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Articulate

a journal of literary and cultural criticism

Spring 1999
Volume IV

Published by the Denison University Department of English
Articulate • 1999
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*Articulate* is a publication of the Denison University English Department. It is supported through kind funding from:

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*Articulate* • 1999
E-MAIL SCAMS AND THE COMMUNAL TEXT:
AN ANALYSIS OF A PHONE FRAUD LEGEND

by Paul Durica '00
Winner of the 1999 Robert T. Wilson Award for Scholarly Writing

A couple of months ago a friend sent me an e-mail, the uncertain subject of which was "Urban Legend?" He knew about my study of urban folklore transmitted on the Internet and was not certain if a message he had received qualified. The message took the form of a warning and urged recipients to pass it on. The message text I first received read:

Mandley, Vicki wrote:
I received a telephone call from an individual identifying himself as an AT&T Service Technician who was conducting a test on our telephone lines. He stated that to complete the test we should touch nine (9), zero (0), the pound sign (#) and then hang up. Luckily, we were suspicious and refused. Upon contacting the telephone company we were informed that by pushing 90#, you give the requesting individual full access to your telephone line, which allows them to place a long distance telephone calls billed to your home phone number. We were further informed that this scam has been originating from many of the local jails/prisons. I have also verified this information with UCB Telecomm. Please beware. This sounds like an Urban Legend - IT IS NOT!!! I further called GTE Security this morning and verified that this is definitely possible. DO NOT press 90# for ANYONE. The GTE Security department requested that I share this information with EVERYONE I KNOW!!! Could you PLEASE pass this on. If you have mailing lists and/or newsletters from organizations you are connected with, I encourage you to pass on this information.

Upon reading this text, I was reminded of other stories about phone fraud. Brunvand provides the text of one such legend, the "Burt Reynolds Telephone Credit Card Number" legend, in The Choking Doberman. Another legend concerning telephone fraud has been circulating over the Internet. In this legend, long-distance dollars are stolen from terminals in the Caribbean. Like the above text, this legend revolves around the criminals' use of a particular sequence of numbers that, when dialed, makes the innocent caller prey to telephone fraud. Mikkelson provides an adequate summary of this persistent story:

Circulating on the net are dire warnings not to call numbers in the 809 area code, because these codes are part of scams designed to run up your phone bill. The warnings are correct in that if you call one of these numbers in pursuit of a "mystery shopper" job or information about an "injured" relative, or you simply return a call to a mysterious number on your pager, your phone bill will go way up. Not because calls to the 809 area code are billed
at a higher rate than calls to any other area code, but rather because you will deliberately be kept on the line while the clock is ticking. So the warnings are right that you will get suckerd, just not about how this will happen.

Unlike the 90#, the 809 story is believed to be true and has resulted in a warning posted on both the Better Business Bureau and the National Fraud Information Center web sites (Mikkelson). The degree to which these two texts are connected is difficult to determine. The 809 story began circulating in early 1997, and I first received the 90# story in the summer of 1998. I simply provide the 809 story to show the 90# story's connection to a tradition of telephone fraud tales and to illustrate the current popularity of this brand of legend. The 90# story did not really capture my interest until I received a second version of it—a version that superficially resembles the earlier text but that also contains subtle and, I will argue, important differences.

In my previous work with e-mail and urban legends, I have studied how the technology of transmission stabilizes a legend text, allowing for countless reproductions with no alteration in form or content. I have also discovered that this technology allows variations to develop. When I received the second version of the 90# story, I was surprised by the alterations made to the text. I was surprised because the alterations were minor. Usually, variants possess distinct characteristics. For example, I have studied two e-mail versions of a popular kidney theft legend collected a year apart and identical in form and content—indicating the textual stability permitted or perhaps fostered by the technology of transmission. I have also collected e-mail variants of the kidney theft legend different enough from the stabilized version to suggest modern technology permits some of the variation associated with oral tradition. The differences between these texts are blatant: different locales, different victims, different thieves. In the two versions of the 90# story I have collected, the differences consist of the changing of a few words, suggesting a development quite different from the kidney theft legend. In presenting the second text, I have taken the liberty or insist of the changing of a few words, suggesting a development quite different from the first text:

I received a telephone call from an individual identifying himself as an AT&T Service Technician that was running a test on our telephone lines. He stated that to complete the test we should touch nine (9), zero (0), pound sign (#) and hang up. Luckily, we were suspicious and refused. Upon contacting the telephone company we were informed that by pushing 90# you end up giving the individual that called you access to your telephone line and allows them to place a long distance telephone call, with the charge appearing on your telephone call. We were further informed that this scam has been originating from many of the local jails/prisons. I have verified with UCB Telecom that this actually happens. Please beware. This sounds like an Urban Legend - IT IS NOT!!! I called GTE Security this morning and verified that this is definitely possible and DO NOT press 90# for ANYONE. It will give them access to your phone line to make long distance calls ANYWHERE!!! The GTE Security department told me to go ahead and share this information with EVERYONE I KNOW!!! Could you PLEASE pass this on. If you have mailing lists and/or newsletters from organizations you are

Paul Durica

The text ends abruptly—the last lines lost—and, as noted above, the differences between this text and the first text are minimal. The first text appears to be the more concise, the more polished of the two. The italicized portions of the second text tend to be verbal stumbling blocks, clusters of words missing or smoothed-out in the first text. These changes suggest either an evolution or devolution of the text. One of these possibilities is suggested by the dates attached to the texts. Although I received the second text on June 21, 1998—five days after I received the first text—the story itself is dated May 7, 1998. If this evidence is taken as valid—there are reasons it may not be—then the second text is older than the first. The conception of the first text may be the handiwork of a concerned grammarian who received the second text and was mortified by its butchery of the English language. In any case, the text has been changed, changed consciously by one or more individuals. Whether or not the mysterious grammarian is Vicki Mandley—the stated author of the first text—is inconsequential. Vicki Mandley is probably not the "I" in the text, the concerned individual who called GTE Security and so forth. The "I" in the text may never have existed and, when the changes in the text are considered, has diminished in authority. This text is a communal text shaped by its recipients. By communal text I mean a text that circulates among a group of individuals, with some shared interest, who construct the text as they transmit it to one another; the text does not have a single author whose textual authority is respected. The community, in this case, refers to computer users who spread the 90# story to their friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Journalist Howard Rheingold calls these large groups of computer users "virtual communities" and defines them as "social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (5). Rheingold calls the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (WELL)—the virtual community to which he belongs—"a small town" that meets all the various social needs of a small town community:

People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantia, and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends, and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot if idle talk. (Rheingold 3)

Rheingold speculates that individuals are drawn to virtual communities like the WELL by a "hunger for community" that increases "as more and more informal public spaces disappear from our real lives" (6). In regard to the 90# story, a virtual community has used the technology of transmission and a piece of computer folklore to subvert the permanence and, thus, the authority of the printed word.

Although this group shaping of a text may be seen as a positive event by individuals like Rheingold, seen as a fortification through technology of interpersonal relationships fragmented by society, the text itself has diminished. As noted, the authority of the "I" vanishes the moment a change in the original text is made. The "I" no longer controls the text; the recipients of the e-mail effectively control the text's content and message. Previous forms of printed media would not cede this control to the recipient. An individual may take a copy of Plato's Republic from the library and
scribe his own thoughts across the pages, but the original printed words—although obscured—would endure, their authority intact. With a text transmitted through e-mail, the individual in the above example can insert his words in the place of the sender's words and forward the text without any evidence of his alterations being apparent. What results is a body of texts—any forwarded e-mail—whose authority must be questioned, for the technology of transmission allows ample opportunity for alteration. These texts should not be trusted, for the “I”s may be masked “We”s. The paranoia pervading the 90# story easily translates to the paranoia fostered by the technology of transmission.

At first the above situation may seem strangely similar to the oral development of a legend text, prompting one to speculate that oral texts produce similar suspicions. I would argue that oral texts are quite different from e-mail-transmitted texts like the 90# story. Transmission of an oral text usually merits a face-to-face encounter; the transmitter and recipient trust one another to a certain extent. The transmitter usually claims to be the source or close to the source of the story, using an introductory remark like, “I heard this from my cousin whose friend...” The source of an e-mail story may be much more obscure. The header on a message may contain several hundred names, making the original sender difficult to locate; even the name at the end of the header may not provide an accurate source. Stories are frequently posted on electronic bulletin boards or serve as chat-line topics; an individual can copy the legend text from one of these sources and forward it to others. Even a forward from a respected friend, by its nature as a forward, has come from a different source; an individual may trust the friend without having to trust the forward. In many ways the e-mail story seems to emerge from the ether, and a certain degree of healthy skepticism is understandable. Secondly, variation in oral transmission is expected and, thus, more acceptable; when re-telling the legend, the transmitter may unintentionally forget a word or two, without the recipients suspecting his honesty. A printed text presupposes a certain degree of stability; changes in wording are more easily determined than with an oral text, and one must inevitably question why these changes were made. With the e-mail legend, one must wonder why the transmitter altered the text when he or she could have forwarded it without any alteration. When the technology for exact reproduction exists and is actively used, a simple change from “that” to “which” in a legend text assumes significance.

All of these speculations have been generated from the assumption that the second text is older than the first text, that the second text has been "corrected" either individually or communally with the end product being the first text. In fact, there is nothing to prove the two texts are even connected. No means exists for tracing e-mail messages. Since e-mail allows for a rapid and diverse dissemination, these two texts may have circulated in vastly different social groups, never once coming into contact with one another. Instead of one giving birth to the other, they may both be born of a third text, an Ur text of sorts, or even of a fourth and fifth text respectively that may have both originated from a sixth text. The trail of development is hopelessly muddled. Whereas oral legends developed slowly enough for folklorists to acquire a sense of geographic dispersion and overall dissemination, e-mail texts shoot out in countless directions making tracking nearly impossible. Despite the fact e-mail cannot be traced, belief in an e-mail tracer exists. This belief is reflected in another urban legend circulating via e-mail, a legend that bears some similarity to the 90# pound story.

