

THE LIGHTHOUSE

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Shelby Borlin

The Reflections of Vampire Media on Societal Views of Sexuality

Whether to reaffirm the status quo or grant permission to ideals of change, stories have long expressed societal fears. The same is true in literary depictions of vampires. From their first written appearance in the English language, vampire stories have captured anxieties surrounding sexuality. In particular, the queer themes and subtext in many of these early texts expose the cultural fear about the unknowns of sexuality. However, as the vampire genre has continued to shift, readers gain more insight into the vampires' characters, allowing an increase in empathy. As conventions of the genre change, portrayals of sexuality and queerness become less harsh and suffocating as those behaviors once considered unsettling and immoral achieve greater societal acceptance. From John Polidori's 1819 "The Vampyre" to the 2019 TV series *What We Do in the Shadows*, vampire stories have evolved from the underlying queer subtext unveiling anxieties about sexual desire and same-sex relationships to the direct representation and normalization of queer vampires. These trends reveal the patterns of cultural beliefs as they have developed into progressively more positive portrayals and interpretations of queerness and sexuality.

Themes of sexuality are introduced in one of the earliest published works of vampire fiction written in English. "The Vampyre," written in 1819 by John Polidori, develops a seductive vampire, Lord Ruthven, who transfixes the main character, Aubrey. These seductive themes create sexual undertones that comment on sexuality and its perceived "normal" and "deviant" forms that would influence the themes of later vampire stories (Ryan 1). Although it does not explicitly comment on same-sex relationships, Ruthven's connection to Lord Byron lends some weight to this interpretation. According to Ken Gelder's *Reading the Vampire*, Polidori named Ruthven after a villain in Caroline Lamb's novel that even Byron recognized himself in and "considered libellous" (31). Since Byron himself faced scandals around this time regarding his alleged sexual encounters with young men, Mair Rigby in the article "'Prey to some cureless disquiet': Polidori's Queer Vampyre at the Margins of Romanticism" suggests that the implication of queerness is visible in the story's framework. Rigby also reads a queer interpretation in "figures who 'pass,' masquerading as normal men, and 'playing to an audience' with the intention to 'mislead'" linking it to understandings of homosexuality in a heterosexual world. They also argue that Aubrey's forced silence reflects the idea of "the closet" (Rigby).

Although an interesting and reasonable queer interpretation of the text, I think this reading does perhaps tend to overinterpret the source material. At this point in history, most societal fears about sexuality were focused on any expression of sexual desire, rather than specific forms of sexuality seen as “deviant.” Therefore, while homosexual behavior was still considered “abnormal” and often criminalized, it was the behavior and not an identity or attraction that drove this belief. When Ruthven preys on Aubrey’s sister, this seems to play into societal fears surrounding expressions of sexuality. Aubrey’s oath not to reveal his “knowledge of [Ruthven’s] crimes for death to any living being in any way” (Polidori 17) seems to supernaturally prevent Aubrey from stopping Ruthven as he courts Miss Aubrey. This draws on the idea that fear of the unknown and fear of losing control frequently drive anxieties about sexuality, anxieties that seem justified because Aubrey and Miss Aubrey are both dead by the end of the story (24). While queer themes can be extrapolated in the story, it is the implication that Ruthven will continue to prey on helpless young women that accentuates societal concerns about sexuality and establishes the recurrent motif of sexuality in the vampiric stories that followed. This opens the door for clearer portrayals and commentaries on queerness in vampire literature and film.

The homoerotic, sapphic companionship between the titular vampire Carmilla and the narrator Laura in J. Sheridan Le Fanu’s 1872 novella *Carmilla* is one such example of this. Laura frequently comments on Carmilla’s beauty, describing her face as “pretty, even beautiful” (Le Fanu 85); however, it is the physical elements of their relationship that best show the sexual and romantic undertones of their relationship. During this period, as Billy Tringali explains in the article, “Not Just Dead, But Gay! Queerness and the Vampire,” same-sex relationships between men were likely to be criminalized and punished, whereas lesbian relationships were made invisible and instead construed as “strong friendships” with no elements of physical relationships (13). However, Carmilla and Laura’s relationship contains both emotional aspects and these oft-ignored physical elements (Tringali 13).

This sensuality is evident even in their first interaction. Laura describes that “She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling” and later notes the feeling of “two needles” cutting “into my breast very deep” (Le Fanu 75). A later instance describes how Carmilla “used to place her pretty arms around my neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear” (89). These scenes clearly suggest attraction or desire between them, if not an established relationship, with Laura even characterizing it as “the ardour of a lover” (90). This plays into the anxiety in Victorian society as it realizes that it “doesn’t know what queerness truly looks like” (Tringali 17). Carmilla

is not immediately recognizable or repulsive based on how she presents herself—as demonstrated through her beauty—an idea that would have been frightening in the Victorian era. Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine Le Fanu's precise opinions on this matter, Tringali believes that "Le Fanu is aware of the queerness within this piece and, in fact, presents it sympathetically, but he does not seek a solution to the fears he's dramatizing" (21). This portrayal shows a greater recognition of same-sex relationships between women and, in some areas, does so through a more positive lens; however, on the whole, *Carmilla* upholds the cultural anxieties by portraying Carmilla as a predatory character and withholding any form of happy ending from these two characters. Despite not yet achieving a positive view of a queer relationship, Le Fanu presents a more nuanced and less exclusively critical view of sexuality and queerness that acknowledges the role of desire between women. Such relationships would not have been accepted at this time and were not accepted in the story. Nonetheless, this suggests a slight shift in views toward a more aware—if not truly tolerant—society.

Fast-forward around one hundred years to the 1976 novel *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice, and this somewhat sympathetic view is expanded by placing a vampire as the novel's protagonist. This allows audiences to empathize with Louis and understand his motivations and insecurities. For instance, Louis's struggle to cling to his humanity and his remorse for killing, which he compares to "the experience of that loss of my own life" (Rice 28), demonstrates his genuine regret and gives readers insight into his emotions. This empathetic perspective makes the queer subtext of the novel appear less critical than in previous stories. Although the queer themes in the novel are not directly confirmed within its text, they are heavily implied, with Louis once even describing Lestat as "that smart, gay vampire" (334). Even in their first meeting, Louis says that Lestat's behavior when Louis was turned made him "think of a lover" (17–8) and that it brought him "sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion" (18). Lines like this heighten the understanding and portrayals of queer themes in the book and make it easy for readers to locate these themes in the relationships of the characters.

These queer themes, because they exist in an alternate version of our reality, can be explored through different lenses depending on the audience's interactions with both normative society and the fictional world of the vampires. In "Queer as Vampires-A Study of Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire* Through Queer Theory," Sonja Osap argues that "One of the reasons vampires are such a rich source for homosexual (sub)text and homoeroticism is that they inhabit a world like ours – but still very different. By having them act like gender is not an issue when it comes to love in their world, it can be accepted in without having to disturb the social structures

of our own world” (22). She explains that in the novel, Louis seems to be heterosexual before becoming a vampire, but after he is turned, “he moves further up the scale” (22). In this context, Osap is referring to Kinsey’s sexuality scale, but her point is that when Louis became a vampire, his sexuality became more fluid as he engaged in relationships with both Lestat and Armand. As she states in the first quote, the alternate world that vampires occupy does not disrupt the heteronormative views of our society. It leaves open the possibility of linking the queerness of the characters to the immorality of vampires. However, this idea seems more applicable to *Carmilla* than to *Interview with the Vampire*. In *Carmilla*, the sympathy relates more to the circumstances that led Carmilla to become a vampire than her vampiric actions, but in *Interview with the Vampire*, this sympathy expands to the characters on an individual level, humanizing them further and lessening the viewpoint that vampires are inherently immoral—and thereby doing the same for views of queerness.

That is not to say that these queer relationships are positive or healthy representations. Most of the conflict in the book arises from Lestat trapping Louis with him through Claudia, using his guilt over killing her to keep him in their dysfunctional and toxic family dynamic (Rice 94-5). When their family falls apart and Louis meets Armand, their relationship seems more promising, but ultimately it is revealed that Armand was the one who killed Claudia, and Louis was aware of this (337-8). Clearly, killing your partner’s pseudo-daughter does not signify a healthy relationship. However, despite not quite achieving *healthy* portrayals of queer relationships, these implied themes still exist and are largely treated as normal. Unlike in *Carmilla*, Rice’s writing does not suggest a causal connection between the queer undertones and the toxicity of these relationships. Overall, while not necessarily *positive* representations, Rice creates greater nuance and complexity, crafting characters that readers—and especially young queer readers—can connect with. This shows a cultural shift toward acceptance and tolerance of LGBTQ+ individuals from the themes seen in older works of vampire fiction.

In 1987, the film *The Lost Boys*—despite maintaining some of the sympathetic tones of previous vampire stories—upholds some criticisms faced by the LGBTQ+ community at the height of the AIDS crisis. The director of this movie, Joel Schumacher, was a gay man himself, which gives the film the feeling that it intended to step outside the critique of queerness that many early vampire movies fell into. However, certain elements and storylines still seem to pathologize queerness and non-procreative sex. The frequent imagery of missing kids shown through posters and the portrayal of the vampires as the “lost boys” can allude to the high number of queer youth that are kicked out or run away from home. It also holds sympathy for the lost boys and Michael. At

one point, Sam tells Michael, “Even though you’re a vampire, you’re still my brother” (*Lost Boys*). Although ultimately undone because Michael is “cured” of his vampirism, this quote does suggest a theme of acceptance. However, those underlying ideas of “curing” and the implication that vampirism is a “phase” undermine the sympathies the movie presents. As Andrew Schopp explains in the article “Cruising the Alternatives: Homoeroticism and the Contemporary Vampire,” Michael seeks to kill David “so that he won’t have to become ‘just like David’” on account of their shared blood (237). Schopp further connects this fear to the AIDS crisis, writing that “Michael clearly fears not only ‘infection,’ but becoming one of the infectors—i.e., queer” (237). This represents queerness as something to be overcome or a phase children will grow out of. Indeed, by the end of the movie, Michael is freed from the influence of the queer-coded group of vampires and free to pursue a heterosexual relationship with Star. Furthermore, Max’s role as the head vampire creates a tricky theme in representing queerness. That Max, as the “pedophile head vampire” (Morey 126), infects the youth with vampirism can be read as a metaphor for indoctrination or “turning kids gay” and recalls the use of “groomer” regarding queer individuals to incite moral panic. Both are examples of commonly used rhetoric against the LGBTQ+ community, and the film does little to dissuade these notions. That said, if viewed through a slightly different lens that accepts Max’s implied straightness, this view may lessen as Max is the story’s true villain; however, this does not fully remove the implications Max’s character portrays. Ultimately, although *The Lost Boys* preserves some of the sympathy granted to vampires in *Interview with the Vampire* and presents more nuanced views of LGBTQ+ identities, it also highlights the fear surrounding the AIDS crisis and the moral panic toward queerness that accompanied it.

This moral panic is largely absent in Octavia Butler’s 2005 novel *Fledgling*. In this novel, queerness—both in same-sex relationships and family structure—is a naturalized part of Ina culture. The Ina are a species that coexist alongside human symbionts, whose families include Ina of one sex and their symbionts—who can be any gender. Besides relationships with their Ina, symbionts can also have relationships with other symbionts in their communities (Butler). In “‘Let Me Bite You Again’: Vampiric Agency in Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling*,” Elizabeth Lundberg explains that “*Fledgling*’s vampires challenge heteronormative family structures by completely naturalizing same-sex familial and sexual relationships and by making those relationships necessary to the survival and perpetuation of the Ina species” (573). Queerness is accepted as the norm in Ina society and is never portrayed as anything akin to monstrous. Certainly, the book questions the complications of consent with how Ina saliva influences the minds of their symbionts, but this arguably monstrous idea is never correlated to LGBTQ+ identity.

In fact, the only time the book presents a somewhat negative view of queerness is when Wright first discovers that Shori will have sex with her other symbionts as well, including the women. He asks Shori, “Swing both ways, do you?” with what Shori notes to be “bitterness in his voice” (85). This question and his tone in saying it can be viewed as homophobic, with his irritation and outdated phrasing of the question; however, it seems likely that Wright’s main issue at this moment is jealousy rather than true disgust or dislike for queerness. Of course, this projection does not excuse the underlying theme of the line, but it is also addressed by Shori within the novel. She replies that she would have sex “with my symbionts if both they and I want it” (Butler 85). In a way, this seems to address a contrast between the continued existence of queerphobia in the human world against the “extent to which same-sex relationships and polyamory are normalized” in Ina society (Lundberg 574). Although Ina society clearly struggles with racism, heterosexism and queerphobia appear absent in their communities. In this way, *Fledgling* suggests a growing acceptance of portraying queer relationships in a positive and normalized light. However, as this normalization only exists within the Ina community, it still distances the world of the book from the real-world culture surrounding it. Readers can still view this as a completely different or even monstrous society, thus linking queerness further to the “other”; but with Shori, an Ina, as the protagonist and a sympathetic—though also nuanced and complicated—view of Ina culture in its entirety, this book is showing a growing shift in acceptance within culture and vampire fiction.

