation on Islam and end-of-life care about the objection to pain medication, he stated, "I can see that. When you take something that strong it may cause you to curse God because you lose your grounding. But it doesn't mean that you shouldn't take it. You have to weigh that against being in pain and what God would want for you."

Some of the Imams I have spoken with also disagreed with the use of hospice at the end-of-life, stating that the family is to take care of a person who is dying, given the importance of the familial unit in Islam. While I argue that this falls in line with recent pushes in the U.S. health care system to allow individuals to die at home or in other settings outside of the hospital given the high costs associated with critical care, there is still a discrepancy between medical recommendations and the Imams' understandings. One Muslim physician who teaches at a medical school in D.C. (after years of practicing) explained that some families are unable to care for their dying loved ones. He stated, "When my mother-in-law got severely ill, my wife stopped working. And stayed home to take care of

her in our home. But we may be in a different situation than somebody across the street who may not be earning sufficient funds to do that. So it has to be really individualized." He said that keeping the person home would be "mandatory" (*fard* or *wâjib*) and refers to what the physician described as one of the "classes of action" in Islam (religious rulings): "That's one of those where it is best, if you can to keep the person at home. But if you can't, and the situation is different, then it's ok for you to [send them to live in a nursing home or other care facility]." Another option for home health or hospice must be brought in to provide the proper medical care and to make sure the person is comfortable through appropriate pain management. But the Imams looked down upon someone else taking care of a dying loved one stating that they are not upholding their familial duties in the eyes of God if they allow someone else to offer care in their place.

Conclusion

I will end with a brief discussion about my own collaborations with medical providers. Through my collaborations, I have tried to make anthropology more central to discussions about culturally competent health care. And while I have attempted to "anthropologize" the medical settings where I conduct or have conducted ethnographic research, I have sometimes failed.

In the examples I just provided from my own research, we can see contradictions exist between how individuals come to understand Islamic principles surrounding pain and death. Islam is not homogenous or monolithic. Assuming that there is coherent Islamic theology is not a productive starting point given that there are diverse interpretations of sacred texts and doctrines—and this has become evident in my own work among Muslim communities in the D.C. area. This is where I see anthropology being a major contributor to discussions of

culturally competent health care. Its focus on human society and ethnographic research, uncovering what is not always obvious or blatant, allows us to see the richness and diversity of culture. Part of my larger goal for this research is to dispel this notion among health care professionals and organizations by providing evidence that people turn theological points into practices in a multitude of ways—they may come in believing one thing and then do something else because it is also seen as being in line with Islamic teachings, as I pointed out in the example of a wife removing her husband from the ventilator and letting him die during Ramadan. In addition, like Kleinman and Benson, I contend that the definition of cultural competency is too narrow in the United States. I think this is where the shift from cultural competency to structural competency is useful, looking beyond the individual but at the policies, discourses, and forces circulating above—such as Islamophobia and xenophobia, for example.

I do not disagree that faith plays a role in health care decisions during serious illness and the end-of-life, but I also want to caution that over-emphasizing the role that Islam plays in my participants' approaches to death at times actually misses their health and social needs and concerns. I also want to note that anthropology can help health not frame populations and communities in terms of being "exceptional"—a term I borrow from Peter Mandaville, former Senior Advisor in the Secretary of State's Office of Religion and Global Affairs at the State Department—and thus requiring additional or different types of services based on assumptions about their religion.[3]

Through my work, I have thought considerably about how we can promote a broader meaning of culturally competent

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[3] This comes out of Dr. Mandaville's talk "The Ambivalence of Islam in U.S. Foreign Policy" given on March 7, 2017 as part of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies Lecture Series at George Mason University.

health care in the United States, and in the closing of this paper, want to talk briefly about some of the ways I have tried to bring anthropology into the medical settings where I conducted research. I have engaged health care providers in conversations about my work and the concept of culture and have had the chance to share some of my preliminary findings from this project with them. I highlighted the many contradictions that I discovered through interviews and observations regarding Islamic beliefs about death, which shed light on the fact that the definitions of religion and culture must be flexible. I experienced several—sometimes difficult and frustrating—conversations with physicians and health care administration about the use of ethnography in health research and have become pretty good at justifying its value alongside clinical trials, statistical analyses, and biomedical research. One physician who is involved in several clinical trials was insistent that we isolate the variable and he spoke in terms of experiments and causality. I tried to explain that correlation is more appropriate with people because it is not always the case that A causes B, but rather A correlates with Z with the entire alphabet in the middle, which represents various cultural and social forces that impact relationships. I hope that my research will contribute to both scholarly and public discussions about palliative care the end-of-life so that those who are dying can receive the high-quality care they deserve and they desire—care that takes into account the whole person and not just the biological.