The same summer I collected the 90# story I came across another text that involved fraud of a sort. This particular text was not a warning of fraud but fraudulent in itself. The text assumed the form of a friendly letter written by America's wealthiest man:

Hello Everyone,

And thank you for signing up for my Beta Email Tracking Application or (BETA) for short. My name is Bill Gates. Here at Microsoft we have just compiled an e-mail tracing program that tracks everyone to whom this message is forwarded to. It does this through an unique IP (Internet Protocol) address log book database. We are experimenting with this and need your help. Forward this to everyone you know and if it reaches 1000 people, everyone on the list will receive $1000 and a copy of Windows98 at my expense. Enjoy.

Note: Duplicate entries will not be counted. You will be notified by email with further instructions once this email has reached 1000 people. Windows98 will not be shipped until it has been released to the general public.

Your friend,

Bill Gates & The Microsoft Development Team.

Even for a moment, I will not grant this text any validity. For one, e-mail, as previously noted, cannot be traced: once an individual sends out a message, he or she cannot control nor determine to whom that message is subsequently forwarded. Secondly, one hopes the wealthiest man in America possesses a better command of the English language or at least enough sense to employ a secretary who does. Despite my skepticism, this message has been taken seriously. In fact, the subject heading of the version I received read, "I don't think this is a joke." Many people must share this opinion for this particular e-mail sported the largest header I have ever encountered: four hundred and sixty-two people had read and forwarded this text before it made its way to my mailbox. The appeal of the text is understandable: easy money. Although no one is really hurt by what is obviously a joke, a teasing of greed, the text still succeeds in undermining a willingness to believe. The text is fraudulent, and this fraudulence is what connects it to the 90# story. If blatantly false texts are actively taking advantage of people—as the header to this particular text easily proves—then belief in the 90# story is strengthened. A legitimate reason to be afraid exists. The Bill Gates text feeds the fear upon which the 90# story thrives. Of course, the 90# story is a false text itself, a warning about a fictional crime. Legitimate reasons exist to be wary, but the e-mail recipient repeatedly encounters illegitimate sources of fear. The problem facing the e-mail recipient is how to see through these illusions—the scams and scam warnings—how to avoid being blinded like Quixote by a circle of textual mirrors. The solution and the shield may be one of the current sources of the problem: the communal text.

Recent legislation—such as the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the Com-
communications Decency Act—has attempted to apply a national code of morals to the Internet. Although this legislation has pertained primarily to restricting children's access to Internet pornography, it is still relevant to a discussion of community. This legislation suggests the establishment of a system of values to be applied to computer mediated communication. Whether or not a system of values acceptable to the majority of computer users can be established—through legislation or other means—is still a matter of heated debate. I would argue that any attempt at establishing communal values for the Internet is an attempt to lessen the problems generated by communal texts. Internet communities need to function like traditional communities, to develop a public trust, if the paranoia bred by stories like 90# is to be contained. Several virtual communities currently do exist that seem to have developed a sense of public trust; Rheingold's description of the WELL community, "a form of psychotherapy" for some, is a good example (4). These virtual communities tend to be small, scattered bands of computer users: "There is no such thing as a single, monolithic online subculture; it's more like an ecosystem of subcultures, some frivolous, other serious" (3). At the same time, increased access to the Internet is drawing these communities together:

Suddenly, the isolated archipelagos of a few hundred or a few thousand people are becoming part of an integrated entity . . . part of an overarching culture, similar to the way the United States became an overarching culture after the telegraph and telephone linked the states. (Rheingold 10)

To contain the problems caused by false texts on the Internet, a more widely accepted set of values needs to be established. In a practical sense, communal texts should be recognized as communal texts. Instead of simply forwarding the 90# story and perpetuating the false authority of the "I" in the text, the e-mail user should comment on the issues and problems raised by the text. He or she should endeavor to create a dialogue with other e-mail users in which the text is deconstructed and its message reappraised. This kind of communal, close reading may cut down on the number of kidney theft messages the e-mail user receives in a given year; scare stories can be replaced by thoughtful discussion, a bridge to public trust. My suggestion that the communal text should be recognized as such and used as a means to build community may seem overly idealistic. I may also be panicked by the very texts to which I suggest a calm response. In preaching Internet honesty to such an extreme, I may be guilty of overestimating the effect of scare stories. After all, these stories are prevalent in traditional forms of community, and folklorists regard the oral variety of scare stories as a means in which communal anxieties are expressed (Brunvand 2). The boy who cried wolf has had a long and colorful history.

Despite the prevalence of scare stories in the history of communities, the underlying message of the 90# story, to me, seems to be a call for public trust. The threat in the 90# story originates outside the community: criminals, jailed and otherwise. These individuals have corrupted technology for their own gain; they have violated the safety provided by community and the technology that binds the community together. Only by recognizing this threat and re-asserting control over the technology, the story suggests, can the community contain this threat. In order to contain this threat, the

Bibliography

"SO ALS CRISTE WOLDE IT WERE":
CHURCH PROPAGANDA IN THE SEGE OF MELAYNE

BY BETSY WILLIAMSEN '99

WINNER OF THE 1999 ROBERT T. WILSON AWARD FOR SCHOLARLY WRITING

The Sege of Melayne is a Middle English Charlemagne romance featuring the well-loved corpus of familiar characters transferred from the Old French chansons de geste. Charles, the Frankish king and defender of the Faith; Roland, his nephew and champion; Oliver, Roland’s boon companion; the feisty Archbishop Turpin; and a battlefield-full of vile Saracen “houndes” just waiting for someone to kill them. This romance, like most of the chansons de geste, concerns itself almost wholly with the conflict between the Christian and Islamic worlds that began before Charlemagne’s time and was still a reality at the time of Melayne’s composition around the end of the fourteenth century.

Although most of the Middle English romances concerning Charlemagne’s never-ending fight against invading pagans are based fairly closely on pre-existing chansons, no source has been discovered for The Sege of Melayne. It is generally categorized as belonging to the Otuel group by dint of its sharing with Otuel and Roland a Saracen sultan by the name of Garic, although Otuel himself never appears in Melayne. The only surviving copy of Melayne, unfortunately fragmentary, appears in the British Museum MS Additional 31042, generally known as the London Thornton Manuscript. It is accompanied in the manuscript by a variety of religious materials in Latin, French, and English, as well as romances such as The Sege of Jerusalem and Roland and Otuel. The existence of these romances amidst such works as the Passio Christi Cantus and the Moralizacio Sacer dotis tocius apparatus in misa is not as strange as it might originally seem, if one considers the religious bent of these particular romances. Those mentioned above treat of battles fought in the name of Christianity and teach that the most just wars are those fought for the glory of the one true Christian God. In order to do this, The Sege of Melayne portrays the Saracens as profoundly Other in their religious practices and Turpin as a strong warrior and spiritual leader who demands the respect and obedience of the secular world.

The romance begins when the city of Milan is sacked by the Saracen sultan Arabas, who burns the symbols of Christianity, “bothe the Rode and the Marie free,” and life, and the lives of his wife and children. Alantyne prays to Christ and is visited by another angel, who bids him reclaim Milan and presents him with a sword sent by Christ, making Charles God’s “werryoure here in erthe” (119).

Immediately the two civilizations clash, as the Saracens demand conversion to their idolatrous religion and the Christian God demands vengeance for the invasion of Christian territory. More than simple territorial or material greed, it is religious differences and the desire to win their respective gods more followers that engenders the conflicts between the two cultures, and this is somewhat reflective of contemporary reality. At the time The Sege of Melayne was composed, Spain was still under Muslim control, and the Islamic civilization’s history of growth through conquest would have been familiar to the romance’s audiences. During the time of Charlemagne, the poem’s setting, the Islamic threat would have been very real indeed, as it was during the eighth and ninth centuries that the Islamic civilization reached its largest extent (Strayer 8: 576).

Here, in the midst of historical reality, arises the first (apparent) misunderstanding of the nature of Islam. Despite the actuality of Islamic conquest, Muslim leaders did not demand the conversion of all they conquered. The Koran declares that all monotheists, as fellow “people of the book,” should be given protection and religious freedom (Strayer 8: 578). Thus, within the areas conquered by Muslims lived Jews and Christians who were not persecuted—although they were prohibited from public displays of their beliefs—and who were frequently allowed to maintain the leadership positions they had held before the Muslim conquest (Wolf 92). The romance, however, presents the Saracen sultan and certain of his warriors as something akin to a group of deranged missionaries; ignoring the command of tolerance toward monotheists, Arabas tells his Christian captives that any who “ne will noghte to oure lawe be swornne, / He sail be hanged or other morne” (55-56).

Perhaps the reason Arabas ignores this command is that the Saracens as traditionally presented in the chansons de geste and romances follow a religion that bears very little resemblance to Islam. The fictional Saracens worship idols, which usually represent more than one deity (although Melayne mentions only “saynt Mahownn” (1253)). Although pre-Islamic Arabs were indeed polytheistic and worshipped spirits and deities represented by idols, Muhammad decreed these practices and introduced a strictly monotheistic doctrine (Strayer 6: 575-6). Muslims followed the teachings of Muhammad, but did not worship him as a deity; the Saracens of the chansons and romances worship a deified Muhammad as Christians worship Jesus Christ.

Most critics of the literature believe the European poets were indeed ignorant of Islamic doctrine, and that their naivete is reflected in their work. If the poets had no understanding of Islam, it is probable that little to no accurate information was disseminated throughout Christian Europe. This was truer in England than on the continent: “The Crusades had never become a national movement in England as they had in France, with its Mediterranean seaboard, and the majority of writers in the fourteenth century knew precious little about them and still less about Islam” (White 178). That information about Islam was limited is supported by the reactions of First Crusaders to their Muslim surroundings on reaching the Holy Land: when the Norman
Tancred reached the Temple in Jerusalem in 1099, he naturally assumed that the silver image he discovered on a throne was an idol of "that original Antichrist, the baleful and wicked Mahomet" (Ralph of Caen, qtd. in Bennett 101). If the only information the crusaders had about the Muslims came from the *chansons* and other such material, it is no wonder they would expect idolatry. Although more accurate facts about Islam were sure to have been available to at least the nobility by the time of Melayne's composition, the acceptance of the stock Saracen and the formulaic nature of the Charlemagne romances inhibited any deviation from the established representation.