This normalization continues in *What We Do in the Shadows*. Although more prevalent in the television series, some queer elements are also visible in the 2014 film. According to Natalie Wilson in the article “Refusing Life in the Shadows: The Anti-Patriarchal Bite of *What We Do in the Shadows*,” the franchise “engages with norms of gender and sexuality, showing them to be not only ridiculous, but harmful... Revealing the consequences of policing gender and sexuality and ranking them hierarchically, *WWDITS* takes delimiting gender norms, sexism, heteromonogamy, and male dominance to task” (147). In the film, this mostly comes as challenging traditional gender roles and presentations, with all three vampires engaging in what has traditionally been seen as “women’s work” in the house and Jackie calling out misogyny in the vampires as “this big homoerotic dick-biting club” (*What We Do...*). Aside from this, the only point where the film directly alludes to queerness is when Deacon tells Jackie to bring some virgins to the house. When asked about gender preference, he says, “Maybe some ladies... Perhaps a guy... One of each would be cool” (*What We Do...*). These moments all highlight a more permissive view of how gender is presented. Because gender and sexuality are often linked, it is easy to see acceptance of these ideals built into the framework of this film.

However, it is the television series adaptation, first released in 2019, that achieves the normalization of sexuality. In a review of the show's first season, Daniel Reynolds describes that "the team behind *What We Do in the Shadows* committed to taking a viewpoint of the world that was queer-inclusive." An executive producer, Paul Simms, said, "All of our characters are completely pansexual" (Reynolds). Queer attraction is not portrayed as outside the ordinary in the show, with this just being an accepted element of vampire culture. Quotes from Simms, later in the review, characterize the integration of these themes, saying "Vampires are so accepting. They've seen everything... They've just lived so much time that everyone seems [the same]" (Reynolds). This show emphasizes an acceptance of queerness in the everyday that goes beyond what either *Fledgling* or the original film accomplish. While it is true that comedy can push the bounds of society with less risk of backlash, the views of this franchise's creators, "each of whom approach comedy from a progressive, socially-justice minded bent" (Wilson 137), suggest this is an intentional push to further normalize queerness in our society. Although society, of course, has not yet reached a complete acceptance of queerness and sexual diversity, shows like *WWDITS* lend hope to the idea that we are moving closer to achieving that goal.

Vampire stories have commented on sexuality and queerness since the first English vampire tales were written down. Since then, society's views toward queer identities have continued to change, and this shift can be seen in the depictions of vampires created at different points in time. From the anxieties toward queerness and sexual desire hidden in the subtext of Polidori's 1819 "The Vampyre" to the increasing sympathy attached to the vampire as the protagonist of the story in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* and eventually to the normalization and direct representation of queerness in the 2019 show *What We Do in the Shadows*, we can see how cultural beliefs and historical context have influenced the messages in vampire media. Society has yet to reach complete acceptance of queerness, but even as our culture influences these representations, so too can these representations change the way society addresses and views queer discourse. When creators push genre boundaries, they can create new tones and themes that alter what has historically been considered acceptable. Change compounds upon change. As vampire stories continue to evolve, we can hope that this more accepting view of queerness will evolve with it.

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Morgan Ruden

Strangers On a Train: Ego and Id, Seer and Seen

Alfred Hitchcock is a director clearly fascinated by the pliability of the human psyche. His 1951 film *Strangers On a Train* fulfills this by depicting how dangerously easy it is for respectable sportsman Guy Haines to be corrupted by the elusive Bruno Antony, for Ego to be seduced by the violent passions of Id. Between excess vs restraint, darkness vs light, seer vs seen, Hitchcock weaves and marries these diametrically opposed couples to create a suspenseful narrative that resonates with the viewer's own sense of morality. The film's audio and visual components within Hitchcock's expressive noir style intensify these themes into a story that captivates audiences today.

One of the most effective ways in which Hitchcock presents this battle of madness is by using the setting of carnival, which has always been historically associated with the demolishing of social norms, pleasures of the body, and turning the existing hierarchy upside-down (This is also an important characteristic of films such as *Lost Boys* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*). In his essay, "Elements of Carnival as a Mirror of the Protagonists' Insanity in *Strangers on a Train*," Alejandro Nadal-Ruiz writes, "They depict an amusement park where there is free interaction between people from different social classes and where any behavior, even though unacceptable, can be embraced" (Nadal-Ruiz 10). Thus, in Hitchcock's film the Metcalf carnival becomes a safe space for Bruno's obsessive behavior towards Miriam and Guy as well as the focal point of Id and his intense stirrings that in the real world would never be considered acceptable.

This chaos culminates in the final fight scene with Bruno and Guy, who spend several minutes attempting to dominate each other on the whirring carousel. Nadal-Ruiz writes again,

Just as the horse seems to be running wild in the shot, the two characters that are fighting are by no means rational: they are driven by instinct, as if they were animals. Therefore, this aspect of the carnivalistic mise-en-scène defining the amusement park contributes to demonstrating that both Bruno and Guy are insane. (Nadal-Ruiz 8)

This scene is not just two madmen duking it out. Guy is trying to use his egoic

masculinity and reason to extinguish Bruno and all that he stands for, for every day with Bruno is an unsustainable, depraved carnival which holds all madness dear. By killing and restraining passions of murder and obsession, Guy stands triumphant in a world with a hard line between the sacred and the profane. The Id has been controlled and the party is finally over. By creating this perfect stage, Hitchcock is able to symbolically and literally show us the inner workings of the two men and their ultimate objectives regarding how they wish to move about in and be perceived in the world.

The most consistent recurring theme in the film's dialogue and cinematography is the significance of doubles. In this motif alone, *Strangers on a Train* proves to be a masterclass in visual styling and subliminal messages. Mladen Dolar, in her essay, "Hitchcock's Objects," muses on the film's opening sequence,

In the opening shots, we get the symmetrical presentation of two pairs of shoes that we follow from a taxi to a carriage; the shot of rails, parallel and inevitably intersecting in the distance, just as the shoes will inevitably bump into each other, thus linking another pair, Guy and Bruno, fatally bound together...This situation looks remarkable like tennis, and indeed Guy is a professional tennis player. (Dolar 39-40)

Guy and the audience were warned at Bruno's drink order for the pair and his chiming "doubles, that's the only game I play" (and oh, how little we knew how true that was). Even in Hitchcock's cameo, he carries a double bass into the train carriage. The deliberate visual emphasis of how these two men's lives are intertwined with one another is practically handed over on a silver platter from the switching between bright and low lighting and the mirroring of Bruno's extroverted and Guy's timid personalities. The film makes ordinary sequences and references fantastical in how well they coordinate with the plot and the characters who unfortunately live in it.

Throughout the film, Guy tries to keep this *double* life secret from his loved ones as well as the public, which puts him in a series of tense predicaments. The rules of carnival are seeping in with Bruno into the real world so the settings in which he interacts with Guy become increasingly perilous and significant. The secrecy of their relationship is heightened by the noir styling of the film by making their deviant behavior separate from the safety of the "light" domestic side. When Bruno confesses to Miriam's murder, he is literally behind the shadow of bars in the dark alley and has dragged Guy in with him. This dark, elusive obsession with one another is inherently homoerotic. The Id's boundary-breaking passions are already a focal point of the central theme and hiding murder *as well as* obsession takes a toll on Guy's respectable, domestic sensibilities. After all, his greatest fear in the film is being caught associating

with this other man. As Richard Dyer for *Jump Cut* writes,

Settings tend to be in the public world rather than domestic. For the hero, a basic domestic ritual like eating is transferred from family to public eating place...Crucial personal encounters take place not in the home but, say, in a train...In this way the hero is denied an environment of safety, coziness, or rootedness. If such an atmosphere is evoked at all, it serves to sharpen the depiction of the noir world by being under threat from the latter or actually destroyed by it. (Dyer 5-6)

Here, Bruno--being well aware of the scandal he is perpetuating--chastises Guy for making him "come out in the open" to speak to each other. His intrusion into Guy's family world at the tennis club and the party show just how far Bruno is willing to go to get close to his homoerotic playmate. Bruno is willing to step in and out of the light to coerce and intimidate Guy, who can do so little about his reputation at this point (it is also notable that Guy has expressed desire to get into politics. Was Bruno not wrong in his inference of what Guy gets out of dating a Senator's daughter? Would he have joined Bruno in the dark had his future image not been at stake?).

Guy's tumultuous descent into darkness is, although more subtle than Bruno's, immensely transformative. Under the "loving" gaze of his obsessor and later the police, Guy becomes an emasculated damsel in distress; prey rather than predator. His immediate instinct upon hearing Bruno's confession is to repress his feelings over what some would call a miracle and try to ignore them and Bruno altogether. The tension in the film becomes just as internal as it is external as Guy tries and fails to keep everyone he loves in the dark in the hopes that it will all just blow over. With this passivity and pressure, Guy experiences an internal and Id-corrupted role reversal that is embraced in the carnival he is living in. After the disruption at the party, Guy "wifes" Bruno by tying his tie, subliminally leading Bruno on only until the "affection" is shared.

"Guy, I like you-" "WACK!" And the homoerotic Id is cartoonishly punched down once again (with a comic book-esque *onomatopoeia* no less; Hitchcock is expertly using an expressionist tactic to add emphasis). This is the turning point for Guy who now understands that he needs to reclaim the control and manhood that has been stripped away from him. At first, he does so by going along with the murder of Bruno's father, the suspense building as he creeps up the stairs in the mansion. This sequence is vital because it perfectly encapsulates the battle between image and passion in Guy's mind. We the audience are left guessing whether he was going through with it, but one important clue reveals what his heart wanted even when his reason took over.

Let us set the scene: it's late at night and Guy has just broken into Bruno's mansion, the belly of the beast. The high strings in the background are whirring up and down as Guy suspensefully approaches the stairwell. He fiddles with the gun; he fiddles with his mind. At the top of the stairs is a growling Cerberus, guarding the gates of hell. To ease the tension ever so slightly, the dog laps Guy as an old friend because he recognizes deranged hands when he sees them (the same hand that fiddled with the gun). This shows the audience that despite what Guy says to Bruno in the bedroom, he had full intention of murdering the Father. Why else would he bring the gun if he wasn't at least entertaining the idea, if he wasn't a little bit tempted by what waits for him in the bedroom?

The bond between the two deranged men is strongest in the bedroom scene (the Father's bedroom, no less! Oh, the desecration of law and gender roles! The profane spitting upon the Superego!). When Guy leans down to Bruno in the bed, the shadows surrounding the side lamp engross the two obsessive men give them a moment of simultaneous recognition and antagonism. This is the lowest point for Guy—this is where the two have finally entangled their mutually assured madness into one and they see each other for what they truly are: something to dominate and control in their own way.

The Eye is its own character in *Strangers on a Train* and exists within its own duality: the omniscient camera and the subjective gaze of the viewer. In order to understand Guy and Bruno's spiral we must pan out to the broader themes of voyeurism in the film, which has been previously touched on but must now be fully examined. The world is watching Guy. *We* are watching Guy. His entire life is recorded in the papers and his career has collected many fans. So, when this all-American sweetheart starts fraternizing with an obsessive murderer, the consequences of being caught could send shockwaves outside the familial into the social and even the political spheres. Robert J Corber in "Reconstructing Homosexuality: Hitchcock and the Homoerotics of Spectatorial Pleasure" writes about this in regards to the film being made during the Cold War,

The Film's setting in the nation's capital casts the homosexual subplot in a wholly new light...Moreover, Hitchcock's scenarization of the meeting on the train immediately identifies Guy as a potential security risk. Bruno recognizes Guy because he has seen his picture in the society pages of the newspaper. Guy's desire to divorce Miriam and marry Ann is common knowledge, as are his political ambitions. (Corber 71)

Throughout the film, two investigators watch over him intensely as stand-

ins for the wider world. The Ego is presentation and reputation, and Guy must do whatever he can to suppress this homoerotically murderous itch to preserve his sense of self and all the externals that define it. The Eye adds an asphyxiating pressure that forces Guy into his reclamation arc, forces him to repress everything that has been revealed to him through Bruno.

Further, Bruno--the keenest Eye out of all of them--embraces this pressure in every way for he is not just voyeur, he is *hunter*. He is the Angel of Death in his seemingly supernatural stalking of Miriam as his shadow overtakes hers in the Tunnel of Love and Guy's around his family and in the near public. Though he has the power to drive Guy insane, he still has a major weakness. When Bruno is put in a trance while strangling Mrs. Cunningham, it is Barbara's glasses and the hallucination of the lighter that sends him over the edge because for once he is being *looked at*. Miriam, the thing getting in the way between him and the man he desires, has resurrected and is making Bruno the object now. This reverse-objectification is also the saving grace of Guy when Bruno cannot escape the public to plant the lighter and when the carnival employee says that he saw Bruno the night of Miriam's murder. It is here that our villain is truly slain by the Eye he formerly possessed. The predator has become prey; the Id has been locked away.