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The English Language: Unbearable Linguistic
Homogeneity and Its Responsibility

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The methods by which educators teach writing, assess writing,
and provide feedback to non-native speakers of English must
be as diverse as the classrooms themselves. In order to combat
the assumption of "linguistic homogeneity"—a term borrowed
from scholar P.K. Matsuda—an uncomfortable but necessary
shift must occur in university composition classrooms.
Matsuda defines this homogeneity as "the tacit and widespread
acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as
native speakers of a privileged variety of English" (638). While
strategically boasting diversity and multiculturalism, American
universities struggle to supply adequate linguistic support for
the student whose first language is not of this "privileged
variety of English." In order to appropriately accommodate

writing instruction for an ethnically and linguistically diverse audience, instructors must create an inclusive environment where English as second language (ESL) students are encouraged to use cross-cultural voices in their writing and receive affirmation in their global identities. It is problematic for universities to market "diversity" while emphasizing a homogenous writing curriculum. These falsely-dubbed student ambassadors of diversity become stigmatized in their writing as ESL, an often silent equivalent to "lower expectations" as they struggle to adapt to a curriculum geared towards a population that is not them. Educators working within higher institutions can adapt pedagogical frameworks to mediate the tension between a student's authentic voice and identity and the sometimes-inadequate vehicle of English composition writing. By mediating this unbearable tension, it could be possible to see higher retention in university matriculation of ESL students. A bidirectional demand for language performance between student and teacher may make the composition process a bit less painful and a bit more authentic for students. If international and/or ESL students were permitted to find these voices within those beginning composition classes, their American university experience can reflect a greater sense of identity rather than one of Americanized reiteration, particularly during a political climate in which those identities are often not valued.

Whether consciously or not, monolingual teachers of English have the potential to harbor reductive expectations of their multilingual students. In his article "Toward a Writing Pedagogy of Shuttling between Language: Learning from Multilingual Writers," Suresh Canagarajah acknowledges and criticizes the "monolinguist assumptions that conceive literacy as a unidirectional acquisition of competence" (589). He differentiates between the "Inference Model" of bilingual composition writing, the idea that second language (L2) writing can be examined through the systems of the student's

first language (L1), and the "Correlationist Model" of bilingual composition writing, the idea that L1 and L2 will merge together to form a nonsensical, mistaken hybrid of the two. He proposes instead the "Negotiation Model," a framework that encompasses the idea that multilingual writers intentionally integrate their languages, and that their writings utilize a form of cultural awareness, rather than the perceived simple linguistic mistakes. He says that "multilingual writers move *between* texts" (590). He continues,

> The [Negotiation Model] is different from the first two in many respects: rather than studying multilingual writing as static, locating the writer within a language, we would study the movement of the writer between languages; rather than studying the *product* for descriptions of writing competence, we would study the *process* of composing in multiple languages; . . . rather than treating writers as passive, conditioned by their language and culture, we would treat them as agentive, shuttling creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives. (591)

This moving between texts, this moving between voices, this allowance of flexibility and grayness in the L1/L2 trajectory is reminiscent of the intertexual dialogue conducted on the page by poststructuralist literary theorists and critical literacy educators alike. It was Jacques Derrida who called into the literary arena the idea of "undecidability" within a text: should the praised "undecidability" within Deconstructionist readings be applied to the writing endeavors of those ESL students, then perhaps their writing may represent less of a linguistic cluster and instead more of a nuanced cultural production (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis 104). Barbara Johnson discusses how the literary community praises the perpetual ambiguity of Plato's use of "pharmakon," in his *Phaedrus*—the word meaning both "remedy" and "poison" and being used to describe the act of

writing—but this praise in ambiguity for the cross-lingual student-writer in the "diverse" college composition classroom does not necessarily exist (Johnson 373). Derrida's idea of deconstructive interplay asks readers to identify and explore the language binaries apparent in literature; it seeks to invert, to question, and to problematize the hierarchies that are inherent in language. This approach, though, can be used when teaching linguistically-disenfranchised student populations, as a method of uplifting them and their identities. Deconstructive *writing* might also aim to invert that implicit hierarchy of English over all other languages. Mikhail Bakhtin also recognized the inherent multiplicity of voices apparent in any author in his extensive discussions of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 263). For the ESL international college student, it seems as though the glamour of poststructuralist studies undergoes an erasure, its theories only examined when convenient but surely not applied to the linguistically "inferior" student in the classroom.