Norman Daniel suggests that the original poets, secular *jongleurs*, were fully aware that they were misrepresenting Islam, and that they created a polytheistic idolatry solely for its humor. He believes that the poets and their audiences were at least vaguely familiar with the nature of Islam as a monotheistic religion, but that to represent the fictional Saracen's religion as such would have been to bring it too close to Christianity. He also proposes that the absurdity of the idolatry came about because the poets did not know enough about paganism to make their Saracens' false religion plausible.

Pragmatically, to expound on the fine distinctions between the two religions within the confines of an entertainment piece would have been far too educational for an audience expecting excessive bloodshed without moral dilemmas. It is still very possible that the secular poets and their audiences were unacquainted with Islam in its actuality; the only people who had good reason to study Islam were the clerics who needed to understand the other religion in order to convince its followers to abandon it for the true Christian faith. Clerics were so familiar with the similarities between Islam and Christianity that Peter the Venerable was unable to determine whether the Mohammedan error must be called a heresy and its followers heretics, or whether they are to be called pagan. . . . For in the company with certain heretics (Mohammed writes so in his wicked Koran), they preach that Christ was indeed born of a virgin, and they say that he is greater than every other man, not excluding Mohammed; they affirm that he lived a sinless life, preached truths, and worked miracles. They acknowledge that he was the Spirit of God, the Word—but not the Spirit of God or the Word as we either know or expound. . . . Choose, therefore, whichever you prefer; either call [the Moslems] heretics on account of the heretical opinion by which they agree with the Church in part and disagree in part, or call them pagans on account of the surpassing wickedness by which they subdue every heresy of evil profession. . . . If you call them heretics, it has been proven that they are to be opposed beyond all other . . . heresies; if you call them pagans, I shall demonstrate, by the authority of the Fathers, that they are to be resisted nonetheless. (qtd. in Metlitzki 200)

That the Muslim religion was viewed by many as heresy is supported by the legend that Muhammad had been a Catholic cardinal who preached heresy to the pagan Arabs out of spite. Muhammad was the most learned of the cardinals, and thus was promised the papacy in return for converting the Saracens in the East. While he was gone, however, the ruling pontiff died, and the cardinals broke their promise and elected another. As a revenge, Muhammad began to "preach the contrary of Christian truth" (Metlitzki 204). This legend is evidence that the similarities between Christianity and Islam were well-known, at least among the groups who circulated the legend.

As mentioned above, the ecclesiastical classes should have been fairly knowledgeable about the tenets of the Islamic faith. Does the assertion of Melayne's clerical authorship, then, lose credibility? Realistically, although the Church's internal dialogues about Islam strove to incorporate serious facts, its goal in regard to the secular population would most likely have been simply to convince the populace of the inherently evil nature of Islam. Aware of the possibilities of popular literature as a means of indoctrination, "the Church was not slow to exploit its claim upon the imagination of the ruling class" (Barron 92). Ignoring Christianity's own violent nature and the clergy's particular reputation for debauchery, the official polemic against Islam portrayed Muslims as inherently violent, as well as sexually rapacious.

Medieval Islam did, indeed, place few of the necessary (to Christianity) restrictions on sexual activity. When Muhammad preached God's word to his adherents, he limited polygamy to four wives, himself taking ten during his lifetime (Strayer 8: 576-77). This, of course, was innately offensive to a religious doctrine that taught chastity as a prime path to paradise. Christian theologians were additionally horrified by the Muslim conception of paradise: it is a place of "sensual earthly delights," in which "whatever one's appetite suggests is at once fulfilled," including sexual desires (Metlitzki 212). The supposed Saracen passion for sensual luxury is wonderfully exaggerated in the description of Gascy's coronation ceremony: his followers shower him with gold, jewels, "sixty fawconns faire of flyghte / And sexti stedis noble and wyghte" (844-45), all symbols of a pleasure-loving and extremely wealthy noble class. To satisfy Gascy's more primal urges,

The Kynge of Massedoyne lande
Sent the Sowndane a presande,
The meryeste one molde:
Sixty maydens faire of face
That cheffeste of his kyngdome was
And faireste appon folde... (838-43)

After the feast, "the Sowdane hade hymselfe I wene / Thaire althere maydenhede" (Barron 92). The sheer number of Saracen warriors traditionally faced by the literary heroes reveals some of the anxieties inevitably bred in Christians by a civilization that practiced polygamy (White 174). The violence supposedly inherent in the above lusty Saracens was perhaps justly attributed to the Muslims because of their belief in *jihad* but its actual manifestation in Islamic society was still misunderstood by those like Ricoldo da Monte Croce, who said, "The religion of the Saracens is violent and was brought in by violence, and so among them it is held to be quite certain that it will last only as long as the victory of the sword will remain with them" (qtd. in Daniel 95). The Saracens' supposedly violent nature becomes comically fanatical in *Melayne* when the Macedonian unit sees its leader wounded and "brayede owte swerdes full bryghte / Agaynes the Sowdane folke to fighte" (1129-30; italics added). Although Muslim territory indeed grew through...
conquest and many of the conquered people chose to convert to Islam; religious tolerance was offered to “people of the book,” so conversion by Islamic swords was not the reality most Christians believed it to be.

With the Islamic people already bloodstained in the popular eye and with their unrestrained sensuality casting them in an animalistic light, the Church needed to employ little energy in order to arouse ruthlessly anti-Arab sentiments among the Christian warrior class, whose participation in any battles the Church might choose to engineer was integral. However, clerics certainly would not want to risk revealing the religious similarities between the two cultures, possibly tempting the masses to expect similar tolerance for sexual license from Christian spiritual leaders. Thus, if clerics writing songs both to entertain the warrior class and to teach the superiority of the Christian faith needed to employ Saracens as enemies, they were faced with making their fictional Muslims as Other as possible. Although the idol-worshipping is indeed quite humorous at times, the moral vilification of the enemy is much more productive than laughter; making the pseudo-religion amusing simply brought the Church’s propaganda to more listeners.

In all regards other than their idolatrous polytheism, the Saracens of the poems are strikingly similar to the Christians who inevitably must defeat them. Their noble societies seem to be analogously structured, in that the ruler is surrounded by knights who owe him allegiance and whose services he rewards with lands and other material goods. The nobility and chivalry of the Saracens is not questioned. *The Sege of Melayne* refers to one individual Saracen warrior as “a nobill Knyghte and a chevallrouse” (995) and “curtays” in battle (1063). Giving the enemy the same praise lavished on Roland and Charles’ other men may seem odd, but it must be remembered that knights would not stoop to engage in battle with an opponent who was not worthy of the fight.

It is understood that the outcome of the battles in the romance will largely be determined by the righteousness of each side’s respective religious beliefs. This is somewhat reminiscent of the ancient ritual of trial by combat, in which God (or the gods) determined the winner of the case by leaving him with functioning internal organs at the end of the duel. If the rules of trial by combat apply to the individual duels described within the romance’s larger battles, it would appear that, contrary to the famous line from the *Chanson de Roland*, the *paganis* are in the right and the Christians in the wrong. When the Franks demand that Arabs send some people for them to fight, Sir Arabaunt of Perse [Persia] obligingly emerges from the gates of Milan with forty thousand men (to match the Frankish army) and “he bare down / worthy lordes of grete renown” until only a handful are left alive (247-48). Each side expects its god(s) to lend some kind of divine assistance, but the Christian God seems to have been otherwise occupied during the first battle, which leaves only Roland and three others standing.

Since the Christian audience of *The Sege of Melayne* understood the inherent and immutable perfection of their faith, God’s apparent abandonment of his warriors at this point in the romance may have been somewhat disturbing. Is Christianity, then, perhaps not infallible? If we compare this initial slaughter of the Christian troops to that in the *Chanson de Roland*, we must accept that this is somehow part of God’s inexplicable plan, and we must simply accept it without questioning. “True to crusade ideology, we may see here warfare depicted as a form of Christian sacrifice and worship—as, indeed, a transformation of the worldly institutions of warfare into a means of serving and reflecting the presence of Christ” (Shepherd 129). Those who die in the first battle are accepted into God’s bosom for their service to Him; as the Duke of Normandy dies, he describes a heavenly vision to his commander:

‘A, Rowlande, byhaulde nowe what I see:
More joye ne myghte never bee
In youte ne yitt in elde.
Loo! I see oure vawarde ledde to hevene
With angells songe and merye stevene
Reghte as thay faughte in the felde.
I see moo angells, loo with myn eghe,
Then there are men within Christyanté
That any wayyn may welde.
To heven thay lede oure nobill knyghtis
And comforthes tham with mayne and myghtis,
With mekill blysse and belde.’ (313-24)

The dead warriors’ example serves as both a stimulation of the Germanic revenge ethic that surely lingers within their Northern European souls, and as an illustration for the second wave of Franks, who must also be prepared to sacrifice their lives for God.

The initial defeat at Milan may also be God’s reprimand of Charles, who disobeys an angelic order when he fails to lead the Frankish army against the Saracens himself; consequently, his “willingness only to delegate his divinely bestowed responsibility causes the deaths of many Christians” (Shepherd 120). Despite being named Christ’s warrior on Earth and receiving explicit instructions for personally retaking Milan, Charles allows himself to be swayed by Ganelon’s advice:

‘What solde worthe of us in Fraunce
And thou in the felde were slayne?
Thyselwe and we at home will byde
And latte Rowlande thedire ryde…’ (182-85)

Although a pragmatic king probably ought to consider such things as the governmental fate of his country, listening to Ganelon is always a bad idea, as the contemporary audience would be well aware. Ganelon seeks Roland’s death in order to lay claim to his lands, and the instinct for self-preservation he triggers in Charles is a subtler version of his own material greed. As God’s chosen warrior, Charles should not hesitate when ordered into the fray, and he most certainly should not make any attempt to preserve his life if God sees fit to end it. “In medieval thought, true humility consisted in recognizing one’s lowly condition compared with God’s greatness, one’s need to surrender oneself completely to the dictates of the divine Will, and one’s total dependence upon grace” (Brault 1: 97). This concept of Humilitas was the ultimate mark of Christian faith.