Guy Haines and Charles Anthony Bruno are two sides of the very same coin. Much like Guy's tennis match, their back-and-forth creates a suspenseful battle of good versus evil and passion versus reason on screen. Their mutual homoerotic insanity is a sight to behold to the watchful Eye of the viewer, for when we watch this classic archetype play out on screen, their depraved dance becomes a projection of our own lives to help us see the significance of dominating our own passions and restraining our inner carnival. As we watch Guy, we must also watch ourselves.

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Madeleine Miller

Human Connection Through Inhuman Beings: George Saunders' Commentary on Community

A part of living is craving connection--this urgency to reach out and hold one another through both the mundane and tumultuous. The necessity for community is a human condition so exhaustively explored in literature. It is almost comical how well executed it is through the vessels of ghosts and ghouls. George Saunders explores this concept of community through the paranormal and ambiguous beings in his debut novel *Lincoln in the Bardo* (2017) and his short story "Ghoul" (2020). In the novel, Saunders' story follows the deceased Willie Lincoln, stuck in the liminal space between life and the beyond. His sudden presence in the "Bardo" disrupts the supernatural residents of Georgetown Cemetery. In the short story, the narrative depicts a society sealed underground in what appears to be a hellish theme park, where beings referred to as "Ghouls" prepare acting roles for anticipated visitors. Initially, these tales seem contrasting; however, upon closer inspection they are two sides of the same coin. Both contain groups of fantastical characters stagnant in repressive worlds where they must rely on one another to keep their delicately constructed life. Saunders illustrates the power and necessity of community by depicting the divergent progressions of these two groups within their dystopian landscapes.

Although aesthetically, the settings of *Lincoln in the Bardo* and "Ghoul" appear vastly different, both backdrops are dystopian societies at their core. Saunders' short story is a glaring representation of a dystopia. Readers are introduced to the Ghouls' community through the protagonist, Brian, a squatting demon that shrinks from flying spears all day in the Maws of Hell workhouse. Although the slightly concerning work environment of Ghouls does not fulfill the requirements of a dystopia by itself, readers quickly uncover evidence that does when Amy, a monitor, confronts Brian. She is torn about alerting the group of Brian's failure to report another for uttering a Regrettable Falsehood: "Brian, to be frank?" she says. "We were kids together. Remember TinyGhosts, remember BabyDracs, remember we were on the Teen Crew that built those first, hilariously inept Torture Racks? I really don't want to blow this whistle and have the group gather and kick you to death" ("Ghoul" 6). The Ghouls live under an oppressive system where saying the wrong things or failing to report those that do can result in a death sentence. Saunders is blatant with the dystopian-like elements of their world. However, it is hard to conceptualize how the metaphysical realm in *Lincoln in the Bardo* can fulfill the prerequisites of a dystopia similar to "Ghoul." The Bardo, by

its nature, is a neutral place. In an in-between, purgatory state, the dead's spirits stay tethered to the Earth, unable or unwilling to move on. The novel's ghosts merely live uneventful existences within the parameters of the cemetery. Nevertheless, there are aspects of the Bardo that would be considered inherently dystopian.

The Bardo's dystopian elements are uncovered by drawing parallels between the functioning of its community and that of the Ghouls'. Each society is constructed around an unspoken rule or law, which compels the residents to act a particular way. In "Ghoul," Law 6 prohibits people from mentioning a dark truth: "We are sealed in, sealed in good down here, by a stout, permanent plug of concrete. Or perhaps a concrete/poly amalgam. How are visitors supposed to get down here? They aren't. They were not, it seems, ever intended to" ("Ghoul" 13). There is no written law in *Lincoln in the Bardo*. Still, all residents refuse to acknowledge that they are dead. Rather, their coffins are their "sick boxes," and everyone in the Bardo is just recovering to go back to their lives:

A beam from the ceiling came down, hitting me just *here*, as I sat at my desk.
And so our plan must be deferred, while I recovered. Per the advice of my
physician, I took to my—

A sort of sick box was judged—was judged to be—
hans vollman

Efficacious.

roger bevins iii (*Lincoln* 5)

Although Hans Vollman remembers the event that sent him to the Bardo (a ceiling beam hitting him just *here*, "here" being his head), he refuses to acknowledge the blow as fatal. Nor does his friend Roger Bevins III correct him. This pattern continues as readers are introduced to new characters. The level of their self-deception is displayed as every facet of the Bardo is a reminder of their deceased status. Each ghost has a distinct personality and visage, which is a nod to either their death or the thing holding them hostage in the realm. Roger Bevins is a perfect blend of both. In his past life, his partner Gilbert leaves him to "live correctly," which causes Bevins to commit suicide. At the last minute, he changes his mind because the world is beautiful and wants to experience it all. This manifests the habit of frequent philosophical tangents about the world's beauty that causes changes in his appearance:

...A purple-blue day unfolds (the muse of spring incarnate), each moist-
grassed, flower-pierced yard gone positively mad with—

roger bevins iii

Friend.
Bevins.

hans vollman

...In telling his story he had grown so many extra eyes and noses and hands
that his body all but vanished Eyes like grapes on a vine Hands feeling the
eyes Noses smelling the hands

Slashes on every one of the wrists.

willie lincoln (*Lincoln* 27)

Bevins' form rapidly duplicates his sensory appendages to absorb as many details as possible. Yet, one detail that is zoned in on by Willie and actively ignored by others and Bevins is his slashed wrists— the very thing that causes his death. The ghosts might not be forced to work in hell-themed rooms, but their appearances are amplified personal hells that continuously reinforce the parts of their life that cause the most suffering and keep them trapped in the Bardo. The Ghouls' acting roles function on a similar level. The Maws of Hell is one of many distinct themed workhouses that comprise the city. Each Ghoul plays an over-theatricalized version of their character. For some, this act can overtake their personality even on designated breaks, which is noticed when Mr. Frame complains about his wife's constant practice of a Cockney accent:

"But she just goes on and on," he says. "Guv'n'r this, and guv'n'r that. And why? For what?"

"Wants to do a good job?" I say. "For her Royals?"

"Of whom there are never any?" He says, crossly.

Then there is a big silence. ("Ghouls" 3)

Mr. Frame, in his rant, highlights a disturbing aspect of the work Ghouls do. Every performance is a reminder that no one is watching and never has. Ghouls are forced to continue in willful ignorance or concede that they are trapped underground without purpose in an unjust society. Like the ghosts in *Lincoln in the Bardo*, Ghouls and their caricatures are a reminder of the suffering they experience and showcase their avoidance of the fact to keep stability. Further, if one fails to ignore the realities of their situation, both communities enact unjust punishment.

In both stories, characters exert violence and mockery toward members that do not follow the rules of their society. It is established early on that Ghouls can be barbaric in enforcing compliance with Law 6. When Rolph, Brian's friend, begins

yelling Unforgivable Falsehoods, a mob forms to kill him: “I hear both a hue and a cry. And rush over to find a group informally gathered around my pal Rolph Splenger, FlyingSpear Launcher Three, engaging in some kicking activity” (“Ghoul” 3-4). Besides the guilt of participating in the act, Brian is relatively unphased by the murder of his friend. It is evident that this is a regular occurrence that the Ghouls are desensitized to. The ghosts’ aggression in the Bardo is more subtle but still present. Due to them having a non-material form, they cannot harm one another physically. Yet, there are some instances where disturbing behavior is depicted. Hans Vollman describes one case as he passes by a newly deceased soldier. When he quickly makes amends and departs from the Bardo just mere minutes after his arrival, the surrounding crowd becomes frenzied:

Some of the lesser members of the gathered crowd now began running amok, mocking at the soldier, inflicting various perverse and disrespectful postures upon his sick- mound—not out of meanness, for there is no meanness in them; but rather from excess feeling.

In this they can be like wild dogs let into the slaughterhouse—racing about upon spilled blood, driven mad by the certainty that some sort of satisfaction must be near at hand. (*Lincoln* 140)

Although Vollman states that there is no meanness in the other characters’ actions, their wild outburst is jarring to read. Their hatred and frustration toward souls that choose to leave the Bardo manifest in the only form of violence they can enact, disrespecting and mocking the departed and their grave. This “excess of feeling” is spurred by the ghosts’ confrontation with the truth. People leaving the Bardo remind them they are stuck dealing with their pain, forcing them to exercise violence to rectify the feeling it brings up (similar to how the Ghouls are moved to kill those that speak the truth). So, viewing the setting of *Lincoln in the Bardo* through the lens of Saunders’ intended dystopian setting in “Ghoul,” readers can see that both stories contain worlds where characters undergo immense suffering and receive unjust consequences when going against the system. These dystopian backdrops of both works are crucial to the theme of community, as they emphasize the genuine connections the characters have within them.

The communities both groups have forged within dystopias are showcased through Saunders’ comedy, which contrasts with the darker content of the works. Despite the unfavorable situations of both worlds, the characters are able to have lovers, families, and overall comradery amongst each other. For the Ghouls this is seen during their Break Week, which is the only time they can shed their characters and mingle with Ghouls from other workhouses in a place called the Room. Here, they

express extreme comfort with one another, especially since mating in the Room is a common and encouraged practice. So much so, in fact, that there is an etiquette to stepping over lovers as they are all in tight quarters: “The polite thing: step or hop over, saying nada. Should you personally know one or both, and feel saying nada might violate politeness, well say something encouraging, such as “Go, go, go!” or “Looking good, James and Melissa, all best wishes” (“Ghoul” 1). Their relationships are not just sexual but platonic, too. This is demonstrated by Brain and Rolph’s friendship that carries over from Break Weeks to work time jokes:

I will rise from my squat and throw my arms wide, exposing my chest, as if to say, “Spear me, then, Flying Spear Launcher! Since I am already a Squatting Ghoul, how much worse can my afterlife even get?” At which Rolph will fake-pump his spear at me, as if to say, “Ha ha, talk to you next Break, pal. (“Ghoul” 2)

The residents at the Bardo also exhibit a strong community that has been centuries in the making, which is shown throughout the novel by the raunchy and wacky antics of the characters. In scheming to bring Willie’s father, Abraham Lincoln, back to his mausoleum, Vollman reminds Bevins that they can persuade physical people by means of possession. He brings up the time they influenced a quarreling couple to fornicate in the cemetery while they watched:

I have misgivings about that. The watching.

hans vollman

well, you had no misgivings on that day, my dear fellow. Your member was swollen to an astonishing size. And even on a normal day, it is swollen to—

roger bevins iii

I seem to remember you watching as well. I do not recall the slightest aversion of any of your many, many—

hans vollman (*Lincoln* 163)

The image Saunders paints of Vollman’s growing member and Bevin’s duplicating eyes at seeing a young couple having relations is a well-placed comedic timing, breaking readers away from the otherwise tense and grief-filled storyline. His comedy prowess extends past sex jokes to even the downright silly. This is shown by

the bachelor spirits who fly around the Bardo propelled by flatulence and a torrential downpour of various top hats (*Lincoln* 118-121). Saunders even sets out to add humor to the sadder dialogue between characters. A professor whose life work is trashed after his death and an owner of a pickle factory that goes bankrupt is stuck in a loop of praising one another for eternity. Their conversations go as follows:

... I find it touching that you admire me so. And perhaps, someday soon, I will again remark upon how fine your pickles were, if that would please you. I would be happy to do so. You are worth it. You who are so loyal, and admire me so much.

professor edmund bloomer

Strange isn't it? To have dedicated one's life to a certain venture, neglecting other aspects of one's life, only to have that venture, in the end, amount to nothing at all, the products of one's labors utterly forgotten?

lawrence t. decroix

Fortunately, that does not pertain to us. (*Lincoln* 210)

Readers knowing that both men are stuck in the Bardo because of regret for the very things Decroix poses in his questions is a sad irony; nonetheless, their blissful ignorance elicits a chuckle. Saunders' use of tragicomedy is not just to bring relief to the darker elements of these works, even though it does function on that level. Saunders' sprinkle of comedy keys readers into the pranks, stories, friendships, and whole etiquettes created by these two groups. It displays a history of people who love and care for one another. The communities they forged are the natural light that shines through the darkness of their dystopian backdrops. This theme of community is further strengthened by comparing the different progressions of both throughout their stories.