To accommodate multilingual approaches in composition teaching, scholars are suggesting some solutions. Recent research has taken up the topic of "translanguaging" in order to amend what P.K. Matsuda calls "the relative lack of attention to multilingualism in composition scholarship" (637). Translanguaging, similar to Canagarajah's "Negotiation Model" opens space in the classroom for students' L1s and L2s, in order to fully capitalize upon the semantic inner-workings of their cognition. Translanguaging rests on the assumption that the student's L1 and L2 are not individually housed in separate spaces of his or her mind, but function as a coexisting repertoire. Editor Catherine Mazak writes in her introductory article to *Translanguaging in Higher Education: Beyond Monolingual Ideologies*, titled "Theorizing Translanguaging Practices in Higher Education," that an example of translanguaging may be reading a text in one language and responding—or writing—in another. She goes on

to offer definitions of this new term in higher-education composition scholarship: it "is a language ideology that takes bilingualism as the norm. . . . [and] a *pedagogical stance that teachers and students take on that allows them to draw on all of their linguistic and semiotic resources*" (5; emphasis added). Conceiving exactly how this differentiation appears in the composition classroom where two or three out of twenty-five students exhibit ESL needs is a difficult and complicated process. Students may be encouraged to seek scholarship and sources in another language. Educators may also turn to select high-school classrooms that are adapting these practices. In her dissertation titled *"Resisting from Within": (Re)Imagining a Critical Translingual English Classroom*, author Kate Seltzer discusses how a translingual approach, based in a Bakhtinian approach to dialogue, might function in a classroom. Seltzer provides an exemplar curriculum co-developed with an inner-city high school English teacher in New York City who works with high populations of ESL Hispanic students (Seltzer 213). Much of her curriculum focuses on examining, with students, the ideologies behind languages and how language practices become a product of the social environment surrounding one. Such discussions on language are surely relevant for any composition classroom, with or without ESL students. For example, Seltzer presents students with discussion materials to discuss why students were not asked to italicize words from their first-language when writing essays in English (Seltzer 213, 221, 238). These are choices, not mistakes. A homogenized composition classroom neglects the notion of choice in the ESL student-writer.

 Translanguaging is not a call for throwing all writing norms and grammatical rules out of the classroom. It is not an attempt for a lackadaisical writing approach in which writers ignore mechanics. In their publication *Theory for Education*, editors Greg Dimitriadis and George Kamberelis defend Derrida's ideas of deconstructionism, explaining that his approach "was

not, as critics allege, out of nihilistic contempt for all things Western or a fascination with groundless intellectual free play. Instead, it was an effort to destabilize assumptions enough to open up spaces for continued reflection and the possibility of innovation and creative thinking" (102). An allowance for two languages in a composition classroom may function the same way. Mazak claims that translanguaging in the higher-education classroom "changes the world as it continually invents and reinvents languaging practices in a perpetual process of meaning-making. . . . [This] transforms not only our traditional notions of 'languages,' but also the lives of bilinguals themselves as they remake the world through language" (6). The connection between translanguaging and deconstruction is explicit: by allowing for a multilingual space in the classroom, students may invert the English hierarchy, or may discover the space to explore whether a hierarchy even inherently exists.