When Roland and three of his companions are captured after the first battle, they
continue to fight with great fury: “Walde never no Cristyn knyghte thethyn flee / Tho ghe that wyste rychte there to dye” (367-68). These four resign themselves to, and feel honored by, the prospect of dying for their God, if such is God’s intention. Fortunately for them, God wants them to survive this encounter. The sultan, courteous like any worthy noble, feeds the Franks well and suggests that they should renounce their faith and turn to that of Muhammad, incidentally mistaking Roland for Charles. Roland corrects him and counter-suggests that Arabas and his men should embrace the Trinity. The sultan laughs, telling him that the Christian God must have no power, since His symbols were so easily burned when he first sacked the city.

Arabas commands one of his men to fetch a crucifix from a nearby church and throw it into the fire in order to prove the inefficacy of the God who already seems to have abandoned the Franks:

The Sowdane saide, ‘Now sail ye see
What myghte es in a rotyn tree
That youre byleve es in.
I darre laye my lyfe full rychte
That of hymselfe he hase no myghte
Owte of this fire to wyn.
How solde he than helpe another man
That for hymselfe no gyn ne kan,
Nother crafe ne gyn’? (436-44)

Arabas’ plan, however, backfires: as the Christians pray, the cross lies cold in the fire, actually dousing any flames that approach it. Finally the cross cracks, and “a fire than fro the crosse gane frusche / And in the Sarasene eghne it gaffe a dosche” (469-70). While the Saracens are blinded, the Franks kill the sultan and anyone else they can find, escaping on a quartet of horses supplied “thorow Goddis grace” (494). When they arrive at St. Denis and stop to thank God, the horses disappear, thereby proving their miraculous origin.

Because God has obviously not forsaken the Franks, His permitting the deaths of 39,996 Christians is unmistakably a reproach for Charles’ reluctance to risk his own person in combating the Saracens. God need not worry that the message might still be unclear to Charles; He has a very persuasive ambassador in Archbishop Turpin. When Roland tells him the sad news, Turpin casts aside his miter and other symbols of his office, vowing that he will instead arm himself as a warrior and take vengeance on the Saracens. He goes to Charles, supported by an army of clergymen, and demands that the king send troops to Milan. Charles, again advised by Ganelon, wavers, rousing his brother Alantyne to beg for help, Charles puts his own life before those of his vassal’s people, thus violating the reciprocity of the feudal relationship. Charles does send a force, but it is insufficient to defeat the Saracens. When that force is nearly wiped out and Charles still hesitates to engage in battle, he appears a coward who is not galvanized even by the need for vengeance. He fails in his Christianity by ignoring his heaven-sent dream and by his reluctance to reclaim Christian lands and force the conversion of any captives he might take in the process. Charles additionally offends the institution of the Church when he...

... withowtten wene
At the Byschopp was so tene,
A fawchone hase he drawnen.

The Kynge comande his knyghtis kene
The Bischopp for to taa.” (709-23)

When compared with Charles, however, Turpin is revealed as an ultra-positive portrayal of ecclesiastical power. The Charles of the romance’s early scenes (before Turpin puts the fear of God into him) is painted as somewhat lazy and easily swayed, failing to live up to the standards of either Christian or Germanic kingship. When his vassal Alantyne begs for help, Charles puts his own life before those of his vassal’s people, thus violating the reciprocity of the feudal relationship. Charles does send a force, but it is insufficient to defeat the Saracens. When that force is nearly wiped out and Charles still hesitates to engage in battle, he appears a coward who is not galvanized even by the need for vengeance. He fails in his Christianity by ignoring his heaven-sent dream and by his reluctance to reclaim Christian lands and force the conversion of any captives he might take in the process. Charles additionally offends the institution of the Church when he...

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Turpin’s violation of this very important prohibition would seem to prevent his being viewed as a favorable representation of the medieval clergy. In addition to fighting, he demands God’s assistance without any semblance of humility and petulantly rebukes the Virgin for her part in the initial failure at Milan:

‘A, Mary mylde, whare was thi myght
That thou lete thi men thus to dede be dighte
That wighte and worthy were?

Had thou noghte, Marye, yitt bene borne,
Ne had noghte oure gud men thus bene lorne.
The wyte is all in the’” (547-55)

The concept of Humilitas dictates humble acceptance of God’s work. In this scene, however, Turpin resembles the Saracens in most of the romances (although not Melayne), who smash their idols in furious disillusionment when they are defeated.

Although ecclesiastics were supposed to promote peace, Turpin not only commands Charles to go to war, but also does most of the slaying himself. Such actions were bizarrely incongruous with the traditional and sanctioned role of churchmen, but not with the documented deeds of historical clergymen. Carolingian capitularies from the middle of the eighth century document the Church’s official disapproval of clerics’ carrying any kind of secular weapons (Martindale 151). Barber, however, cites the noted battle prowess of the early thirteenth-century bishop Philip of Beauvais — in his time, clerics were forbidden to carry swords and other edged weapons that could draw blood, but maces and clubs were approved (Reign 28). When Bishop Odo of Bayeaux accompanied his brother William on his invasion of England, he is known to have wrapped his mace with cloth so as not to draw blood; a well-aimed (or even a not-so-well-aimed) blow could crush a man’s skull or cause internal hemorrhaging that generally proved fatal. Turpin goes beyond this, hacking Saracens in half with an actual edged weapon.

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Turpin, on the other hand, hyperbolically fulfills all the hallmarks of an admirable churchman, especially from the Church’s perspective. On discovering Roland and the other survivors and learning the state of affairs, the Archbishop immediately
leaps into action, sending a summons "to monke, chanoun, preste and fre / And badd them . . . / . . . / Come help to feghte one Goddis foo" (620-23). Perhaps by doing so, he invites other clerics to violate the prohibition against violence, but it falls to the Church to protect Christendom if the secular warriors fail – or fail even to act. When Charles, even with Turpin's example of efficient army-raising, still vacillates, the Archbishop's passionate faith takes control: "And here I curse the, thou Kyngel! / Because thou lyffes in eresye, / Thou ne dare noghte fyghte one Goddes enemy" (687-89).

Excommunication having convinced Charles to change his attitude, the Christian army arrives at Milan. Turpin, apparently having resumed his vestments—it may be that casting them aside before seizing a weapon negates his crime—performs Mass, and God shows his approval of the pending battle by miraculously supplying bread and wine for the ceremony. Donning armor, Turpin dashes into the fray, accumulating more kills for the day than those of his comrades who fight for their livelihoods. Despite his wounds, he refuses to eat, drink, or receive medical attention, citing the example of Christ's Passion: "Criste for me sufferde mare. / He askede no salve to His sake, / Ne no more sall I this ryde" (1345-47). Significantly, Turpin is the only Christian warrior to face the Saracen champion, Arabaunt, and survive. To return to the subject of trial by combat, perhaps the previous Christian losses to Arabaunt denote the weak faith of the majority; only those truly inspired by God can triumph over the evil of the Other.

Turpin's military prowess seems to be a partial manifestation of a clerical fantasy. Turpin embodies all the powers, spiritual, physical, and political, that the Church of secular warriors themselves (Martindale 165). Their actions made it difficult for the tendencies by instituting the Peace and Truce of God around 1000. The first ecclesiastical peace movements, which arose in tenth-century Aquitaine, were actually aimed at curbing the baronial wars by micrallyically supplying bread and wine for the ceremony. Donning armor, Turpin dashes into the fray, accumulating more kills for the day than those of his comrades who fight for their livelihoods. Despite his wounds, he refuses to eat, drink, or receive medical attention, citing the example of Christ's Passion: "Criste for me sufferde mare. / He askede no salve to His sake, / Ne no more sall I this ryde" (1345-47). Significantly, Turpin is the only Christian warrior to face the Saracen champion, Arabaunt, and survive. To return to the subject of trial by combat, perhaps the previous Christian losses to Arabaunt denote the weak faith of the majority; only those truly inspired by God can triumph over the evil of the Other.

Largely because the baronial wars in Europe frequently left gutted churches in their wakes, the eleventh-century Church attempted to curb the warrior class's violent tendencies by instituting the Peace and Truce of God around 1000. The first ecclesiastical peace movements, which arose in tenth-century Aquitaine, were actually aimed at controlling and punishing those clerics who chose to bear secular arms, rather than secular warriors themselves (Martindale 165). Their actions made it difficult for the Church to condemn warriors who attacked clerics, since the clerics were armed themselves. Having for the most part convinced those of the cloth to lay down their arms, the Church could take action against those of the secular world who raised their weapons against the religious.

The Peace of God, first instituted in France in about 980, was an attempt to give some means of protection to the unarmed sectors of society, namely the clergy and the peasants (Strickland 70). This act was also an endeavor to curb the baronial wars by threatening with excommunication those who thought to settle quarrels through force of arms rather than in the courts of justice (Barber, Knight 251). The Peace forbade the destruction of crops, mills, and churches and the stealing or killing of livestock.
of authority. No good Christian knight would be able to follow Charles' commands with a clear conscience, and the king himself would be wracked with anxiety over the questionable fate of his immortal soul. Finally receiving wholesome advice from Duke Naimes, his wisest knight, Charles asks forgiveness, bowing to the will of God as represented by the Church.

On the battlefield, Turpin becomes the preeminent warrior, claiming the life of many a Saracen. His martial skills far surpass those of the other knights, demonstrated by his rather easy defeat of Arabaunt in a merciless style:

Turpyn strake hym so sekerly
Thurgh the breste bone all plenerly
A lange yerde and more
That ded he daschede to the grounde

The Bischopp than lighte full apertly
And off he hewes his hede in hy... (958-65)

Turpin is a churchman who demands the warriors' respect. His virility dispels the perception of a passive Church controlled by effeminate monks who couldn't defend themselves from a mosquito, much less from hordes of belligerent pagans. Archbishop Turpin is God's scourge, and not to be crossed. His character is rather hypermasculine, as he first rails at Mary (the feminine Church) for her quiescence in the face of the Saracens and then terrorizes the battlefield with his penetrative weapon. This problematic clergyman seems to overturn every behavior proscribed for clerics, and yet Turpin is "the floure of presthode" (1583).

Although such contradictions are widespread throughout The Siege of Melayne, they do paint an informative picture of the relationship between the Church and the nobility and between Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages—or at least, a picture about which much can be speculated. Assuming the clerical authorship suggested by most critics, the romance can easily be read as manipulative propaganda intended to promote trust in the Church over secular rulers and to instill and maintain in the audience a sense of moral and spiritual superiority over the people of Islam. The exaggerated Otherness of the poem's Saracens amplified Christian distrust of Arabic peoples and the overstated inefficacy of the Frankish king, perhaps the greatest of European rulers, encourages an unquestioning obedience to the ecclesiastical powers. The Church satisfied its desire for dominion by using popular literature like The Siege of Melayne to perpetuate a falsehood and undermine a legend.