A fascinating aspect of both works is the communities' different reactions to the catalyst of their stories found in Willie and Brian. Law 6 and Brian's growing rebellion against it in "Ghoul" sets the plot in motion. The challenges these factors pose to the other characters in the short story cause a domino effect of betrayal. When Mr. Frame writes a letter to Brian pleading for him not to report his Regrettable Falsehood, he lets his Reporting Period expire. Frame uses his hesitation to report him instead, which Brian is informed of by Amy, "Mr. Frame is claiming immunity, for being First Individual Forthcoming" ("Ghoul" 6). However, Brian is not guiltless of betrayal himself. In fear of being reported by the monitors, he joins the murder of his

friend Rolph: “Shirly’s eyes go wide, then glance down at my foot, as if to say, ‘Brian, I know you are one of the good guys and I would like to be able to write that down.’ It is not a true kick I gave Rolph, more of a foot-tap” (“Ghoul” 4). Brian tries to minimize his participation by stating he did not give an actual kick, but the action itself is a betrayal of their friendship. As he and Amy grow more frustrated with Law 6, they are caught by a peer whispering Regrettable Falsehoods, which causes Amy to falsely accuse her of their crimes: “I suppose you think I went to the whistle too quick,” she says. “Oh, God, maybe I did. But what did you want me to do? Let her go rat us out, so we could spend the rest of the day waiting to get kicked to death” (“Ghoul” 10). Every opportunity the Ghouls had to trust and rely on one another, they squandered it. Their fear and paranoia overrode the bonds they built. Law 6, and in part, Brian, challenged the community to either come together or shatter under pressure, and they chose the latter. *Lincoln in the Bardo* takes an opposite direction.

Willie’s arrival and immediate danger in the Bardo fortify the bonds of the Georgetown community. He is instantly established as a unifying presence as he causes waves in the ordinarily dull realm. His father, the grieving President, keeps returning to hold his “sick form.” Seeing Willie as a connection to the physical world, mass crowds begin forming to tell their stories and ask for requests, bringing every single resident together for the first time in years (*Lincoln* 66). However, the first genuine demonstration of a strong community is the mass possession of President Lincoln. Although Willie brings hope to the Bardo, it is dangerous for him to stay. Children who tarry for too long are overtaken by demonic spirits who wish to enslave their souls. This poses a problem when he refuses to leave based on the promise that his dad will return to him again. All the ghosts: White, Black, and poor, unitedly leap into Lincoln as a Hail Mary in persuading him to return and give Willie closure. This co-habitation deeply moves the residents as they begin to recall more of their past lives: “Suddenly, I remembered: the showing up at church, the sending of flowers, the baking of cakes to be brought over by Teddie, the arm around the shoulder, the donning of black, the waiting at the hospital for hours” (254). Coming together for Willie reminds the Bardo’s inhabitants of the most significant and joyful memories of their lives. Times when they were serving others they cared for—being a part of a community. These were memories they purposely tried to forget; as Bevins explains, “To stay, one must deeply and continuously dwell upon one’s primary reason for staying; even to the exclusion of all else” (255). Even though these memories signify they are losing hold of the Bardo, the characters are peculiarly unafraid and do not dismiss them. They continue to act selflessly despite the repercussions. This is especially evident when Reverend Everly Thomas sacrifices himself to shield Willie from the demonic beings:

They have me he shouted. They have even me! I must— I must go!
Good God! Mustn't I? Or be trapped like this, forever—
Go, yes, by all means, save yourself, dear friend! I shouted. Go!
But I don't want to! he shouted. I am afraid...
And the Reverend was gone. (*Lincoln* 275)

The Reverend was arguably the one who had the most desire to stay in the Bardo. His dark secret being he knew he was dead and had intended to move on, but fearing God's judgment, he fled to live out the rest of his existence in the Bardo. His moving on to save Willie despite the consequences demonstrates the character arc all members of the Bardo have been undergoing during the novel. Unlike the Ghouls in Saunders's short story, Willie's arrival and the ripple effect it causes to the delicate system of rules put in place are met by the characters coming together as a community. So the moment Willie realizes he is dead and moves on, the reaction is a far cry from the soldier's departure earlier in the novel. A chaotic mass exodus ensues as ghosts rapidly accept their death and dissipate: some scared, some begrudgingly, but most, touchingly, leave together:

I'll do what you do, Mrs. Hodge, Litzie said. You always been like a mother to me...

Ready? I said to Litzie.

As if for old times' sake, she gave me the double-eyed blink, which had always meant:

Yes.

mrs. francis hodge (*Lincoln* 314).

In *Lincoln in the Bardo*, Saunders spins a poignant tale that bears a drastically different direction than his short story "Ghoul." Despite both works containing strong communities within dystopias, the Bardo inhabitants overcame their suppressive conditions, while it is uncertain if the Ghouls ever do. Saunders conveys the theme of community with both groups and their odd but devoted relationships. This concept is further pushed by the Ghouls, whose inability to trust these relationships self-destruct, and the ghosts, which gravitate toward each other under the same circumstances, thrive.

George Saunders masterfully conveys the power and necessity of community in *Lincoln in the Bardo* and "Ghoul." Utilizing the stark contrast between the dystopian settings and the tragicomedy of the works, he emphasizes the characters' connections and preestablished bonds that form their respective communities. This theme of community is driven forth when readers compare the divergent progressions of these

two groups. The failure of one to rely on community and the resulting subsequent deaths, and the other's success defined by their strength in each other, demonstrate the essential nature of a community in life. Although each work centers on fantastical, supernatural, and outlandish beings, Saunders sharply communicates this vital element of the human condition. He answers some critical questions: When all things must die, and life's purpose is never defined, how can we love? How do we survive? We reach for each other.

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Mary Schellenberg

John Clare's Freedom in Nature

John Clare used many of his sonnets to carefully realize scenes in nature and how animals, or even himself, interacted with and through it. These depictions reflect Clare's earlier home of Helpston, England, known as "Clare's countryside," where the boy was oftentimes read to during his work in the fields. Such a childhood in nature, along with his mother's lack of education, led to his want for proper schooling - though trouble still presented itself in his future. In adulthood he dealt with both a lack of profit from his books and his declining health, the latter breaking his trust with close companions and his publishers. Unable to support himself and his family and weighed down by depression, Clare was voluntarily placed into an asylum from 1837 to 1841. Soon after this, he made an escape because of an influx of delusion, though he was later committed to a second asylum where he stayed until his death in 1864 (Robinson). This extended period of institutionalization, and his brief escape from it, establishes his personal need to be reunited with nature and freed from restriction.

In a letter to James Hipkins in March of 1860, one can see the evaporation of Clare's ties to reality: "I am in a Madhouse & quite forget your Name or who you are you must excuse me for I have nothing to commu[n]icate or tell of & why I am shut up I don't know" (Bate 522). This excerpt either addresses Clare's madness, or even more disturbing, the fact that he truly does not remember who he is--or for that matter, anything at all. Thankfully, in many of his beautiful sonnets, like "Field Thoughts" and "Stray Walks," the audience gains an understanding of who Clare is, and what makes him happy: fellowship with nature. Clare may have forgotten these truths at the time he wrote the letter to Hipkins, but his casual documentations of life through his sonnets are a time capsule of knowledge into Clare's life.

Therefore, Clare's two sonnets "Field Thoughts" and "Stray Walks" depict a happy Clare, where he experienced and could enjoy what he wanted out of life. Contrastingly, his four-stanza poem "An Invite to Eternity" utilizes a differing form and showcases Clare's loss of identity. This poem, where his identity seems to be lost in the recurring image of a shadow, brings a new significance to his sonnet "The Happiness of Ignorance," especially in reference to Clare's happy sonnets. Overall, all four of these poems expose Clare's definition of freedom through different lenses.

John Clare's sonnet "Field Thoughts" displays a broad scope of nature where

Clare is able to freely roam. Although the poem quickly establishes a casual mood through the lack of punctuation and repeated usage of the ampersand, the tone of the poem suggests great happiness on the speaker's part; Clare feels heaven is showering down on him. This is explicitly evident when he writes, "burst of happiness from heaven fall." Alliteration throughout the poem emphasizes the joy in this last line, causing the reader to read faster as he describes nature around him. An audience notes this through phrases such as "Flag fringed," "pike plunge," and "water weeds," which all occur in the span of three lines (*The Midsummer Cushion* 461). In addition, the rhyming couplet that concludes the sonnet spotlights the words "fall" and "all," pointing out that nature is bringing happiness, and it is for everyone; this contributes to a happy Clare. This couplet also features the repetition of "f" sounds, stressing words like "fields" and "free" in particular (461). I believe Clare uses this technique, as well as the concept of the poem in whole, to put his concern of enclosure on a main stage; his time spent in nature was more bipolar than his poems made it seem, and although this is a happy Clare, the poem introduces what makes him unhappy.

Enclosure was something Clare experienced first-hand in his village when fields were fenced in or closed off for agricultural efficiency. Unfortunately, for individuals like him, who enjoyed walking through these places, they were blocked off. Although there were still town greens where individuals could graze animals, plant something small, and/or work in, that was not enough for Clare. In addition, he was one of the individuals employed to put fences up, which conceivably pained him even more. So, although there does not seem to be much craftsmanship in this poem, his experimentation with syntax and language has a large impact. He uses the sonnet "Field Thoughts" to imagine and explain the joy that is brought to him laying upon a field of grass or "track[ing] some little path," which may seem simple, but defines his happiness (461). He is a free man whether he can walk through another individual's land or not, though enclosure burdens his individual sense of freedom and happiness. Freedom for Clare is in nature--in its true and untouched form.

This idea of Clare's pleasure in wandering through scenes of nature is again emphasized in the sonnet "Stray Walks." It is so present in this poem he acknowledges the idea multiple times when he writes "How pleasant are the fields to roam and think" and "How pleasant is it thus to think & roam / the many paths" (454). He begins and ends the poem with the same idea. While true, the end indulges in the idea of Clare heading home with the images of nature in mind and running over those images to absorb them into his memory: "wander home / & oer the beutys we have met to muse" (454). Again, this poem describes what Clare wanted out of life: to walk freely, notice things in nature, and then memorialize them in his poetry. In addition, he enjoyed

being alone, valuing alienation while he did this—which makes it interesting when, in later letters to his wife and others, he uncovers recesses of want for his wife (and an imaginary one) to visit him. Furthering the idea of wandering, Clare depicts the beauty of roaming for full sabbaths, where the implied duty of a person was to go to church all morning and then have the rest of the day free; that is the important part of this idea: freedom.

Although both of the sonnets “Field Thoughts” and “Stray Walks” relate a very similar message, “Stray Walks” introduces a child-like joy Clare finds in nature. It is written, “The many paths scarce knowing which to chuse” (454). Again, he spends the majority of his time indulging in nature, yet each time he goes out it seems new again; like a child who forgets their way or lacks object permanency, each day the path seems new to him—even though it is surely nothing new. What would usually be mundane for another individual is valuable for Clare. I feel a similar way towards his sonnets in general; they seem quite informal and without impressiveness, though they include what Clare would find impressive: nature.

These sonnets are often read in a monotonous tone due to their lack of punctuation, but they are still able to express instances of joy. Even so, Clare loses this identity of happiness from freedom in nature in his four-stanza poem “An Invite to Eternity;” here he is miserable. It seemed in the two previously discussed sonnets that Clare was not bothered by nature being random, and in fact, he enjoyed any “little path” life took him on; even walking through “water weeds” was a freeing activity, while the common connotation would be to associate the image of weeds as negative (461). Contrastingly, in an “Invite to Eternity,” “the path has lost its way” and the “sun forgets the day” (“Invite” 881). The poem is four stanzas long and already, in the first few lines of stanza one, there is darkness and a feeling of being lost and hopeless. Similarly, stanza two introduces two stones that turn to “*flooding* streams” (882). Whereas the wading through “water weeds” in the sonnet “Field Thoughts” was still a happy thought, where heaven was the beautiful driving force, water now has a drowning effect; it is flooding; an overwhelming force. I believe Clare continues this feeling throughout the poem and it is enforced by the poem’s four-stanza form. Becoming quite episodic to the reader, or like a nightmarish delirium, this poem differs greatly from Clare’s two previously discussed sonnets. This structure also allows the reader and Clare, as the most likely speaker, to relive the same threads and images repeatedly; one of the most prominent becomes the image of shadows.

This thread can be followed in the first two stanzas, though it is explicitly stated in the last two: “Things pass like shadows” and “The land of shadows” (881-882). This is an obvious example of the poem’s nightmarish feeling and how it repeats

itself in theme and image. With this in mind, I find the first shadowy reference more interesting, where Clare seems to quote Psalms 23:4 from the Bible: “Through the valley-depths of shade” (882). This replicates the diction of Psalms 23:4:

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me. (ESV)

Even if he is not referencing this particular verse, and just uses similar phrasing, he is still depicting a trialing and frightening passage that the Bible also highlights. Psalms 23:4 combats the journey through “the valley of the shadow of death” (882) with the remembrance of Christ, which acts as a comfort. For Clare, there is no comfort in “An Invite to Eternity,” which is emphasized by his constant questioning. Therefore, the sonnets “Field Thoughts” and “Stray Walks,” where Clare feels secure in his joy in nature, and can find comfort through it, greatly contrast “An Invite to Eternity.” Repetition of the question “Sweet maiden, wilt thou go with me?” (881) occurs in each stanza of this poem, appearing in slightly different forms, and installs a reality of Clare’s loneliness. When Clare is accompanied by nature he does not need to question, and it seems a return to nature is the only hope in curing such an insecure state.