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* is an example of multilingual choices for the purpose of voice, aesthetic, and theme. Her blend of creative nonfiction, poetry, and research writing has interjections of Spanish language in a mostly English text, demonstrating the mind's fluidity of one who lives on the borderlands of any identity. For ESL students, the linguistic borderland of their L1 and their English writing in composition classes is worth exploring. This in-between is referred to by Anzaldúa as "mestiza consciousness," often placed in the arena of queer theory, cultural theory, and/or feminist theory: "It appears that many who adopt Anzaldúa's framework . . . view all border dwellers as resistant to 'the dichotomies of patriarchal/colonial modernity'" (Naples 507). The critical composition educator must examine to what extent compositional writing allows for a system of difference, and to what extent it demands a "colonial modernity." It is true that students want to learn English. And it is true that students need to learn English if

they will succeed in the American college experience. But educators must allow native interjections, as Anzaldúa does, when she writes, "The US-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* [an open wound]" (3). The value and effect of bilingual nonfiction writing here is unequivocal. It is possible that educators compromise student identities in the demand for the composition essay that fits university-wide curriculum for standard-Englishized, Americanized students.

Ideas of deconstructionist composition teaching is not new. In his 1983 article, "Post Structuralism and Composition," Ross Winterowd asks which is better of the following two:

> [The] key idea … behind the teaching of composition is this: "I know what you're trying to say in this paper, and I can help you say it better." The strict deconstructionist as teacher of composition must say, "I think I know what this paper means to me, and I'll explain that to you." (85)

In this ultimatum, Winterowd suggests that the deconstructionist approach to composition teaching makes the educator obsolete. Winterowd worries that such free play of the composition course will result in a lack of form, a forsakenness of clarity, and a nod to the nonsensical. This is possibly true in the extreme; such anarchy is possible and is not desirable. But he does go on to acknowledge that there is something to be valued in the post-structuralist teaching approach: "exploratory writing will gain stature, and that, of course, is a mixed blessing. Students need to use writing to work ideas and attitudes out, writing that is inconclusive, open-ended . . . " (90). This inconclusiveness is necessary within any research work by freshmen and sophomore writers. To truly adapt the curriculum to reflect the exploratory nature of research itself would require an allowance for exploratory, deconstructionist, translingual writing itself.

Critical educators often discuss the importance of writers being active agents in their learning. This requires an

examination into how students are making conscious choices in communication rather than merely failing to meet university-wide expectations. When adapting Canagarajah's Negotiation Model, educators must prevent themselves—to some variation—from the immediate assumption of English writing errors and explore the ESL student's intention. Canagarajah proposes that the changes made by ESL students in their writing could very well be "not an act of omission or failure" but serves as "an act of choice . . . ; a conscious strategy for specific rhetorical reason" (597). Ultimately, when teaching writing to ESL students, educators must consider the student's active decisions in their writing and how these decisions might be influenced by cultural norms rather than an error from misunderstanding. For example, the inclusion of a religious convocation within an academic paper or the placement of a thesis at the end of an essay rather than the beginning may very well be shunned in Western writing, but may also very well be a cultural norm in the student's L1 country. Refusal to acknowledge such is a failure on behalf of the educator and the greater university devotion to multiculturalism and inclusion.

The drive for linguistic pluralism and multilingual writing classrooms remains paramount in current events, especially given the recently decreased federal support of immigrant students and their families. P.K. Matsuda, in his article, "The Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity in U.S. College Composition," attacks American universities for failing to create inclusive, multi-language composition classes that adequately teach writing to non-native speakers of English, boldly claiming that "the vast majority of U.S. college composition programs remain unprepared for second-language writers" (637). He advocates for composition educators themselves to embark on their own second-language learning: such an idea is not far-fetched, considering these educators themselves work within higher institution settings. While international student populations increase, the presence of

multilingual educators must also increase. Matsuda claims that a willful oversight of linguistic diversity in composition classes is a product of a conveniently generalized student population (638). He suggests that the inception of composition courses themselves were the opportunity to institutionalize and homogenize the otherwise inconveniently linguistically different college student. Matsuda continues, "Another common strategy, especially when the number of students from unprivileged language backgrounds is relatively small, is to ignore language issues, attributing any difficulties to individual students' inadequate academic preparation" (641). While such a theory may be egregious to progressive and liberal composition educators today, such an observation does not deserve willful oversight. In order to begin mediating sociohistorical efforts of homogenization, educators must actively work to include language practices outside of the university norm.