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Berthe Morisot: A Life of Crossed Boundaries and Exceptions

By Erin E. Gyomber '99

Morisot is an interesting case. A bourgeois woman who prided herself on her elegant and fashionable clothes, a mother and a wife who valued both these roles, a painter and a colleague of the Impressionists, she was able to use her vision of the world to create a body of work, which, while indicating her tenacity and strength in being able to manipulate her circumstances to her advantage, also reflected the dominant, often stereotyped constructions of femininity of her time.

—Adler and Gard 102.

Berthe Morisot is indeed an interesting case. Her life was one of negotiated boundaries and exceptions that included only herself: a woman artist when that was not socially possible, a working mother when the term did not exist, a modern woman confined to certain private spaces, a founding, cutting-edge member of the Impressionist movement, a model for Manet. She continues to negotiate boundaries today: Is she forgotten because of sexism or because she did not have a talent or output similar to Manet or Degas? She was/is limited by who she was, who she knew, what she painted, how much those paintings sold for and to whom. We may never know the truth about Morisot or how she felt about crossing these boundaries, overcoming the limitations of her sex, class, and her place in history, but an exploration of them will lead to a more complete portrait of Berthe Morisot and her world.

Considering the character of your daughters... my teaching will not endow them with minor drawing room accomplishments; they will become painters. Do you realize what this means? In the upper class milieu to which you belong, this will be revolutionary, I might almost say catastrophic. Are you sure you will not come to curse the day when art, having gained admission to your home now so respectable and peaceful, will become the sole arbiter of the fate of two of your children? (Rouart 14)

Joseph Guichard, the second teacher of Berthe and Edma Morisot, was not entirely correct when he wrote to Mme Morisot. One daughter would escape the clutches of knowing too much about art for her own good through marriage. However, Berthe Morisot would remain entangled in the art world for her entire life, and, in fact, her mother would curse her daughter's talent in and involvement with this world. Morisot was a woman painter in a time when the phrase was an oxymoron. One of the few paintings that portray a working woman artist from the time is Edma's Berthe Morisot Painting. In it, Berthe Morisot confronts a canvas with dirty brushes and an intense glare. She is a painter, not simply a woman painting. It is a picture quite unlike Manet's Portrait of Eva Gonzales, a contemporary painter, looking out from the canvas dressed in a sitting gown and painting a picture already framed and decorated. A woman could not be a painter and a painter could not be a woman in early nineteenth century France. Clearly, not even the wardrobe was the same. However, Berthe Morisot lived the duality. What were the societal circumstances that made the idea of a woman artist impossible? How did Morisot negotiate this line, one that seemed to be so clearly drawn, but which she continually crossed and recrossed?

First, upper-class society had clearly drawn boundaries between male and female, separating the two genders into entirely distinct spheres. Men did not negotiate the domestic sphere and women did not enter the public sphere. The cult of true womanhood valued piety, domesticity, and purity. Though men held the knowledge of society and were rational, precise beings, women were expected to be the moral foundation of the home and were almost entirely controlled by their emotions, good only to be mothers and wives. A woman's primary duty to herself, her parents, and society, was to get married. She was, of course, good for little else. Society looked to science to support these divisions, seen as natural and unavoidable.

In nineteenth-century France, women were widely considered to be physiologically less capable of rational thought than men and also to be more given to emotionalism and superficiality. Also biologically determined, it was believed, was woman's "natural" bent toward humility and obedience, a condition that explained her lack of originality, determined her imitative rather than creative abilities, and inevitably undermined any effort that she might make as an artist. (Broude 152)

Scientific experiments proved that white men's brain cavities were the largest of both genders and all races, and that their frontal lobes, where rationality supposedly originated, were "much more beautiful and voluminous" (Broude 152). Medical studies found that if women were educated, their constitutions would weaken or they would become barren because their brains had been overdeveloped. The "indisputable organic inferiority of feminine genius ... [had] been confirmed by decisive experiment, even in the fine arts, and amidst the concurrence of the most favourable circumstances" (Broude 153). Other aspects of society also were easily divided into masculine and feminine spheres. Nature and science were dichotomized. The feminine nature was “to be unveiled, exposed, and penetrated even in her ‘innermost chambers’” by the masculine science (Broude 152). Thus, women could not be creative because it was not biologically possible.

These ideas about women’s brains and their biological dispositions manifested themselves in the education of both sexes.

[Most] public statements argued for a separate and different schooling for boys and girls, based not only on their different natures but on their concomitant social roles... girls were to be groomed for a life of domestic re-
Articulate • 1999

Responsibility, motherhood, appropriate servitude, piety, and gentle accomplishment in those arts deemed suitable, such as needlework, watercolour, and singing — les arts femmes. (Adler and Garb 10)

Girls were educated, but not about things that would tax their brains or encourage them to find fields deemed unsuitable for those who were to become wives, mothers, and hostesses. Too much learning, according to contemporary opinion could “only serve to detract from [a woman’s] happiness and the happiness of those around her” (Higonnet, Berthe Morisot 78). Art education, though, was encouraged in certain fields. It was acceptable for girls to learn watercolour, among other arts, to have a drawing room skill as long as it did not “take precedence over the sacred obligations of woman” (Higonnet, Berthe Morisot 78). It was not acceptable for a woman to aspire to do more than paint little pictures for her own home, and the exclusion of women from formal systems of art education prevented public success. There was a “systematic exclusion of women from proper artistic training, whether through the apprenticeship system or within the academy, and the crucial prohibition against women drawing the nude model” (Stapen 87). The Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the art academy in Paris, did not accept women. The only way around such social conventions was to hire a private tutor, and even then, “only those whose private tutors regarded such study as suitable [a classical education]... would have been schooled in that range of material from which much of the subject matter of art was drawn” (Garb 6). Thus, women could work around the prohibitions, but only if their social class allowed them this option.

This was the social climate that Berthe Morisot somehow managed to negotiate. Her parents were surprisingly supportive of their daughters’ forays into art. In fact, the first lessons were intended to produce a sketch for each girl to give their father. Though Yves Morisot, the oldest Morisot daughter, stopped taking lessons, Berthe and Edma continued to do so. They progressed through several teachers, copied paintings in the Louvre, and exhibited at several Salons. The two sisters were a team devoted to careers in art in time when “[s]ingle women were ‘excess’ human beings who had not fulfilled their womanly destinies” (Higonnet, Berthe Morisot 51). Finally, in 1869 at the age of thirty (late for the time), Edma married and broke the support system that both sisters had depended on. This began a tumultuous period in Morisot’s life. Both sisters were torn about the marriage which took Edma away from the family home. Berthe felt, for the first time, alone in the world with her art. The separation started a flurry of correspondence that clearly demonstrates the norms of the time period. Edma missed Berthe and their artistic life: “I am often with you, my dear Berthe. In my thoughts I follow you about in your studio, and wish that I could see you, or have that same room that you have. I will not be alone. As long as I have my dreams and thoughts, I will not be empty.” (Rouart 27). Berthe replied: “Come now, the lot you have chosen is not the worse one. You have a serious attachment (sic), and a man’s heart utterly devoted to you. Do not revile your fate. Remember it is sad to be alone; despite anything that may be said or done, a woman has an immense need of affection” (Rouart 28).

Berthe did not marry one of the men her mother paraded before her, but in 1874 (when she was thirty-three) Eugène Manet, brother to her celebrated and controversial friend Edouard Manet, courted her. In December of that same year, they were married. The Manets and the Morisots had been mingling in the same social circle for years, and so one wonders at the motivation for Berthe’s marriage. We can only assume it was a positive one from Berthe’s own words. She wrote to her younger brother that she had “entered the positive stage of life” with her marriage (Rey 58). She also stopped painting Edma. Virtually no paintings of her sister are found after Berthe’s marriage (Kessler 28). Finally, she had fulfilled part of society’s expectations for her and could maybe have a moment’s rest.

How did Morisot’s painting survive her marriage when it did not survive Edma’s? One can do little more than speculate, but Morisot continued painting and Eugène was a strong supporter of her efforts. At one point in her career, the family was in Italy vacationing and Julie, the couple’s only child, became ill and could not be moved back to France. This happened right around the time of an Impressionist exhibit. Eugène boarded the train and went back to Paris himself to organize her selections and supervise their hanging. This devotion to his wife’s artistic career is surprising for a man of his time, but Morisot certainly could not have had it any other way.

The marriage between Eugène and Berthe was a good one for both of them. Soon after they were married, Berthe began to long for a child. Though protected now by marriage, the idea that Berthe could be a mother and an artist was again a foreign one. Surely after the birth of a child, she would stop her foolish painting. Julie Manet was born in November 1878. Though she did not exhibit in the Impressionist show of 1879, Morisot’s most frequent model became her daughter. Far from slowing Morisot’s work, Julie seemed to push it to a new level. Morisot had painted pictures of mothers and children before, frequently of Yves and Edma with their children. These por-

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trayed seemingly traditional ideas about motherhood. In *The Cradle*, Edma seems absorbed in her new daughter, even imitating her position, hand resting by her ear. Mother and daughter are clearly connected although there is no physical touch exchanged. Edma simply watches her daughter sleep, intrigued. For Morisot and Julie it would be different.

One of the first pictures illustrates this: *The Wet Nurse Angele Feeding Julie Manet*. One of the first, obvious differences is that Morisot, the mother, is not in this picture. She is making the picture, a working mother. The woman in the picture, feeding Julie in a traditionally maternal pose, "mother" and infant joined physically, is a "seconde mère or wet nurse," but she is not the mother (Nochlin 237). She is performing this mothering "as work, for pay, in a way that is eminently not natural but overly social in its construction" (Nochlin 235). Her dress and cap, the hat with ribbons, the only part of the painting that grounds us in some plane, all signify her status as employee. Morisot makes it clear that she, the painter, is the mother.