The sonnets “Field Thoughts” and “Stray Walks” showcase a happy Clare, and “An Invite to Eternity” shows an obviously unsure, questioning, and lonely Clare. Although this last poem was not a sonnet, it has the ability to shine a new light on the sonnet “The Happiness of Ignorance” if one follows the biblical thread of Psalms 23:4. This is seen in the first lines of the sonnet “The Happiness of Ignorance:”

Ere I had known the world & understood
How many follies wisdom names its own
Distinguishing things evil from things good
The dread of sin & death – ere I had known
Knowledge the root of evil...” (*Midsummer* 438)

Here Clare seems to be acknowledging that knowledge is the root of evil and imagining an idealized landscape in Biblical literature: Eden. This was a place where evils were not present, and understanding evil was not even a possibility, as nothing of the sort existed yet. For Clare, a man greatly familiar with his King James Bible, Eden would be an image of the natural, fenceless, and open world he sought after both

enclosure and his admission to an asylum (Robinson). Looking back at Psalm 23:4, I again must highlight that comfort is found even in the shadows – which was not a possibility in “An Invite to Eternity,” a poem written after Clare’s institutionalization (Bate). The episodic form and repetition of the speaker’s questioning allows for that to become visible, but it differs so greatly from what Clare takes away from the three sonnets. In the sonnets Clare visualizes comfort—even in the more troubling poem of “The Happiness of Ignorance,” Clare recognizes nature as a place of refuge: “had I been Left in some lone place where the world is wild [...] Brought up by nature as her favourite child [...] Emparadised in ignorance of sin” (*Midsummer* 438). It never seems like he finishes his thought, but he does toy with the idea of living in a place where you are alive for the sole reason of joy and rejoicing in the ignorance of sin; this is the very biblical application to escaping “follies,” or foolishness, of the world, and it takes root in a time where nature is left to be “wild” (438). This draws the audience back to the poem “Field Thoughts,” where enclosure is a great threat that looms in the back of Clare’s mind; after seeing nature and its freeing qualities for Clare through the three sonnets, one can understand how much greater of a threat enclosure is to his health and well-being.

Clare’s three sonnets “Field Thoughts,” “Stray Walks,” and “The Happiness of Ignorance” showcase where Clare truly flourishes in life: nature. The poem of differing form, “An Invite to Eternity,” exposes a change from this happiness and introduces the recurring image of shadows to emphasize his seclusion. Interestingly enough, Clare’s sonnets allude to his happiness from alienation from others, though he asks for a companion in the maiden in “An Invite to Eternity.” It is interesting to see Clare use different forms of poetry to highlight his need to be back in nature, though each form differs in pinpointing whether seclusion is necessary or evil.

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Love and Friendship in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an intricate and beautiful play that plucks the readers' emotions in a whip-lash manner. This play displays brilliant comedy that has readers laughing, but it also displays heart-wrenching situations where friendship and romantic love are forced to compete. Shakespeare dives into how friendship and love are prone to go head-to-head, and how choosing one over the other can have dire consequences. This essay will explore a couple of friendships presented within *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that have been strained or ended due to the effects of romantic love; additionally, the essay will analyze the play's overall attitude towards friendship and romantic love working in tandem.

The most prominent example of friendship in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is that of Hermia and Helena. Being childhood best friends, they suffer a great conflict once their respective romances materialize. Once Lysander and Demetrius have been placed under a spell to make them fall in love with Helena instead of Hermia, the girls' friendship is immediately in shambles. They both insult and accuse one another, throwing around harsh words and preying on insecurities. Helena begs Hermia to think back on their friendship as a way to try and make Hermia see reason. It is startling to her, as it would be to anyone, to see how it took virtually no time at all for their beautiful friendship to be reduced to nothing, all because of the affections of men. Helena also asks Hermia a question: "And will you rent our ancient love asunder, / to join with men in scorning your poor friend?" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 3.2.220-221). Helena is asking Hermia to choose who she will align with: her oldest friend or the two men. Essentially, does Hermia place a higher value on friendship or love? In addition to Helena and Hermia's friendship, there is a similar friendship dynamic that we can observe through this lens.

Another friendship that is broken up by romantic love is that of Titania and the changeling's mother. While not much is revealed about their relationship, Titania does say that they would laugh and gossip together, showing that they were good friends. In their paper "Individuation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*", Hunt takes this a step further and states that these two women "seem to merge into a single being" (2). This thought makes the death of the changeling's mother (and the death of her friendship with Titania) even more tragic, as it is reminiscent of splitting one's being in half. Regarding the changeling, Titania states, "But she, being mortal, of that boy

did die, / And for her sake do I rear up her boy, / And for her sake I will not part with him" (*AMND* 2.1.140-142). This statement tells us a couple of things. First, we know that the changeling's mother died in childbirth, which could be interpreted in a way that the changeling's mother died of love with a man (or at least she died as a result of a sexual relation). Second, this statement tells us that Titania has set her mind upon raising the boy, indicating her friendship with his mother was strong. So, the changeling's mother died as a result of love and sex, abruptly ending her friendship with Titania, and ultimately leaving Titania to bring up her child. Both friendships (Helena and Hermia's and the changeling's mother and Titania's) display a common theme: platonic feminine companionship being disrupted or destroyed while the men in their lives are, for the most part, unaffected.

These unique situations show women being torn apart emotionally due to the effects of love while the men reap the benefits and get away scot-free. Yes, Lysander and Demetrius do have a conflict that could have resulted in a fight, and that shouldn't be ignored. However, that would have been one fight between men who already disliked each other from the start. It would have been a much graver situation had Lysander and Demetrius been lifelong friends, but that is not the case. This makes it harder for the reader to sympathize with them, unlike how easy and natural it is to sympathize with Helena and Hermia. What does it matter to Lysander and Demetrius that the girls are destroying their friendship due to the prospect of love? All they want is Hermia's love, and later Helena's. What does it matter to Oberon that Titania lost a dear friend in childbirth, caused by a romantic relation? He is only interested in possessing the outcome, the Indian boy. They toss these women's love around like it is worthless. For example, while Helena is scorning the men for their actions, Lysander ignores her and tell Demetrius, "In Hermia's love I yield you up my part. / And yours of Helena to me bequeath, / Whom I do love and will do till my death" (*AMND* 3.2.167-170). This instance shows that these women are going through emotional turmoil and the men are thinking only of how they could "win" or what they have to gain. Never once did it cross their minds to stop and think about the emotional damage they could be causing these women who have deeply felt the strain between friendship and romantic love. These women are certainly versed in the perils of romantic love, which is elaborated in the breakdown of these various friendship bonds.

A Midsummer Night's Dream seems to warn readers of the dangers associated with love and how it can affect friendships. Love is literally portrayed as a drug that alters the actions and words of an individual. Once you have fallen in love, you are a changed person, and your priorities change. This can be seen on a drastic level in Act 4, when Titania has the effect of the flower removed. She exclaims, "My Oberon,

what visions have I seen! / Me thought I was enamored of an ass" (*AMND* 4.1.77-78). The love spell caused Titania to do something entirely out of character and humiliating. Love is indeed a powerful drug that changes and alters a person. This effect seems to happen both with falling in love and falling out of love, as both induce drastic adjustments to a person and their identity. The lovers all became hateful and spiteful after they experience drastic changes in love. Hunt makes mention of how Helena "fawns upon [Demetrius] more intensely after each humiliating insult" that he throws her way, showcasing how love has taken away her self-worth (5). Hermia and Helena's friendship is a perfect example of how love can easily drive a wedge between friends once priorities are placed elsewhere. However, despite this clear warning from Shakespeare, this isn't to say that the play views love as bad entirely. There seems to be an internal conflict of sorts as the play balances the blessings and curses of romantic love and friendship.

It does appear that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* challenges the majesty and intoxicating appeal that have been associated with love. The play demonstrates time and time again how love has pulled apart friendships, and begs the readers to ask themselves, is it worth it? Is romantic love truly more valuable and more important than platonic love? It is difficult to gauge exactly what side of this issue the play takes. On the one hand, the play shows the wedge that romantic love can drive between friendships. On the other hand, in Act 5 everyone is happy and in love. All is well. Theseus reinforces this by saying, "Here come the lovers full of joy and mirth" (*AMND* 5.1.29). Clearly everything worked out for the best and the trials that the lovers went through granted them a great reward. Otherwise, they wouldn't be walking around joyful. However, Shakespeare clearly displays the dangers that love can have on friendships. This leads one to believe that this play is a warning, suggesting a trade-off. You can fall in love and hope for a happy ending, but you should be aware the damages that could potentially be caused.

This serves as a compromise of sorts. As we see with Helena and Hermia, falling in love and pining for love can quickly turn someone towards jealousy, spite, hatefulness, and insecurity. As we see with Titania, being in love can eventually hurt you deeply, and in a sense, literally kill you. In both of these cases, love and romance got in the way of the beautiful friendships the women had fostered. As the play progresses and the conflict is resolved, Hermia and Helena both get to be with the men that they loved in the beginning. Titania and Oberon are at peace in their marriage again. These finalities aren't without their issues but, overall, everyone is happy and content with how the events of the story panned out. As Lysander so wisely states, "The course of true love never did run smooth" (*AMND* 1.1.136). It seems that Lysander was

predicting the future. The path of finding true love can be difficult and trying, but the end reward is sweet indeed.

So, what should we value more? Love or friendship? It is difficult to pinpoint exactly and suggests Shakespeare's thoughts were complicated on this issue. He allows readers to glimpse into each relationship, romantic and platonic, and presents a variety of situations that evidence the intertwined nature of these relationships. Romance can easily get in the way of friendships, but in the end, romance and true love might be worth fighting for. Shakespeare certainly presents friendship as something just as beautiful as love, and he makes it clear that one should not disregard their friends in the name of romantic love. However, that does not necessarily mean that he is against love as a whole. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents this conundrum of human emotions in such a manner that the readers are prompted to critically think and form their own opinions. With everything laid out in front of the readers, they must draw conclusions for themselves. In this brilliant play, Shakespeare invites us to evaluate the intensity of human love, both platonic and romantic. As friendship and romantic love are both widespread connections in the human experience, it is important for us to discover what we are willing to sacrifice and who we are willing to hurt in the chase of our subjective happiness, no matter which path we choose.

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Madelin Hayes

Whispers of Imagination

Losing teeth, public nudity, falling into an endless abyss, and the call to a glorious adventure (filled with details that writers of fairytales could not even spin) are all elements of the unique subconscious response to worldly stimuli that occurs when one simply rests their eyes. Worlds beyond anything Hollywood can fabricate live in the human subconscious, lying dormant until triggered by an occurrence, object, or origin that necessitates exploration. John Keats was a man troubled and bewitched by his own dreams, dreams that did not abandon him upon return to consciousness. In “Ode to Indolence,” “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” “Ode to Psyche,” and “Ode to a Nightingale,” Keats expands upon daydreams and nightmares alike to concoct starkly imaginative poems transposed with beautifully intricate language. “Ode to Indolence” and its contrasting motifs of love, ambition, poetry, and indolence amalgamate to conceive the ideal that laziness cannot be truly passive as it is always plagued and rewarded with the contriving of one’s imagination.

“Ode to Indolence” begins with the introduction of three figures depicted on an urn constructed within Keats’ imagination. These figures haunt and chastise Keats for lying indolent rather than indulging in the trivial worries that they have to offer. The first personified figure that Keats portrays is ‘Love.’ Keats exclaims and inquires, “O folly! What is love? And where is it?” (“Ode to Indolence” ln. 32). In this quote, Keats highlights the ‘folly’ of love and the hardship of finding it. The passive Keats writes off love for its inability to be confined to one definition in any relationship, but the non-indolent Keats revels in the complexities and challenges of this revelation. In “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” one of Keats’ main arguments is for the beauty of love’s ability to endure and metamorphose over time. Keats laments, “Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss... / ...She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss” (“Ode to a Grecian Urn” ll. 17-19). To Keats, love is only beautiful when it can stand the toils of time while evolving. It loses its bliss if it is to be stuck in place. The premise of love within “Ode to a Grecian Urn” is how it may stay beautiful forever, but it never expands past the honeymoon stage as the lovers are forever frozen on the urn. Conversely, the figure of Ambition that is depicted on the urn in “Ode to Indolence” commands Keats to forsake his own icy state of inability.