The poor preparation of the average incoming college student is no longer call for surprise or call for misplaced blame: the critical educator will already have acknowledged the urgent demand for those freshmen composition college students, many arriving out of complacent education systems, to be in dire need of an educational overhaul in the new-found freedoms of the university. Paulo Freire, in *The Politics of Education*, specifies the blight of public education particularly on marginalized student populations, such as those with differing linguistic needs: that such a student has been conditioned to become one "who renounces critical thinking, who adjusts to models, [who] should do nothing other than receive contents that are impregnated with the ideological character vital to the interests of the sacred order" (117). While there is significant work to undo what Matsuda calls "linguistic containment" in American universities, educators can individually make steps to "reimagine the composition classroom as the multilingual space that it is" (649). Consider

the works of Gloria Anzaldúa: her nonfiction essays, her poetry, and her literary theory reflect her Chicana culture in its use of multiple languages in a single piece of literature.

In lieu of university advertisements showcasing multiculturalism, diversity, and tolerance, the institution must implement the pedagogy to reflect it. And frankly, a writing curriculum that demands a genericized, ideal English-speaking student is an unjust disconnect from its summons for inclusion. If the English language continues its increasing domain within the international community, surely accommodation can be made for some liminal spaces between English and other languages. By truly applying poststructuralist approaches to pedagogy and framing composition writing as a space to subvert hierarchies and discuss the political implications of language homogeneity, then composition classrooms in beginning college courses can change the trajectory for many ESL students entering those campuses. This shift in trajectory may very well also work towards changing not only a homogenized writing practice, but other higher-stakes strata where more homogeneity persists. The stereotypically unbearable writing course has within it the potential to become the exploratory, multilingual, and diverse space that educators intend it to be.

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The Unbearable Freud: Teaching
Psychoanalysis/Literature

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In the chapter on psychoanalysis from his influential book
Literary Theory: An Introduction, Terry Eagleton observes that
one ironic effect of transference in analysis is that the patient
falls ill again, as it were, and therefore is never precisely cured
of his or her original ailment.[1] Having co-taught a semester-
long undergraduate class on psychoanalysis, literature, and
culture on three occasions,[2] I can say with similar irony that no
one emerges from such an undertaking unscathed. In first
drafting this essay for a conference on "The Unbearable

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[1] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: U of
Minnesota P, 1983) 160.
[2] On all three occasions my co-teacher was my friend and colleague
Suzanne Raitt, whose influence is ubiquitous here.

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Humanities," I was led to revisit the experience of teaching psychoanalysis in these courses and many others as an ongoing, salutary exercise in professional discontent. In hindsight, the psychoanalysis courses in particular produced a psychologically fraught classroom, which went hand-in-hand with a blurring of conceptual boundaries between criticism and its objects, Theory and Literature. More broadly, these slippages served to muddy basic disciplinary questions of truth, knowledge, and the imprimatur of Science. The results were at least uncomfortable, if not exactly unbearable.

This essay has a thesis, though in keeping with the subject matter, one might say that it has an unconscious as well. I want to wind up with Freud's eternally weird essay "The Uncanny" (1919) and to argue that perhaps the best way to teach Freud today is *as* literature, with his standing in psychology departments oscillating between embarrassing footnote and outright pariah. The unconscious of this suspiciously neat assertion is the instability of "the students" themselves—their unpredictable attachments and resistances—to which I owe my expanding sense of Freud as a symptomatic instance, a limit-case that has helped to crystallize some of my personal ambivalence about the Humanities. The odd conjuncture of psychoanalysis with literature dramatizes the perplexing deconstructions and inversions that can occur as Theory, capital T, meets "primary" texts in the classroom.

My use of scare quotes in the last sentence occasions a preliminary note on method. Significantly, I have found that one of the easiest ways to frame the matter of literariness and psychoanalysis for students is via the veritable para-literature of quasi-scientific, quasi-poetic psychoanalytic jargon—and the rather liberating incitement to devise (and *desire*) a terminology of one's own, in the spirit of Roland Barthes and the great phenomenologists. In the classroom I often find it useful to restate the obvious: the old vocation of *le mot juste* still constitutes a shared goal—and a shared ground—for both

Criticism and Literature. Psychoanalysis throws the generalized purgatory (or orgy) of linguistic indeterminacy into sharp relief; in this spirit, when above I describe "The Uncanny" as a weird essay, I intend the adjective *weird* both colloquially and technically. After all, it was Freud himself who gave us the willfully off-kilter phrase "wild psychoanalysis" (German paper title: "*Uber 'wilde' Psychoanalyse*"), in addition, of course, to the ineffable colloquial/technical terminology of "das Ich" and "das Es" (literally "the I" and "the it"), and the gratuitous but now-canonic Latinate incarnations devised by his translators: the infamous Ego and Id.