The way the painting is composed can lead one to consider Morisot's situation. She is a working mother in a world where children are the only work women should do, where traditional images of mothers and children show physical connection, two as a connected one. How would she deal with this, something she could never show for herself and Julie, even in the two self-portraits that contain her daughter where mother is holding a sketch pad, not the child? Here one could look at the picture and comment on its disjunction, the way the figures seem to melt into each other. The woman's face is obscured by the short brushstrokes. The woman, in fact, is barely there. Several critics comment on Julie, that "only the round and rosy Julie coheres," but I do not agree with that (Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot* 159). She too melts into the nurse, their dresses are seemingly one, and her other arm is absorbed into the woman. This reflects the confusion Morisot felt. Her daughter, her painting could in no way equal the set images of physical closeness of mother and child. Mother and daughter had to be two separate beings, but throughout the rest of Morisot's painting career, we see that the two remained close. This painting began "the most extensive and profound visual exploration we have of a mother-daughter relationship" (Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot* 160). Julie was Morisot's favorite model.

A similar painting, *Julie with her Nurse*, made later the same year, does focus on Julie. Here her face has distinct characteristics while the nurse blends into the background. One could say that this painting focuses on the "round and rosy Julie," as would a majority of the paintings done by Morisot for the rest of her life. These include images of the father-child bond (another infrequent subject) in *Eugène Manet and his Daughter at Bougival* and *Eugène Manet and his Daughter in the Garden*, as well as images that chronicle Julie's development into womanhood, ending with *Julie Manet and her Greyhound Laertes*, one of the last paintings Morisot painted. Morisot was able to paint and be a mother because she allowed there to be adjustments to the relationship. Her upper class status also helped because she could hire a wet nurse to help her take care of Julie. Morisot did not set out to change the world of motherhood, she simply adjusted it to fit her situation. She made herself an exception, just as she had when she married Eugène. Being married and painting was not acceptable; being a mother and painting was not acceptable. Berthe Morisot did both.

Morisot then fits into the personal world of marriage and motherhood by making an exception for herself. She did not set out to change what was social practice at the time, but "worked within these structures and used them to [her] advantage" (Edelstein 38). Morisot, along with other women painters, also adjusted the ideas about modernity that were widespread in art and literary circles. The epitome of the modern man was the flâneur, invented by Charles Baudelaire. The flâneur was to inhabit the world, his only job to absorb and experience the modern. He was to walk the streets, sit in the cafes, talk with the people, experience the daily, hectic pace of the modern life. He had money and freedom and, most importantly, he was always male. The modern artist was to express the life of the flâneur in his painting. The modern scenes were the public ones (Adler and Garb 80). What was woman to Baudelaire, definer of the modern? "[A] kind of idol, stupid perhaps, but dazzling and bewitching" (Broude 149).

For Morisot, because of her class and gender, the modern as defined by Baudelaire was not accessible. She had to be chaperoned constantly. Mme Morisot had accompanied her daughters to their lessons and to the Louvre. Later Eugène accompanied Berthe. An unescorted woman had questionable morals. Plus, the social spaces defined as modern, bars, cafes, the streets, were not accessible to women of Morisot's social class ever, even escorted. Modern spaces were simply not spaces that Morisot had access to. Women were cut off from the modern, the city. Morisot's images of the modern then, are images of an upper class feminine modern and illustrate this separation.

*On the Balcony* is one painting that illustrates the concept of the woman and child removed from modern spaces. In it a woman and a child, Edma or Yves and Jeannie or Paule, stand at a railing overlooking a city. The woman is absorbed in her own thoughts and seems to be looking at her child. The little girl stands, hands on the bars of the railing, staring out to the city beyond. In *Artist's Sister at a Window*, Edma sits in a chair before an open balcony door which reveals other balconies and a railing. She is not looking outside, however, but is absorbed in her own thoughts, playing with the fan on her lap. In both paintings, woman is literally removed from the city and barred from entering it. It does not even occupy her thoughts. Morisot shows that the woman's modern space is not the city. Instead, Morisot found her modern in the midst of her own life. Modern was gardens, public and private, and vacation homes removed from the city.

A popular modern woman's image of the time was the woman at the ball. Various artists portrayed upper class women in loges or waiting dressed in spaces that could be theatres. Morisot has these images too, but they are clearly situated not in the public view, but in the home. In *Woman in Black* and *Young Woman Dressed for the Ball*, both models are clearly dressed up to be going to social, public spaces. However, the backgrounds situate them within a home still. Morisot paints them waiting to go to the ball or theatre, not already there. She removes the woman from the public gaze, the male gaze, and instead places her in her own space, the space of the home, the private areas of modern life. Morisot's images were what she saw in her everyday life. Though
critics “repeatedly suggested that Morisot’s work suffered from exhibition and belonged instead to a secluded domain” because her subjects was the woman’s private sphere. Morisot insisted on her version of the modern and continued to show her works (Higonnet, “Imaging Gender” 150).

In a society where women were discouraged from entering the art world, Berthe Morisot was part of the founding group of a new movement: Impressionism. This new movement in art flouted the convention of the time, and without meaning to do so, partially enfranchised women in their movement. They rejected the École des Beaux-Arts which would not admit women. They rejected classical painting which valued the nude that women could not paint. They made the equipment smaller and portable to work outdoors; now women could carry it or put it in a closet. The paintings were made to hang on the walls of homes, not churches or palaces which did not recognize women as painters. The Impressionists “had changed the definition of 'high art' in a way that included—just barely—the way women worked” (Higonnet, Berthe Morisot 100-101). Of course there were still boundaries for Morisot to work around, including the flaneur concept and the public modern spaces. However, she was a better fit for Impressionism than most of the men in the movement, at least according to critics.

Teodor de Wyzewa [a contemporary critic], for example, claimed that the marks made by Impressionist painters were expressive of qualities intrinsic to women. He saw the use of bright and clear tones as a parallel to the lightness, the fresh clarity, and the superficial elegance which make up a woman’s vision and declared: “Only a woman has the right to rigorously practice the Impressionist system, she alone can limit her effort to the translation of impressions.” (Adler and Garb 64)

In fact, Morisot was the perfect Impressionist: a female painter practicing a feminine art. Her paintings were “constantly praised by critics of her period for qualities that these same critics objected to in the work of her male colleagues” (Broude 151). This placed Morisot in a precarious position. Because the techniques of Impressionism were considered feminine and because she was considered the perfect fit for Impressionism, she was frequently thought to have little talent because the qualities were intrinsic to her nature as woman. Her transient moments, quick brushstrokes, light colors, and subject matter, although techniques for others to master and demonstrate, were innate, and not a talent. Paul de Charry, a contemporary critic, declared in 1880 that her interest in not finishing a painting to academic standards was understandable because she “is a woman, consequently capricious; unhappily she acts like Eve by biting the apple and finding it unpleasant too soon” (Lindsay 14). This idea that woman was the perfect Impressionist/impression was also dangerous because it allowed the woman to become the painting, removing even more purpose and direction from her art. In 1902, critic André Fontainas wrote of Morisot’s work:

The woman displays no belief in superiorities; indeed she has confronted nothing, except herself. By an intuition, rather than by a usurping will, her brush ingeniously attracts to itself every delicate universal marvel, and we know, henceforward, that the palpitating pulp of flowers, the murmuring fronds, and the silences of water in summer gardens, the shivering atmosphere of calm clear days, equal in ecstasy... the frail colored radience of her face and eyes, the sighing inflexions of her supple voice, her gazes, the trembling agitation of her splendid bosom. She is, in festive nature, the inevitable center, luminous and divine. (Higonnet, “Imaging Gender” 151)

Was this, or any of the other comments, praise? The critics discounted Morisot’s work because she was a woman. She did not have talent, she simply had control of the intrinsic female qualities that every woman had. Her painting was simply an expression of that, not of talent, hard work, or accomplishment.

To seek to explain the stylistic characteristics of Impressionism with reference to “femininity” is to imply that Morisot did not exert a sufficient degree of conscious control over her working practices, and that her “style” is the unconscious expression of self. In the case of her male colleagues, however, due recognition is given to their exploration of certain aesthetic and political choices, which resulted in a particular way of knowing. (Adler and Garb 64)

Thus Morisot fit Impressionism and Impressionism fit Morisot, but it also was a way for critics to discount her work, to negate another woman artist because of special circumstances. Still, Morisot seemed to care little for what critics said. She exhibited in every Impressionist exhibit but one; sold her work with the other artists through dealers and the Impressionist auction and continued to paint almost until the day she died. Morisot thought of herself as an Impressionist and she fit right into their circle.

From almost the beginning of her artistic career, Morisot knew the circle of Impressionists and was accepted socially by them. She met Manet in the Louvre and eventually married his brother. Monet, Renoir, and Degas all knew her. She was involved in the establishment of the first Impressionist exhibit and considered a major part of the group and a founding member. Although she could not join them in the cafes and boulevards of Impressionist life, “[t]he regular salons held in haut bourgeois circles served as a bridge between two worlds generally conceived of at this date as being entirely separate, the ‘woman’s’ world of the home and the ‘man’s’ world of business and commerce” (Adler and Garb 29). Edma wrote to Berthe after she had married, “Your life must be charming at this moment, to talk with M. Degas while watching him draw, to laugh with Manet, to philosophize with Purvis [Pierre Purvis de Chuvannes, a veteran Salon artist]” (Stuckey 28). However, no matter how much she was a part of their world, she was not portrayed as such. She is not seen in Henri Fantin-Latour’s The Bagnolles Studio nor his Homage to Delacroix, though she was acquainted with almost everyone in the picture. She was a woman, after all.

Morisot and Manet had a relationship that was often speculated about. She was known more as a model for several of his paintings before she was known as a painter in her own right. Le Repos and The Balcony were seen as risqué at the time, although not as risqué as Manet’s Olympia, because of the popular beliefs about models and because of Morisot’s social class. No one knows how these paintings were done, but one can assume that Morisot was chaperoned. Still, some believe that Manet and Morisot were more than friends and professional acquaintances. Le Repos was particu-
larily risqué because of Morisot's pose. A woman reclining in such a comfortable way should not have been portrayed in a painting. It was thought that such relaxation should only be seen by one's husband or family. Morisot was perceived as dirty and of low morals by critics. She was also looked down upon for her gaze in *The Balcony* because it was too direct and sultry for a young middle-class woman (Adler and Garb 28). Morisot is also often thought to be a pupil of Manet's, but there is no proof of this. Though some insist that Morisot was strongly influenced by Manet, "it remains unclear who influenced whom" (Stuckey 41). This idea is possibly one perpetuated because a woman artist of the time would certainly never have been able to influence a male artist. However, it is more likely that they influenced each other. Morisot and Julie were also painted by Renoir and Eugène was painted by Degas, possibly as a wedding present for the couple. All Impressionists admired Morisot's work and wanted to own it. Manet, Monet, Degas, Renoir, and Cassatt all purchased something by Morisot at some point in her career (Rey 24). Even in death they cared for her; her memorial exhibition in 1896 was supervised by Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, and Stéphane Mallarmé (Stuckey 15).