Ambition, or lack thereof, is a motif found within “Ode to Indolence” and “Ode to a Nightingale,” but sanctioned in diverse manners. In “Ode to Indolence,”

Keats presses, "So, ye three ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise / My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass" ("... Indolence" ll. 51-52). Keats tells Love, Ambition, and Poesy of his preference for lying and imagining, rather than giving into their tiresome whims. In "Ode to a Nightingale," when Keats is indolent, he is conjointly in awe: "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet, / Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs" ("Ode to a Nightingale" ll. 42-43). Keats is taking in the sublime nature that circulates his being and whispers directly to his soul. In "Ode to a Nightingale," it appears as if he is having a sensory overload filled with the beauty of the world around him, while in "Ode to Indolence," his chief reason for being amongst the grass is out of laziness. However, it can be inferred that he was also drinking in the artistry of the megacosm as this was his duty in "Ode to a Nightingale." Nature was John Keats's muse for the poetry he aspired to write; however, in "Ode to Indolence," he speaks of the misery of writing it.

Poesy is the final figure and motif that haunts Keats from the urn in "Ode to Indolence." Poesy is the representation of poetry and the constant overarching presence that commands it to be penned on paper. In one portion of the poem, Keats goes so far as to say, "my demon Poesy," highlighting its possession of his soul and every action he takes ("... Indolence" ln. 30). Furthermore, he exclaims, "For Poesy! --no—she has not a joy, -- at least for me," ("...Indolence" ll. 35-36). Once again, Keats illustrates his dislike of the pressure that writing poetry places on him. However, in "Ode to a Nightingale" his differing view provides a more detailed analysis of the previous quote. Keats writes that he is, "... charioted by... the viewless wings of poesy" ("...Nightingale" ll. 32-33). In this passage, Keats explains how he becomes drunk on the imperceptible ideas of the imagination that accompany the creation of poetry. Even while indolent, Keats would be accustomed to the train of thought that only comes to the station by its documentation. Even in indolence, there is no escape from one's mind.

The motif that Keats dedicated his poem to, indolence, presents a narrative of contrasting thoughts surrounding it. One idea that can be certain, however, is Keats' longing for an afternoon of "honied indolence" ("...Indolence" ln. 37). The adjective, honied, suggests a sweet and slow-moving afternoon. An afternoon depicted in the next stanza and by Keats' dream: "The morn was clouded, but no shower fell" ("... Indolence" ln. 45). Perhaps "clouded" refers to the nature of Keats' thoughts and how due to his lethargy, he has begun to have muddled thoughts that he cannot access, just as the rain cannot fall from the sky. Both the cloud and Keats are not performing their duties to the world and are shrouded in a passive nature. This concept of cloudiness suggests that if one does not actively engage their brain then it will not work properly, which is a scientific verisimilitude proved by the concept of synaptic pruning. The brain dissolves any part of itself that is not seen as being used, so what would happen

if someone never used their brain? In “Ode to Psyche” we see the adverse effect, of when one uses their brain and builds upon their foundation of knowledge by exercising their imagination. Keats explains, “Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane / In some untrodden region of my mind” (“Ode to Psyche” ll. 50-51). In this quote, Keats emphasizes the power of imagination and the fact that it is only limited by the ability of the wielder. This idea is like William Blake’s aphorism of “mind-forg’d manacles” (“London” ln. 8). Humans draft boundaries in their minds that control their reactions to their environment and limit their imaginative expanses. If Keats chooses to be indolent, he will still have a flourishing imagination, just not one to the comparison of his active and engaged brain. Keats paints a contrasting picture of motifs that cultivate a weightier overall theme.

The nature of Keats’ writing is one filled with contrariety, particularly with his view of imagination and activity. In “Ode to Indolence,” and “Ode to a Nightingale,” Keats provides different perspectives on indolence. “Ode to Indolence” provides a distinct argument for the practice of lethargy. Keats laments, “O, for an age so shelter’d from annoy, / That I may never know how change the moons, / Or hear the voice of busy common sense!” (“...Indolence” ll. 39-40). In these lines, the author pleads for an era where he can just simply exist, rather than be plagued by time or trivial matters that always seem to need discussion. However, in “Ode to a Nightingale,” his argument is in complete opposition. Keats writes, “Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain-- / To thy high requiem become a sod” (“...Nightingale” ll. 59-60). The author highlights the need for activity and involvement in the surrounding environment. Keats is even frightened at the thought of missing out on the nightingale’s melody, which symbolizes the world that would forge on without him if he were to drop into indolence or commit suicide. This pushes past his initial argument of wanting to maneuver away from the world as it speaks of his terror of actually committing to the move. Furthermore, Keats even provides a conflicting viewpoint within “Ode to Indolence.” Within the poem, he expresses his want of wings to chase after Love, Ambition, and Poesy (“...Indolence ln. 31). This request is strange and unlikely of a man who has spent the majority of the poem describing his distinct need to bid these qualities of action farewell. “Ode to Indolence” is not so much about lethargy as it is about the conflicting nature of the mind and the body and how both may seek laziness, but it can never truly be fully acquired.

All in all, “Ode to Indolence” can be dissected by “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” “Ode to Psyche,” and “Ode to a Nightingale.” Upon comparison, a plethora of contrasts present themselves, defining indolence as an unobtainable quality that is plagued by the intrusion of an overactive imagination. To be indolent is to be completely idle,

with nothing bothering one or causing one to strain oneself. Unfortunately for many, the human subconscious will never allow complete complacency. The true question is: is indolence worth the lack of cognitive abilities, or is the use of cognitive abilities worth the lack of indolence? This question is posed and inquired by Keats himself throughout the selected procession of poems and proven by the conflicting views found in each. One certainty is that the human subconscious will carry on with or without the consent of the brain's owner. Dreaming is inevitable, whether it be a dream to escape the realities of the work week, a nightmare, the American dream, or like Keats, and his dreams of Grecian urns. Dreams are a jarring depiction of the root of human desire and the greatest fears that mirror the whispers of the soul. What are humans but composed of the dreams and desires they formulate and spend their lives practically dying to achieve?

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Crafting Critiques and Imagining Falsely Efficient Futures: Swift the Economist

Precise in aim, Jonathan Swift consistently diagnoses and attacks his satirical targets. His economic writings are no exception with his ferocious bombardments of Britain and Ireland's extortionary business practices in "A Modest Proposal" and William Wood's monetary manipulation in *Drapier's Letters*. These pieces showcase excellent economic analysis in their documentation of their respective controversies. Exemplifying a clear understanding of incentives, economic computations and scales, the interconnectivity of markets, and the functions of money, Swift stands out as a clear economic expert for his time. However, his inhibitive stances towards import-substitution and foreign currencies fall short of being productive for fostering domestic growth in Ireland. With this disparity in accuracy between his criticisms and proposed solutions, Swift's domestically rooted economic ideals are dated even though they are in the background of timeless works.

While analyzing different issues, Swift tries to protect Irish incomes in both "A Modest Proposal" and *Drapier's Letters*. For the former, he creates a sadistic but dependable source of income. Working under an invented persona, he hopes to give the Irish "something valuable of their own, which, by Law, may be made liable to Distress, and help to pay their Landlord's Rent; their Corn and Cattle being already seized" (Swift 299). This notion touches on a large economic issue: production incentives. Not able to reap large portions of their own labor, workers had little reason to go the extra mile and produce more since any extra crops or other agricultural products would just be taken as well. These disincentives to production were an important focus and weren't strictly held against the British considering his additional desire for "*putting a Spirit of Honesty, Industry, and Skill into our Shop-keepers; who ... would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon us in the Price*" (Swift 300). Transactors are to blame in "A Modest Proposal," but *Drapier's Letters* hone more on the currency that allows such transactions to take place. While reprimanding Wood's half-pence for the poorly-made unworthy currency it is, Swift's efforts as M.B. Drapier work to establish how the Irish would lose purchasing power. Noting how Wood "may by Stealth send over *another 108000l. and buy all our Goods for Eleven Parts in Twelve*" Irish incomes will lose value from this currency exchange due to requiring more of Wood's currency for the same purchases (Swift 272). Working on two different fronts across these pieces, Swift shows a clear-cut devotion to safeguarding the country's affordability of goods.

In pursuit of income security, Swift utilizes foundational economic analysis along with extensive computation in hopes of measuring the issues at hand as well as potential solutions to them. Instead of gunning for the largest figures possible, Swift diversifies his statistics to further bolster his argument. Each figure serves a purpose and reinforces Swift's credibility as a thorough and well-meaning thinker. In "A Modest Proposal," he admits "that a Boy or a Girl before twelve Years old, is no saleable Commodity ... they will not yield above Three Pounds ... which cannot turn to Account either to the Parents or Kingdom" (Swift 296-297). Showcasing cost-benefit analysis, his honesty that children need to be younger to be sold profitably speaks volumes. It shows the duration and density of which he thought his proposal through. This diligence in financial research pervades through more than Swift's major economic pieces. Patrick Kelly's "Swift on Money and Economics" emphasizes this by bringing up Swift's *Seventh Letter, An Humble Address to Both Houses of Parliament*, where he aggregates "the rents paid to absentees, ... imports of coal, corn, ... [among other costs which Swift] puts at nearly £700,000" (Kelly 137). Also capable of providing per capita and annual figures, Swift shows a credible and staggering variety in his calculations.

In league with his thorough usage of economic measurements, Swift also utilizes a clear understanding of interconnected markets and the relations between goods within them. Concerning the damages of adopting Wood's half-pence, the entire economy breaks down as "the *Landed-man* ... maintains the *Merchant*, and *Shop-keeper*, and *Handicrafts-Man*" (Swift 274). Transactors do not operate in a vacuum, and the economy is better for it. There are services that some people are simply better at performing than others, so transactions allow those who cannot to reap the benefits of those who can. Wood's half-pence would lock up markets and force citizens to be a jack of all trades, but most would be a master of none. Swift recognizes this inefficiency as "the *Squire* turns *Farmer* and *Merchant* himself, all the good money he gets from abroad, he will hoard up to send for *England*, and keep some poor *Taylor* or *Weaver*, and the like, in his own House" (Swift 274). Resources would be held up in waiting when they could be used to make the country better off. This concern for efficiency carries over into his dark suggestion in "A Modest Proposal" as well. In his insincere advocacy for the consumption of children, Swift assures readers that "Shambles may be appointed for this Purpose, in the most convenient Parts of it; and Butchers we may be assured will not be wanting" (Swift 298). His proposal not only allows for job creation to expand Ireland's domestic output, but this addition doesn't threaten the meat market and its previously established selection of goods. Indirectly touching on the nature of goods, Swift shows an understanding of substitutes given that he doesn't classify children as one for other meats. If it was, then any demand for them would decrease any purchasing of beef or other carnivorous products. This consideration

further cements his thorough understanding of economic principles at the time, and that it isn't strictly geared towards buyers or sellers.

Outside of just examining the Irish market and trade of goods, Swift also deals with their currency. Wood's scheme is outright detested by him, but he does advocate for Ireland to "make our own Half-Pence, as we used to do" (Swift 272). The proposed project needs to be scrapped, but it also needs to be replaced with an authentic program instead of a manipulative scheme. With the country using gold and silver as their primary currencies, the fact that Ireland suffered from its forced dependence on Britain hurt the value and exchangeability of their money. The British altered "the gold-silver ratio ... in 1717 ... [with] no corresponding readjustment ... in Ireland" (Kelly 131). Their negligence led to Irish incomes depreciating in value and would take more of it to translate into gold which became overvalued in consequence. Ireland had little option to avoid these financial ills since only gold and silver were legal tender at the time, so unless laws were passed to start coining a third currency their method of transacting would be entirely subject to British whims. With a foreign entity dictating the currencies' value, gold and silver coins fail to be a sustainable store of value. Values can change on a whim with few options for the Irish economy to correct them. On top of this, the country "was also chronically short of small change ... The supply of money was seriously inadequate" (Kelly 131). With change being more complicated to calculate and give, transaction costs in Ireland have unnecessarily risen due to awkward amounts of currency being required to carry and deal with. If a third currency that was denoted at a smaller value did exist, then purchases would be less of a headache. However, due to legal proclamation, they must work with the two currencies they have, and they lack any alternatives to avoid British intervention. They could abandon them and revert back to a barter economy in order to avoid such devaluations, but this decision would carry a whole set of caveats. Examining the functions of money, currencies allow transactions to naturally occur faster than if one was trading entirely in goods. When shopping, you must look for what you want to purchase, but after that, you can usually pay with money given that it is accepted as legal tender. Without it, you not only have to find a product, but you must hope that the seller is willing to accept whatever good you would be exchanging in place of it. Called a double coincidence in economics, money circumvents this notion by only requiring that transactors find goods they want without worrying about whether they have something capable of purchasing it (Mishkin 50). Ireland's currencies are certainly flawed with their subjugation to British orders and inability to simply convert from one to the other, but Swift's eye for potential advocates for a purer reattempt of the coinage scheme rather than throwing it away altogether.