Revealing this to students is a sort of professorial trick, a pedagogical point scored early in the semester, but as the term wears on I sometimes feel undermined by a sub-textual doppelganger, a shadow Freud haunting the classroom. I frequently find the first Freud alarmingly straightforward to teach, thanks in large part to Shoshana Felman's magisterial 1977 essay "Turning the Screw of Interpretation."[3] Teaching psychoanalysis/literature in keeping with this highly influential work, I try repetitively to entwine problems of textuality with questions of sexuality and Desire. Following Felman, I try to argue the following, in no particular order: sexuality is the mortal enemy of the Literal; sexuality is not a happy, organic extension of the daylight ego but a persistent "shattering" of it, to use Leo Bersani's term[4]; to read is to enter an intercourse with a text; the great Freudian dualisms of fore-pleasure and end-pleasure, Eros and Thanatos, are transcoded in Literature, and with particular intensity, in *narrative*; and every text is in some way an allegory of the failure or inauthentic foreclosure

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[3] Shoshana Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation," *Literature and Psychoanalysis—The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982) 94-207.

[4] See Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 38-39.

of its desiring project. Thus—and this is a punch-line implicit in Felman—the truest "psychoanalytic reading" is not genital symbol-hunting, but (perhaps unsurprisingly) the sort of literary deconstruction one finds in Barthes and Derrida, readings that celebrate textual plurality, the Polysemous and Polymorphous. And, rather neatly, the idea of polymorphousness steers the class toward/back to the sexual questions that constitute both the fount and telos of the psychoanalytic narrative enshrined in the syllabus.

From this rather chaste pedagogical project thankfully emerges a second Freud, which I can introduce briskly via a favorite passage from *Totem and Taboo*, in which Freud outlines the anthropological development of the "primal horde," as he calls it:

> One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually. (Some cultural advance, perhaps, command over some new weapon, had given them a sense of superior strength.) Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed,

> which was the beginning of so many things—of social
> organization, of moral restrictions and of religion.[5]

To what scientific methodology does this passage belong? This innocent-sounding question gently steers students toward thinking of Freud-as-literature. The passage, I suggest, forms an irreducible "brick" (my terminology) of condensed exposition, a gripping mini-yarn that shoehorns a speculative anthropological narrative of *social* development into the conceptual space of *individual* development and the Oedipus complex. Moreover, the Brick does all this theoretical work via an essentially *literary* narratology, in which claims of scientific truth are modified—in ways that often feel beneficial and liberating—by aesthetic criteria such as economy, expressive precision, and even suspense. The parenthetical remark about "new weapons" casts a sidelong glance at Europe on the edge of the Great War (the collection *Totem and Taboo* was first published in 1913), and, to stretch the point, the denouement of this breathless paragraph points to the pathos of soon-to-be-published literary parties in Joyce's *The Dead* (1914) and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). The cloud of the Father and civilizational guilt that hangs over the local celebrations of human beings—a key theme, surely, that one also finds in disparate popular texts such as Renoir's *Rules of the Game* (1939)*,* or much more distantly Peter Weir's film *Witness* (1985).

This last example is not randomly chosen; in the strange classroom dance I am describing, the literature/theory problem leads back to pedagogy, and—in thematic connection with collectivity and celebration—to another aesthetic medium, and one of a teacher's best friends: the shrewdly selected film clip. In Weir's film *Witness*, betrayed and wounded Philly cop Harrison Ford, in hiding among the Amish, shares moments of

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[5] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey et al., *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York and London: Norton, 1989) 500-501.

manly camaraderie and lemonade-drinking (with the dancer/actor Alexander Gudonov, no less) during a beautifully rendered communal barn-raising. Here the expiation of the film's horrifying original sin, a grisly urban murder in a public bathroom, is accomplished by breathtaking ideological regression: the unabashed utopianism around pre-modern Amish life, in which the men "erect" a kind of barn/cathedral, as the women prepare a voluptuous feast that seems to flow from an imaginary horn of plenty. Tellingly—and this is the key point I want to raise here—the students generally pounce on the film clip with particular analytic vigor, leaving the impression that they may take more from the weird Freud of *Totem and Taboo* than from brutal High Theory texts such as *The Ego and the Id*. In trying to teach passages such as the one from *Totem and Taboo*, I find that I need the idiom of aesthetics more than I need psychoanalytic theory. Arguing polemically, I might say that one of Freud's neglected achievements is his skill as a crafter of theoretical *vignettes* (borrowed/invented terminology seems required here) rendered in discursive Bricks that fuse the imperatives of philosophic and literary persuasion.