If Morisot was involved in the Impressionist circle, a master of Impressionist techniques, a creator of a woman's place in the modern, and able to overcome the constraints of motherhood and womanhood, why isn't she remembered? Why does every art student not name her among Renoir and Degas, two of her friends, or Manet, her brother-in-law and friend, when they recite the Impressionist circle? Even with the formation of a feminist art movement that has "rescued" some forgotten women artists, "[i]n recent decades her works have become increasingly unfamiliar (Scott 43).

Some blame her talent:

Morisot was a gifted, original painter; but, although she was too good to belong to the second rank, one cannot place her unreservedly among the company of Manet, Monet and other artists of the first rank. There is nothing in her outlook on a level with the former's broad historical ambition or, in the latter, the willing surrender to the logic of his aesthetic. Nor did her career have the necessary force or staying power required of a great artist. We are easiest with Berthe Morisot if we don't ask her to bear too great a historical burden, and recognize that she is at her best as an artist engaged in a dialogue with, rather than a wholehearted pursuit of the Impressionist aesthetic. (Gibson 24)

However, I cannot agree with this. Morisot was on the cutting edge of the Impressionist movement; she was a founding member. Critics think she may have influenced Manet. She painted and was recognized by the Salon and the Impressionists for close to thirty years. Some blame sexism and praise her talent:

Why else has Morisot always been considered somehow a secondary Impressionist, despite her exemplary fidelity to the movement and its aims? Why has her very flouting of the traditional "laws" of painting been seen as a weakness rather than a strength, a failure or lack of knowledge and ability rather than a daring transgression? Why should the disintegration of form characteristic of her best work not be considered a vital questioning of Impressionism from within, a "making strange" of its more conventional practices? And if we consider that erosion of form to be a complexly mediated inscription of internalized conflict — motherhood versus profession — then surely this should be taken as seriously as the more highly acclaimed psychic dramas of male artists of the period. (Nochlin 241)

However, some would argue that with the rise of women and feminists in the art history world Morisot should now be recognized and acknowledged. Perhaps sexism is still controlling the art world. In the first exhibition of Morisot's work in the United States at the National Gallery in 1990, visitors got to see a seductive Morisot before they got to see her work: *Manet's* _Le Repas_ fronted the exhibition (Gordon 110).

All the arguments eventually run together, and we may never know truly why Morisot is not remembered. I tend to think it is a combination of several factors. Sexism has indeed played a role. She was not a true painter of the time because she was a woman. Critics did not linger over her work after her death. Her class played a role. Morisot did not have to sell paintings for her livelihood; her works were not purchased by museums. Friends bought most of them when she did sell. I think the life Morisot lived played a large role. She was not out on the boulevards; she was not able to attend the meetings that set up the Impressionist exhibits; she was a mother and a wife in a time when that meant everything, even her scandals were short-lived. She was a private person because that is what society demanded of her: a French bourgeoise wife, mother, and hostess. She was not canonized with the rest of the Impressionists because critics could write off her talent as innate, because she caused no scandals, because she had no affairs, because she did eventually marry and have a child to fulfill society's expectations. She was not brash and outspoken, single, American, or a supporter of the new feminist movement like Cassatt. It may seem that there is no reason to remember Morisot, except for her paintings, because in a world that lives for scandal, she is not worthy to note.

However, I will remember Morisot because of her devotion to her daughter; because she did not marry until thirty-three and that did not end her career; because even though she was a woman she was also a cutting edge, founding member of the Impressionist movement. I will remember her light colors and quick brushstrokes, her devotion to the Impressionist ideal of the transient moment. I will remember her self-portrait with her palette. One cannot decide why Morisot was not accorded the same place as Manet and Degas and Renoir, but maybe we should remember her among them now.

**Bibliography**


The traditionally accepted format of the love poem has been historically attributed to authors such as Petrarch and William Shakespeare, poets who have immortalized the sonnet as the most commonly recognized style of verse in regards to love poems. Eloquent in language and form, these poems were renowned for their romantic quality and hidden sensuality. While not exclusively utilized by male poets, many sonnets originated as love poems portraying women as the main objects of affection through the lovesick eyes of men. Although many readers and critics alike have regarded such poems as “superb” works of romantic literature, there exists today a movement away from traditional love poems in order to accommodate the changing society in which we live.

Throughout her career as a writer, Adrienne Rich has taken it upon herself to alter the face of traditional poetry in an effort to appeal to a more diverse audience. As Rich matured within her relationships and as a writer, so did her poetry. According to McGuirk, “In the fifties, Rich’s love or marriage poems typically present[ed] a wife-or lover-poet maturely propounding the wisdom of accepting limits” (68). Her poems written in the fifties reflected a time in which the sole responsibility of a wife was to support her husband and care for their children. He continued, “In the sixties, Rich discover[ed] that “The world breathes underneath our bed” (qtd. in McGuirk 69), and that the well-wrought lyric poem [could] not accommodate her present experience in the world” (69). The sixties were a time of great change, confusion, and protest in America. Civil Rights, war, and free-love demonstrations were common across the nation. As a result, Rich yearned for more depth and a greater statement in her writing. Finally, “it [was] in the seventies,” McGuirk added, “with the development of a positive feminism and an alternative order to the bourgeois marriage and well-wrought poem, that Rich [began] to break a path that [led] beyond the lyric of pathos to a rhetorical lyric practice” (69). Rich had unleashed her feminist notions to the world and there was no end to her newfound passion.

In an interview with Matthew Rothschild, Rich exclaimed that poetry is, in itself, a powerful mode of activism. “Through its very being, poetry expresses messages beyond the words it is contained in; it speaks of our desire; it reminds us of what we lack, of our need, and of our hungers. It keeps us dissatisfied” (35). Certainly, Rich has been a key activist in the battle for women’s “liberation,” but argues, “you don’t make a political movement simply out of words” (Montenegro 8). Determined to re-vise literature in an attempt to focus attention on the plight of women, Rich published a book of poetry entitled The Dream of a Common Language in 1978, in which she longed for a world filled with the voices of united and powerful women.

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The Dream of a Common Language is, with the exception of one poem ("Nights and Days"), about what has been or is possible among women in the world as we know it. Its limitations constitute the gap between the infinite of the imaginary and the contradictions of the extant; between the force of the single, well-exercised will and voice and the long, hard way toward commonality, of love, of language, of trust. (Broumas 323)

While the title of the collection of poems suggests that this "dream" of a female voice is unattainable, Rich has introduced "a newly imagined commonality defined by gender and based upon a rejection of men as both readers and lovers" (Dielh 420). It is inherently a book for and about women, according to McGuirk, but serves its male readers just the same, as it promotes gender awareness and allows male readers to glimpse into the history of women, while acknowledging their quest for power and respect as a community.

At the core of A Dream of a Common Language is the section of "Twenty-One Love Poems," which actually includes twenty-two poems, formatted as a short story, documenting a romantic relationship from the initial infatuation to its unfortunate termination. Much controversy has surrounded the reading of these poems, as they were intended by Rich to be read as lesbian love poems, rather than simply universal love poems. While McGann argues that lyric poems are experienced by readers primarily through identification and are, therefore, in a sense "universal," Rich denies this theory, contending that these poems in particular were written as a social and political statement and cannot justifiably be read in any other manner.

Responding to two women who read Twenty-One Love Poems with their male lovers and praised the "universality" of the poems, Rich exclaimed,

I found myself angered, and when I asked myself why, I realized that it was anger at having my work essentially assimilated and stripped of its meaning, 'integrated' into heterosexual romance. That kind of 'acceptance' of the books seems to me a refusal of its deepest implications. (qtd. in McGuirk 78)

It is readers like these that re-emphasize the issue that Rich has made a strong and forceful attempt to reconcile—the issue of patriarchy in our society and the woman's tendency to cooperate with the historical norms and traditions of such a society. Jane Hedley states that,

In "Twenty-One Love Poems," Rich sought to regender the love poem sequence by taking issue not only with its overt agenda but also, at a more subliminal level, with its formal conventions and figurative strategies, on behalf of making love or being in love that they have systematically blocked. (qtd. in Estrin 24)

Through this sequence, Rich has identified the traditional love poem, redefined its identity, and offered an alternative solution to women forced into silence and submission in this male-dominated world. Blatantly advocating lesbianism in "Twenty-One Love Poems" as this solution, she argues that the bond shared by women can negate the evils posed by a patriarchal society.

If a reader could merely change a few pronouns throughout these poems in order to read them as the story of a heterosexual love affair, then Rich would not have done justice to her re-vision of the love poem. Clearly, the continual references to oppression, female relationships, lost identity, homelessness, and dreams to gain power set these poems apart from the traditional love poem. The images portrayed in "Twenty-One Love Poems" are, arguably, metaphors for the patriarchal society in which Rich lives and her solutions are presented in the form of dreams and myths, signifying her prospects of liberation. Although Rich believes that her goals are attainable, she fears that her fellow womankind will fail to gain the strength needed to free themselves from the shackles of men. Jean Kennard believes that it is necessary to discover a manner in which to read and write about literature "that does not reconfirm the universality of heterosexual experience" (662). Adrienne Rich has done just that.