Eyeing a valid redo of the project, Swift further demonstrates his understanding of the functions of money in vying for a practical currency. Pressing the fact that Wood's half-pence requires more of it to equate to gold or silver, Swift hilariously highlights its burden that "when one of these *Farmers* comes with his Half-Year's Rent, which is One hundred Pound, it will be at least Six hundred Pound weight, which is Three Horses Load" (Swift 273). In order to pay for ordinary items, citizens would need comical amounts of Wood's coins to pay for them. Noticing this inefficiency, Swift speaks of Wood's coins failing as a successful medium of exchange (Mishkin 51). For money to work successfully in this regard, it should be easily divisible and transportable, but it instead fails miserably. Needing horse-drawn carriages instead of simply wallets or purses, the half-pence further slows down purchases given that it takes more effort to tally it up and give it to the seller.

Wanting to foster domestic growth, Swift's unwavering focus on it leads to him advocating what would be inhibitive policies. Not necessarily isolationist in nature, he does desire only "*what is of our own Growth and Manufacture: Of utterly rejecting the Materials and Instruments that promote foreign Luxury*" (Swift 300). Exports are not detested like imports are as in "A Modest Proposal" he categorizes "the Addition of some Thousand Carcasses in our Exportation of barrelled Beef: The Propagation of *Swines Flesh*" as a plus to his plan (Swift 300). This fear of imports and vying to abstain from them would only spell disaster for the country. Without international trade, utilizing both imports and exports, countries cannot specialize in whatever goods they most efficiently produce. Being primarily an agricultural economy, Ireland would have a comparative advantage in crops on the world market. Under free trade, they could lean further into their food production rather than having to make any other products themselves. Trade partners with expertise in producing other goods could fill in those gaps while Ireland could have higher crop yields than if they had to be self-sufficient. By allowing countries to specialize in free trade, transactors can enjoy more goods which in turn increases a country's welfare. Given Ireland's state of famine and poverty at the time of "A Modest Proposal," finding healthier trade partners would foster a quicker recovery. This ability to determine and specialize in whatever good is most efficiently created, known as comparative advantage to economists, wouldn't debut until the Ricardian Model of trade which came out after Swift's lifetime. It explains that free trade allows countries to specialize in whatever good they most efficiently produce and trade for goods that they don't which aggregate into countries producing and having access to more goods, but this theory postdates Swift and his domestically oriented thinking (Krugman et al. 48). Utilizing the economic principles of his time to their fullest extent, Swift's lack of innovation in trade belief upends "his ultimate objective ... is the practical manifestation of love of country through doing good to

the public” (Kelly 142). If his barring of imports was implemented into trade policy, Swift’s goals of domestic prosperity would be stunted given his ignoring of the net gains from free trade. Although the country’s distancing from Britain would allow for better welfare given their colonial situation, shunning imports would prevent any further betterment. Under his nationalist policies, Ireland would grow slower, not be able to play to its economic strong suits, and never reach its fullest financial potential.

Besides Swift’s proposal for avoiding imports, his nationalist beliefs carry more varied effects. While he does conduct a thorough inquiry into having Ireland gain control of its money, he acknowledges that “you are not obliged to take ... the *Half-pence* or *Farthings* of *England*, but of any other Country” (Swift 277). These sentiments make sense given his biased conception of trade and its supposed inability to be mutually beneficial, but they also deter the country from making the most of itself. Foreign currencies are not bad on their own as they can foster their own market in the foreign exchange market. If Ireland was able to designate an established location to conduct these transactions of domestic and international currencies, credit would flow faster into the territory to allow for more internal investment and output growth. This distrust of foreigners and their currencies even leaks into his view of the Irish, as S.J. Connolly points out in his essay “Swift and Protestant Ireland,” which exposes that “The Drapier’s fourth letter was addressed ‘to the whole people of Ireland.’ Yet the text insists that those who rejected Wood’s coin were in fact ‘the true English people of Ireland’” (Connolly 830). Instead of just speaking to the relatively small crowd of strictly Ireland, he really speaks to a more minuscule portion of those he believes are truly Irish. Regardless of whomever these desires are targeted to, Swift’s domestic passion in his financial writings does still present legitimate concerns for capital and labor flight outside of Ireland. Considering that the country’s financial system was underdeveloped yet dependent on England, it makes sense that he worries that “[Wood] would in a short Time get all the *Silver* and *Gold* of the *Kingdom* into his own Hands, and leave us nothing but *Brass* or *Leather*” (Swift 275). Losing capital would decrease production potential, and Swift’s sentiments to sustain Ireland take an emotional route as well. In Charlotte Sussman’s “The Colonial Afterlife of Political Arithmetic: Swift, Demography, and Mobile Populations,” she brings to the forefront Swift’s insistence in “A Modest Proposal” against “the potential migration of these bodies to other colonial scenes; as consumable goods, they will be most economically useful in their home markets” (Sussman 115). Taking a stance for Ireland’s prosperity and against the commodification of its citizens, Swift approaches the country’s situation with both heart and mind.

Examining, dissecting, and considering Ireland’s economic ills, Swift

maximizes the economic theories of his time to give the situation its due diligence. Most of his analysis holds up as the field has advanced in thought, but his ideals on trade relations contradict with what would have been necessary. With such proposals coming from an intellectual who lacked access to knowledge in that aspect, Swift stands only as a great economic thinker for his time and not a visionary. His work in satire and prose is certainly innovative, but his financial knowledge doesn't reach those same peaks.

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The Reconsideration of Civility in *The Round House*

In the Hollywood Diversity Report for the year 2022, it was found that Native Americans made up only 0.9% of lead character roles in broadcast scripted shows and were completely absent from lead roles in cable scripted television (Ramon 26). Throughout media history, when Native Americans are shown, they are often portrayed as the antagonistic, savage Hurons of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) or caricatured as the feather-wearing, face-painted warrior sidekick of *The Lone Ranger* (2013). The representation we get as an audience not just in visual media, but in media across genres, is that Native Americans are a primitive society and in dire need of The White Man Protagonist to save them and set them on the path to civilization. In Louise Erdrich's 2012 novel *The Round House*, she delves into many of the current plights of Native American peoples such as the horrifically common occurrence of rape of Native women and the injustice of the legal system in regards to tribal jurisdiction. What Erdrich does not make as obviously apparent in her book, but which is still a powerful message woven throughout the story, is the conception of Native Americans as a "primitive" or "savage" people. Erdrich addresses this stereotype and subsequently invalidates it by providing the message that there is no strict binary between "civilized" society and that which is still wild and connected to nature.

This ambiguity between civilization and the untamed is given form through the role that animals play throughout the novel. Erdrich further negates the savage stereotype through a manner that initially seems quite counterintuitive: the Native boys self-proclaim that the characters they relate to the most from their favorite show, *Star Trek*, are the characters who are most notably inhuman, yet their connection to the inhuman characters brings out a new understanding of the boys' abundant humanity.

In the novel, the Coutts family's lives are forever changed after the brutal rape of Geraldine, the mother of Erdrich's protagonist, the Ojibwe teen Joe Coutts. After Joe's mother returns to their house after her hospital stay, Joe goes to visit his beloved Aunt Sonja who comforts him and gives him the dog, Pearl, to be a watchdog to protect the house and his mother inside if he and his father cannot be there. Pearl is described as "a rangy long-legged mutt with a bull terrier's broad head and viselike jaws. She had Doberman markings, a shepherd's heavy coat, and some wolf in her" (Erdrich 26). Even in the very description of the dog meant to provide protection to the Coutts family, the civil and feral are combined inextricably. Pearl's breeding

is that of both wolves—something wild—and a mixture of domesticated breeds. Joe further describes that Pearl “paced and snapped the air whenever someone violated her territorial boundaries. Pearl was not a companion dog and I wasn’t sure I wanted her” (26). Pearl appears to be a dog barely tamed but she is the one who brings peace to Joe’s father with her presence in the house. Joe, too, is later comforted by Pearl’s presence. After a fight with his mother in which he begs her to become the woman she was before the rape, Joe is filled with the rage of a teenage boy who just wants his mother to be there for him in a way she no longer can. His rage is about to be physically expressed, yet before he violently starts to rip out his mother’s garden, he states “Pearl came up to me. I felt my anger blazing out” (90). Joe subsequently tries to teach Pearl to play fetch, but each time he raises the stick in his arm Pearl lunges for it ferociously and never allows him to throw it. On his last attempt, Joe says:

I bent down to pick the stick back up and just as I closed my fingers on it Pearl stepped up to me and caught my wrist in her teeth. Her jaws were so powerful she could have snapped bone. I stood warily, my hand empty, and she released my arm. There were pressure marks, but not a tooth had broken flesh or scratched me. So you don’t play fetch, I see that now, I said. (91)

Pearl keeps Joe in line in an animalistic way, yet she is never brutal with him. She resists being taught a game that tamed dogs play, yet she is not savage. Erdrich is showing the reader that even animals can act civilized, although the definition of what is civil for an animal is not what may be considered civil for a human. However, despite the difference in defining civil in regards to human or animal, Erdrich is still enabling the reader to consider how wild and civil are blurred and this is in special relation to animals interacting with humans and teaching them just as Pearl taught Joe that she does not conform.

Pearl is not the only animal who brings a young man back to his senses. Erdrich establishes a small but meaningful parallel between Joe and the figure of Nanapush who exists as another son who is a protector of his mother. One of the elder figures in Joe’s life is his ancient grandfather, Mooshum. Mooshum is one of the few on the reservation who remembers traditional stories and practices due to his advanced age. As Joe spends time with his grandfather, the elderly man drifts off and sleep-talks, telling the old story of the creation of their sacred space--the round house. Nanapush, the main character, is guided by a female buffalo after he can no longer trust the elders for accusing his mother of being a wiindigoo and states, “he had completely lost trust in authority, he decided to stay away from others and to think for himself” (214). “Nanapush did not want anyone to come to him,” he thinks as he rejects his community for their betrayal of his mother. He wishes to live a life of solitude and thus

is rejecting civilization. The buffalo tells Nanapush that she desires him to build the round house, wisely saying “the round house will be my body, the poles my ribs, the fire my heart. It will be the body of your mother and it must be respected the same way” (214-215). Here, Erdrich is making it evident that the distinction between human and animal is blurred. The round house is the most sacred space of the Ojibwe tribe and the idea for it came from a wise buffalo who is as important a part of the structure as Nanapush’s human mother is. It is an animal who revives Nanapush’s connection with others and pushes him to create a space for his own society. The Ojibwe tribe is still centered around the round house as it is the beginning of their community. The boundary between nature and civilization is blurred because the buffalo and mother are combined into the very struts of their physical building which holds sacred symbolism. It is animals, whether ferocious dog or noble buffalo, who in their natural capacity, teach these native young men how to act in one notion of civility. Erdrich addresses the savage stereotype not just by having the reader consider the duality that the animals present, but also in who she determines from the cast of the *Star Trek* characters that the native boys relate to the most.

Joe proclaims that he and his friend group are obsessed with *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. “Naturally, we all wanted to be Worf. We all wanted to be Klingons. Worf’s solution to any problem was to attack. [...] Worf was combustible, noble, and handsome even with a turtle shell on his forehead” says Joe (20). Klingons are typically characterized throughout *Star Trek*’s numerous versions as an intensely battle-ready and brutal civilization. Joe fully admits that he wishes to be like a character because he admires such a savage trait of his. While it seems counterintuitive of Erdrich to make Warf the character Joe and his friends admire the most when she is supposedly combating the conception that Natives are a primitive and brutish society, it is this and Joe’s additional adoration of the android character, Data, which humanizes his decision to take away the life of another human. Linden Lark, the brutal rapist of the story, is ultimately killed by the formerly innocent Joe. While one could say that Erdrich having her character actually commit a murder—rather than the common story route of having a character decide they don’t want to ‘sink to the level’ of their villain—reduces Joe to the savage warrior archetype common of Native portrayals, the reasoning for which Joe kills Linden in accordance with his Native background undermines the savage perception. As the scholars Jacob Bender and Lydia Maunz-Breese state in their article discussing the inclusion of *Star Trek* and native culture, Linden is akin to Armus, a character who is referenced in the book’s chapter titled “Skin of Evil.” Armus is a character who must be isolated from the rest of the world. Armus is evil for the sake of being evil just as Linden is evil to satisfy his own despicable desires. Bender and Maunz-Breese suggest that, as Erdrich makes abundantly clear

that several characters consider Linden Lark to be the diabolical figure of a wiindigoo, Joe is justified in his murder. The article authors state that “The wiindigoo, then, is a personification of the very form of violence that threatens to consume communities whole” and that “the response to the wiindigoo in the Anishinaabe legal tradition is a communal one” (Bender 147). The response to a wiindigoo that the authors go on to describe is that the person determined to be a wiindigoo must be eliminated for the sake of the tribe. Joe must kill Linden in a ruthless manner just as the Klingon Worf would because it is an act of protection for his mother, and at large his civilization. His act of murder is also not considered savage and thus does give any credence to the stereotype because the reader must consider that Joe’s action is not barbaric by his own society’s standards. We must again consider that there is no strict definition of civil that all cultures would agree upon just as we previously discovered that the line between tame and wild is also ambiguously vague.