So to return, via the classroom, to the general theme: considering the various Freuds in play here—scientist, analyst, litterateur, patriarch, eccentric, Victorian, modern—does Freudianism in whatever guise have anything to offer the beleaguered, "unbearable" humanities today? My home institution is by reputation slow to warm to academic trends; accordingly, we approached across-the-board curricular change a few years ago with the zeal of the converted, installing in one fell swoop a mélange of interdisciplinary rubrics and New Age-y utopian pedagogy as replacement for an old-fashioned, content-heavy inventory grouped under distribution requirements. The result has been nearly the David Lodge novel that real-life academia sometimes seems desperate to

become, anticipating right-wing caricature so assiduously as to render actual criticism almost superfluous.

Whatever one's curricular philosophy, an advantage of riding the wave is feeling authorized, even encouraged, to press the implications of the new environment, a college experience increasingly attuned to the consumerist needs and preferences of students, and steeped in the emergent corporatism of the contemporary Academy. The playful gallery of Freuds now arrayed for contemporary delectation—enabling the composition of a kind of Exquisite Corpse, an elegy for Freudian modernity—accords in interesting ways with the current climate. In teaching modernism, I increasingly foreground the problem of theory/literature via (distinctly middle-aged) enthusiasm for the Signifier, for the sexy things that the students (in Lacanian terms) are "supposed to know" about contemporary culture, and for the provocative, popularizing things I try to make for them from literatures of the past.

Which brings me to "The Uncanny"—perhaps the coolest thing that Freud ever wrote, if one were leaving a comment on Amazon. Here Freud himself juxtaposes the vulgar and sophisticated kinds of psychoanalytic reading that Felman finds decades later in varied critical responses to Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. At first glance, Freud's essay is attractively packaged, anchored in a repeated bullet-point— taken from Friedrich Schelling—that the uncanny is that which should have remained hidden, but which has nonetheless come to light.[6] Fleshing out this notion, in the ostensible center of the essay, Freud glibly provides a sort of A-minus undergraduate reading of the E.T.A. Hoffmann story "The Sand-Man," which the essay effectively treats as its main source of "evidence," whatever this loaded term is taken to mean.

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[6] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," trans. David McLintock, *The Uncanny*, ed. Adam Phillips (New York and London: Penguin, 2003) 132, 148.

Freud's breakneck interpretation is an instructive tour de force—modelling for students the not-unimportant skill of summarizing a text while blithely half-analyzing it—and it is moreover an energetically vulgar bit of bad Freudian literalism, replete with Father-complexes and castration symbolisms. Crucially, however, this skillful but unsatisfying reading is half-apologetically consigned to a breathless *footnote*, and its almost comical compactness is (inversely) magnified by a footnote's conventionally smaller font size.[7]

But "The Uncanny" has one more turn in store. The presumptive core of the essay—the explication of the Hoffmann story—is further upstaged and displaced by the remarkable etymological adventure-story of the adjectives *heimlich* and *unheimlich* in the opening pages. One imagines that this is something from Derrida, by way of Borges or Calvino, but fused with the breathless popular readability of a writer like Jack London (a rough contemporary of Freud's). Here, Freud reaches a mildly tortuous, deadpan conclusion: "this word *heimlich* is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which are not mutually contradictory, but very different from each other—the one relating to what is familiar and comfortable, the other to what is concealed and kept hidden."[8] And a consequent bit of weirdness: in sense 2, *heimlich* has more or less become its opposite, *unheimlich*, and thus it is only in relation to sense 1 that the actual word *unheimlich* is ever conventionally used.

If I had only one class left I might focus on this last bit of business, a dime-store version of Freud/literature in the best, strongest sense of what "dime store" can mean. What sort of insecure antonym (*unheimlich*) only appears in relation to an easy target, a chastely literal first term? At the same time, what about the innocent term's evil twin, the other *heimlich*, a word

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[7] As my psychoanalysis co-teacher Suzanne Raitt likes to remind students: with Freud you can often skip everything except the footnotes.

[8] "The Uncanny" 132.

for "familiar" whose secret sense turns out to mean, literally, "secret"? From this astonishing prequel to "The Uncanny," one begins to discern several Freuds, chatting amiably. To students of this most unfashionable of dead white men, from the swamps of Theory, unexpectedly emerges a meticulous piece of literary minimalism, a modern or proto-postmodern meta-story by Freud, written circa 1920…also a heyday of pulp fiction, as it happens.

In class, I'm tempted to call all this Cool and leave it at that. But students, in their infinite savviness, can be stern critics of glibness and jaded enough to perceive existential Bad Faith as a kind of universal predicament. In this spirit, I have to admit that part of the pleasure of writing this paper has come from feeling authorized to speak of Students in repeated, unsystematic ways; the unconscious of this document is partly revenge against them, disguised as tribute. But perhaps this is itself a red herring, as the capitalized Students are really a rhetorical figure, a metonym for particular institutional work— the peculiar career/job of an English professor, softened, but also mystified, by the disciplinary cloak of the Humanities.

In this sense it is unsurprising that the invocation of students can feel impressionistic or downright lazy in formal scholarly discourse. Like driver's license photos and tax brackets, students are something we all *have*, which makes it seem particularly gauche to bring them up. But what is at stake in this repression? Surely students are an all-too-literal—I'm tempted to say vulgar—reminder of one of the most unbearable things about the humanities: the fact that for most of us, they constitute a *job*. Speaking as a worker, then, a performer: in the shared theatre of the classroom, I sometimes perceive a kind of generalized discontent, a simultaneous disappointment with both Theory and Literature that is especially pronounced in relation to Freud. An illustration: a few years ago, a number of students who had (after all) enrolled in a course called Psychoanalysis and Literature wound up complaining of too

much psychoanalysis. In contrast to the breezy, "that's obvious" acceptance with which students now seem to greet many of the Classics (as it were) of 60s-70s Marxism, feminism, etc., one gets the impression that it is Freud himself whose repression remains strangely urgent.

Despite the formidable difficulties of much subsequent psychoanalytic discourse, including the work of Lacan and his commentators, I have found that it is Freud's work that remains intriguingly *unsatisfying* for students. As a figure, Freud is problematic in elemental, polarizing ways bound to incite undergraduate mistrust. Consider these contradictions: Freud as uber-bourgeois and crypto-revolutionary, sexual liberal and habitual misogynist, therapist & addict, rationalist and visionary, ardently professional man-of-science and equally ardent amateur. As the inseminator of psychoanalysis—the occasional double entendre is inevitable—it is Freud who most spectacularly fails to live up (or down) to the Logos so insistently ascribed to him, who spectacularly fails to fit the bill. And I think that some of the "unbearable" quality of Freud and indeed of much Theory—capital T—as disseminated in college classrooms, is its failure to live either up or down to the clichés that surround it. And in literature classrooms, the *mediocrity* of Theory—"mediocrity" being an interestingly loaded word—can tend to erode the object Literature, degrading literary texts to the status of examples-of-themselves. As Roland Barthes famously observed in *S/Z*: from a certain theoretical perspective, a single text can be valid for all the texts of literature[9]; analogously, from a certain undergraduate perspective, a sprinkling of Freud and various theoretical –isms can be taken as valid for all of Theory.

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[9] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002) 12.

So, a conclusion (though this may sound more like a figural chain in dream-interpretation): for me, the discontented nexus of Freud/literature/classroom is a specially charged instance of the general malaise of Theory/Literature, which in turn signifies the problem of the Humanities as socially useful knowledge, colored in my case by disciplinary envy/resentment/skepticism concerning the various Sciences and their claims to truth. In this context, I would argue that Freudian literature—in its bones, from the basic terminological confusions of the colloquial and the technical—pointedly raises key questions that continue to haunt the imagination of the Humanities. What counts as knowledge? What is the relationship between "science," broadly considered, and other forms of discourse? With surprising contemporary relevance, psychoanalytic literature dramatizes the interweaving of the Theoretical and the Rhetorical, the scientific and the literary.

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