It is not just Joe who exhibits the trait of a *Star Trek* character. Cappy, Joe’s very best friend, exhibits the cool, detached demeanor of Data when he is the one who ultimately kills Linden. Data is the second-most beloved character of the boys as Joe states, “Next to Worf, we liked Data because he mocked white people by being curious about stupid things that the crew would do or say” (Erdrich 20). When Joe is unable to deliver the killing shot to Linden due to his poor marksmanship, Erdrich writes:

The rifle was lifted from my arms. Cappy stepped forward beside me. I didn’t hear the shot. All sound, all motion, had stalled in the sullen air. My brain was ringing. Cappy picked up the ejected casings from around my feet and put them in the pockets of his jeans. C’mon, he said, touching my arm. Turning me. Let’s go. (282-283)

Cappy shows no overwhelming emotion as he kills the man to whom he was led by his best friend’s rage. He simply takes the best course of action available to them which is to efficiently finish the job Joe started—an action that Data, the inhuman android, would also do. The manner in which Erdrich writes the event is even characteristic of the short, clipped, and emotionless speech pattern of Data due to her brief, informative sentences. Once again, Erdrich is forcing the reader to reconceptualize their definition of what is civilized. Joe kills his mother’s rapist, which is an action that would have been highly praised in the Klingon society he respects. As Bender and Maunz-Breese examine in their article, Joe’s indigenous background provides further reasoning why his actions are not those of a cold-blooded murderer, but rather someone who is a great protector from evil. The inhuman, detached calculation, characteristic of Data, and the ruthlessness of the act, characteristic of Worf, present in the murder of Linden may seem like they comply with the stereotyping of Natives, but it is through acting like

their favorite characters that the boys are able to express the enduring love they have for one another. The courageous brutality that Joe admires in Worf is what allows Joe to carry out a ruthless act of love, and Cappy's devotion to Joe enables him to act like a detached android. In comparing the boys to their favorite characters, it is apparent that the boys are no savages, they are connected to their culture by killing the evil Linden. Worf and Data are not solitary, static characters, they are weighty figures of a crew that goes to great lengths to protect one another. In assuming the roles of Worf and Data, they appear to be acting the stereotype of savage warriors, but this is merely the cloak they wear to really act as two boys who are willing to go to any lengths to protect one another.

Those of us who are not a part of any indigenous culture likely have similar conceptions of what "civilized" means. There is a common view of Natives as being a culture of people connected to the Earth and particularly in tune with nature. With this thought also comes the stereotype that Natives have not developed past the days of America's development into a civilized, developed country. There exists the thought that Natives are primitive, savage, battle-hungry, and brutish—far too many notions of Natives that dehumanize them. Louise Erdrich is not telling the reader that Natives are a civilized society. She is telling us to forget what we think civilized means in the first place. She produces a way for the reader to reexamine their notion of the divide between tame and feral within the framework of scenes involving animals and the inclusion of *Star Trek* characters. She establishes that there is no strict binary between these concepts. The characters learn from animals and build a society that would not be possible without them. They relate to characters that are thought of as strictly inhumane and yet these characteristics allow them to be at their most compassionate for their fellow humans. *The Round House* is a Native story that is telling society at large that the story we know of Natives and the words with which we use to describe societies are not nearly as well understood as we first imagine them to be.

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Mattie Bowyer

Cultural Appropriation in Jackson High School

The public high school of Jackson, Missouri is widely regarded as the best of the best. Their varsity football team for the 2022-23 season was the district champion. Their graduating students are regularly admitted to Southeast Missouri University, located in the next town over. Rival schools often glimpse them approaching track meets, basketball games, and other competitive events decked out in red and black. One thing in particular makes these students and their school stand out, however—their mascot, the “fighting Indian”.

The city of Jackson, Missouri was founded in 1814. It was named after President Andrew Jackson, who was a general at the time. Jackson High School was first established in 1867, two years after President Jackson died. The students and staff then declared themselves to be the “Jackson Fighting Indians.” Today, one of their popular logos printed on t-shirts, hats, and other school merchandise depicts a spear with feathers on it. One might find it endearing that the school was consequently named after a city which was named after a president, but the dark history behind the man and the mascot taints that sweetness.

President Jackson may be one of nearly fifty presidents, but he was arguably one of the worst. He owned hundreds of slaves and forced thousands of native Americans to be displaced from their homes, driving them out of the South to make space for slave plantations. He was a white supremacist who imposed his influence on the United States in order to check boxes on his agenda. Fragments of that influence remain more than a century later, specifically at Jackson High School. The city itself remains over 90% white, with 5% of other races and just 1.54% of black people making up the population (World Population Review). Not surprisingly, the school reflects almost the exact same demographic.

Over the years, the proposition that JHS change its mascot has been rejected again and again, despite thousands of signatures scrawled across multiple petitions. This situation prompts more than a few questions: Why did Jackson choose the “fighting Indians” for a mascot? Why are so many people adamant about keeping things this way? And, to play devil’s advocate—what is so wrong with choosing the “Indian” as a mascot?

Jackson, Missouri has struggled with racism from its start. Besides it being established before the abolishment of slavery, Jackson is located in the “bootheel” of Missouri, in close proximity to the South. The state of Missouri as a whole was pro-slavery, and even after slaves were freed, Jim Crow law remained in place for decades. President Andrew Jackson’s influence remained a force to be reckoned with, driving native Americans away and replacing them with a mascot which distorted views of their cultures. Citizens of Jackson often use “tradition” as an excuse for keeping their town and school the way it is, despite the sometimes offensive nature of such traditions. Although not an excuse, it does explain why many of the older members of this population have fought so hard for JHS to remain the “Jackson fighting Indians.”

However, there is a difference between continuing tradition and continuing cultural appropriation. To this day, fans of Jackson High School can be seen wearing “war paint” and headdresses to games. This is extremely offensive because dressing this way lumps every native American tribe together, when there are certain patterns, colors, and symbols unique to each culture.

In the words of Cherokee nation member Adrienne Keene, “This headdress has been “borrowed” so many times and in so many ways that its original power and sacred meaning have been all but lost to the non-native public.” Headdresses are not meant for just anyone to wear; they are presented to a leader whom the community places their trust in. Random kids and adults donning this symbol of leadership and nobility takes away all meaning from it. When a non-native person dons one of these headdresses or a cheap, distorted version of it, they are erasing hundreds of years of native American tradition. Native American culture is not something one can take on and off whenever one wants; borrowing the aspects of native Americans that one likes and discarding others should not be an acceptable thing to do. One can admire another culture without cherry-picking bits of it for themselves. Doing such a thing is highly disrespectful and a slap in the face to people of that ethnicity.

Choosing an entire ethnicity as one’s school mascot is offensive on multiple levels. For Jackson High School and others like it to put “Indians”—which is not even ethnically accurate, since Native Americans do not come from India—on the same level as the Notre Dame Bulldogs, Cape Central Tigers, and so on is incredibly dehumanizing. Native Americans are not animals, and they are not vicious—both traits which typically determine what schools pick to represent them. Also, choosing the “fighting Indians” as a mascot sends the message that Jackson High School views every native American as part of the same tribe or ethnicity. This is not only wildly inaccurate but sends the message that despite slavery and Jim Crow no longer being legal, racism still rules the school.

Some people may argue that remaining the “Jackson fighting Indians” is not for the sake of offending people. Writer John McWhorter of the *New York Times* even noted in an article, “Some academics say, ‘imitation is a form of negation.’ But what happened to ‘imitation is the sincerest form of flattery’?” However, the general consensus amongst citizens of Jackson (which, again, is mostly white) is that they want to preserve tradition. They do not want to preserve it to show their admiration for Native Americans at all, but rather, to protect their old high school memories. This does not mean that the mascot should remain, though. It is important to note that not every tradition should continue to be practiced. It was a tradition for two men to duel to the death for a woman’s honor once upon a time; it is doubtful that people would want that tradition around today.

Cultural appropriation is not a form of flattery. It is just racism dressed up with a pretty pink bow so that the appropriators do not have to acknowledge its offensive nature. Native Americans and other ethnicities should not be degraded by being turned into mascots. Reducing them to a costume is hurtful and dehumanizing. Native Americans growing up in schools like this are going to lack positive role models of their own ethnicity. It will significantly impact their self-worth.

There is nothing flattering about white people misrepresenting Native American tribes and cultures. If schools like Jackson High are continuously allowed to foster this form of racism, the identities of Native Americans will only be further pushed into the background, and their stories and symbols forgotten. When students and other fans of JHS don headdresses and warpaint or a piece of clothing with the spear and feathers logo, they are mocking Native Americans, even if it is being done inadvertently. It is a widely known fact that children learn behaviors from their parents; since that is true, parents sending their children to JHS need to reconsider their stance on this ongoing issue of cultural appropriation. Do they want their kids to grow up without any regard for other peoples’ cultures and identities? Do they want to teach them to value their own tradition over everyone else’s—the tradition of inflicting racist behavior on minorities? If the answer to both questions is no, perhaps changing the mascot is not such a bad idea.

Southeast Missouri State University has already begun to take steps in the right direction. Beginning in the 1980s, SEMO began to slowly phase out their original mascot—unsurprisingly, also an Indian—and replace it with other less offensive options. The school went through many mascots before settling on Rowdy the Redhawk on January 22, 2005. Though the transition was well overdue, it was a necessary one to make.

Admission of more people of color into SEMO has been on the rise, too, which may be indicative of the school's efforts to right its wrongs. In 1985, 95.5% of Southeast Missouri State's undergrad population was white. As of the fall 2023 semester, minority attendance has gone from a mere 4.5% to 14.8%. The change has been slow, but it is happening. If the university that Jackson high schoolers look up to continues to make positive changes such as these, perhaps it will encourage JHS to do the same.

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Contributors Notes

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MATTIE BOWYER is a senior in undergrad at SIUC. She studies English with a specialization in creative writing and minors in classical civilization. She is originally from Jackson, Missouri and is the oldest of four siblings. Other work of hers has appeared in *Grassroots SIU Spring 2024* edition, including *In the Lonely Hour and Forget You- Prologue*. She currently lives in Carbondale, Illinois.

KACY CLARKSTON is a recent graduate from SIU's English Bachelor's program. Mainly using writing for analytical ends, he currently attributes his time towards legal work and research in hopes of writing for a legal journal during his time in law school. His essay "Crafting Critiques and Imagining Falsely Efficient Futures: Swift the Economist," serves as his first published piece.

PORSCHÉ GARRETT is a senior at SIU who is double majoring in English and Classical Civilizations, and minoring in Art History. She is the President of the SIU chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. She is also the Editor-in-Chief of *Grassroots Literary & Arts Magazine* and her work can be found throughout the 2022-2024 editions. She hails from a small farm in Illinois and can often be found amongst a myriad of cats and dogs.

MADELIN HAYES is a 2024 graduate of SIU-C with a B.A. in English. She currently teaches Sophomores and Seniors at Hamilton County Senior High and is from Benton, Illinois. Some favorite works of literature she teaches are *The Odyssey*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. When she is not busy planning her next lesson, she reads novels with a coffee in hand, spends time with her family and friends, walks her dog, and loves spending time outdoors.

MADELEINE MILLER lives in Benton, Illinois, and is a public high school teacher. She received her B.A. in English Education from Southern Illinois University of Carbondale this year. Currently, she focuses on educating the youth while writing in her free time.

MORGAN RUDEN is a 2024 graduate of Southern Illinois University Carbondale with a B.A. in English, Pre-Professional specialty.

MARY SCHELLENBERG is an undergraduate student studying English Literature, particularly being drawn to literary analysis. Over her academic career at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, she has been a member of SIU's Honors Program, worked as an English tutor for Intercollegiate Athletics, and was published in *Grassroots Literary & Arts Magazine* for a short work of fiction and poetry. Now she is a consultant at SIU's Writing Center and a member of the English honor society Sigma Tau Delta.

MAURA WHITE is from Sesser, Illinois, and is currently pursuing a degree in English Education with a minor in Spanish. Maura will graduate from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 2026. Upon graduation, she aspires to become a high school English teacher, sharing her passion for writing and literature with her students. Maura is very excited to make her authorial debut in *The Lighthouse* and hopes to have the opportunity to publish more of her work in the future.