"Twenty-One Love Poems" begins in a city, with three images: "metal," "disgraces," and "the red begonia perilously flashing / from a tenement sill six stories high" (I, 9-10). The coldness of the male-dominated world has been set as the scene with notions of "pornography," "vampires," "victimized hirelings," and "garbage" along the streets. And yet a red flower, bold, thriving, but altogether out of place, is seen high above the filth and disgraces of the city. This is the first representation of women in these poems, a symbol of hope and prosperity in a seemingly ugly and dismal world. Rich displays her loyalty to women and desires for strength when she says, "No one has imagined us. We want to live like trees, / sycamores blazing through the sulfurous air, / dappled with scars, still exuberantly budding, / our animal passion rooted in the city" (13-16). Although man has yet to conceive the notion of women gaining power or desiring to be with one another, the possibility exists. For women are strong, like trees, and can weather a storm and survive under the most unbearable conditions in man's city. They thrive, even after hundreds of years of abuse, much like the tree withstands the uncontrollable wrath of mother nature.

The first of the "Twenty-One Love Poems" presents Rich's intense passion for women and her newfound lover from whom she has gained a sense of power. Poem "II" continues with the author's adoration for her lover and traces a dream in which her lover is a "poem." She wants to display her "poem" for all to see, but realizes that this is merely a dream, or an unattainable goal at this time. "To move openly together / in the pull of gravity" (14-16) would defy the normal or traditional male/female relationship in Rich's patriarchal society. But, Rich is tempted to disregard the conventional, as well as her own anxieties.

In the third poem, Rich feels youthful in her new relationship, as she walks the streets with her "limbs streaming with a purer joy" (5) now than they did when she was twenty. Always aware of the hardships that they must face in this love affair, Rich exclaims, "I touch you knowing we weren't born tomorrow, / and somehow, each of us will help the other live, / and somewhere, each of us must help the other die" (15-17). She is confident that future women will not suffer from such discriminations when involved in a same sex relationship. But, now, it is their job to "kill" the memories and submission in this male-dominated world. Rich feels youthful in her new relationship, as she walks the streets with her "limbs streaming with a purer joy" (5) now than they did when she was twenty. Always aware of the hardships that they must face in this love affair, Rich exclaims, "I touch you knowing we weren't born tomorrow, / and somehow, each of us will help the other live, / and somewhere, each of us must help the other die" (15-17). She is confident that future women will not suffer from such discriminations when involved in a same sex relationship. But, now, it is their job to "kill" the memories and submission in this male-dominated world. Rich feels youthful in her new relationship, as she walks the streets with her "limbs streaming with a purer joy" (5) now than they did when she was twenty. Always aware of the hardships that they must face in this love affair, Rich exclaims, "I touch you knowing we weren't born tomorrow, / and somehow, each of us will help the other live, / and somewhere, each of us must help the other die" (15-17).
handed on to me, / but I want to go on from here with you / fighting the temptation to make a career of pain” (12-14). The fantasy images continue in poem “XIII” with Rich’s descriptions of what appears to be a “female world” in which women are “outside the law” (15).

As “Twenty-One Love Poems” is arguably one longer poem that consists of twenty-two sections, the reader is able to detect the increased spirituality and sense of power that Rich gains as the poem progresses. In the sixth poem, she begins to compare her body to that of her lover’s, focusing on their similar hands. She begins by saying, “Your small hands, precisely equal to my own— / only the thumb is larger, longer— / in these hands / I could trust the world” (1 -3). These hands, like women, hold endless possibilities and can perform the same tasks as a man’s, yet are even more powerful; these female hands can go so far as to perform acts of violence, thus making them obsolete. Rich is identifying the physical equalities of men and women, but has discovered more compassion and love in the restraint of women.

The only poem that involves actual sexual contact between the two lovers is “THE FLOATING POEM, UNNUMBERED,” “meaning everywhere, meaning despite,” (325) according to Broumas.

“THE FLOATING POEM” tells not only of a physical intimacy, but of the place of physical intimacy in an “honorable human relationship”—that is, one in which two people have the right to use the word ‘love’ (Women and Honor.) It is not the physical which defines this love as lesbian, but the absolute and primary attention directed at the other. (Broumas 326)

This poem “floats” because the sexual aspect of their relationship is ever present, but does not dominate their relationship. The numbered poems deal more with the obstacles and hardships hindering their relationship, while the physical aspect of their relationship has always been their ultimate source of power and love. They are beyond the physical and are searching for their fulfillment outside of their sexuality in the larger patriarchal community. “The meeting of lovers in Twenty-One Love Poems is unique because it is on terms which are consciously anti-patriarchal; lovers who are disloyal to patriarchal civilization strive to free themselves from its attitudes even in their intimate relations, even in themselves” (Oktenberg 335). Oktenberg went on to say, “Living in such a world is a paradoxical project for them; they float, unnumbered, in a world anchored with numbers” (334).

Discovering one’s sexuality is an “accident” that just “happens,” according to Rich. “No one’s fated or doomed to love anyone / . . . we’re not heroines” (“XVII,” 1-2). But, “women should at least know the difference / between love and death” (“XVII,” 7-8), or a relationship with a woman (love) and a man (death). For “only she who says / she did not choose, is the loser in the end” (“XV,” 14-15). Women must make a conscious effort to choose the path of their life or they will be drawn into the traditional patterns set forth by the men of society. Women are forever the victims, for no matter which partner they choose, they are ultimately under the power of men; it is this theory that Rich so desperately attempts to disprove with her “Twenty-One Love Poems.”

There exist only two instances within the sequence of poems in which Rich directly addresses the fact that this lover to whom she has been referring is, indeed, a woman. While some may argue that the remainder of the poems may still be considered “universal,” the poems were written as a sequence and were not meant to be read separately. Therefore, once again, Rich “means that no man, no work of literature, no part of patriarchal culture has taken into account the possibility of two women together, loving each other, and of this as the embryonic beginning of a new, woman-centered civilization” (Oktenberg 334). However unorthodox a lesbian relationship may seem to the reader, it was Rich’s intention to present such a relationship in an attempt to break the barriers of tradition, give silent women everywhere a voice, and to expose the world to the realities of these changing times.

Poems twelve and nineteen directly address the lover of the author to be a woman. In “XII,” Rich states,

But we have different voices, even in sleep, / and our bodies, so alike, are yet so different / and the past echoing through our bloodstreams / is freighted with different language, different meanings— / though in any chronicle of the world we share / it could be written with new meaning / we were two lovers of one gender, / we were two women of one generation. (11-17)

Raised in the same generation of women, these lovers possess distinct pasts as a result of their upbringings in a patriarchal society. Neither speaks a common language of women, as it is yet to be written. But, together, their respective pasts will unite them to create their own language, a unified language, and a new world in which they can live freely as lovers. They have found commonality in love, a unifying experience that will empower them to re-vise the nature of their society.

Similarly, poem “XIX” examines the obstacles faced by the lovers in their male-dominated society. They have not been altogether successful in their attempt to modify the existing and traditionally accepted male/female partnership. Disillusioned, Rich states with a hint of despair, “two women together is a work / nothing in civilization has made simple, / two people together is a work / heroic in its ordinariness” (12-15). It is at this point that Rich foreshadowed the failure of their relationship. Yet, by stating that “two people together is a work,” Rich reinforced the fact that the relationship was failing because of their individual differences, and not because a lesbian relationship was an unlikely or incongruous match. The idea of truly connecting with another individual, Rich argued, necessitated much effort, most especially in an “unordinary” situation like theirs.

“Twenty-One Love Poems” is not necessarily Rich’s autobiographical account of a personal relationship. Perhaps this is why many critics have argued that these poems do, indeed, possess a universal appeal. It is not that a heterosexual individual could not relate to the poems, their political savvy and powerful transcendence of the “ordinary.” However, it is important to note the author’s intentions in writing a particular work when reading his/her literature. Truthfully, to some extent, “almost every poem [in “Twenty-One Love Poems”] reflect[ed] an image or previous writing by Rich, simply reverberated” (Oktenberg 339). As Cumpston argued, “She does not pretend to expose the world to the realities of these changing times. The voice and message will be heard, that her efforts to construct a “common language”
Judith McDaniel argues, "The strength in these poems is the discovery of the self in discussed her belief in the power of words as a form of activism and called upon Rich had truly broken new ground in the fight for women's liberation. The article "tradition". followed Rich to find the strength through the power of her pen to revise and rewrite love: the encounter of another's pain" (320). This identification with women has al-

another, the range of knowing and identification that seems most possible in same sex
tion with her lover in poem "XX" in which she stated sadly,

Even in the midst of a painful break-up, Rich referred to that final, dreadful conversa-
tion for a home where all women can finally understand one another and communicate with a single, kindred language. But, until women learn to speak the same lan-
guage, they will remain powerless within "the sacred institutions of family, marriage, heterosexual romances, that is, the foundations of patriarchal civilization" (Runzo 138).

To Rich, lesbianism is a secret source of power, well kept from most members of society. Discovering this inherent power, Rich stated:

Even before I wholly knew I was a lesbian, it was the lesbian in me who pursued that elusive configuration. And I believe it is the lesbian in every woman who is compelled by female energy, who gravitates toward strong women, who seeks a literature that will express that energy and strength. It is the lesbian in us who drives us to feel imaginatively, render in language, grasp, the full connection between woman and woman. It is the lesbian in us who is creative, for the dutiful daughter of the fathers in us is only a hack. (qtd. in Bennett 222)

It is this connectedness to women that was reflected in "Twenty-One Love Poems." Even in the midst of a painful break-up, Rich referred to that final, dreadful conversation with her lover in poem "XX" in which she stated sadly,

And this is she
with whom I tried to speak, whose hurt, expressive head turning aside from pain, is dragged down deeper where it cannot hear me,
and soon I shall know I was talking to my own soul. (8-12)

Judith McDaniel argues, "The strength in these poems is the discovery of the self in another, the range of knowing and identification that seems most possible in same sex love: the encounter of another's pain" (320). This identification with women has allowed Rich to find the strength through the power of her pen to revise and rewrite "tradition".

With the publication of "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" in 1971, Rich had truly broken new ground in the fight for women's liberation. The article discussed her belief in the power of words as a form of activism and called upon writers everywhere to join her in her process of "re-vision." Advancing in her efforts to support "liberation," Rich stated:

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the as-

sumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a search for identity: it is a part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. (90)

Her intention was to have women everywhere re-evaluate their lives—their relationshipships, language, viewpoints, and past traditions—and abolish the complacency with which they have simply accepted their "fate." "Twenty-One Love Poems" displayed her ambitious tendencies concerning activism, as it not only contained deep-seated political statements, but also involved a lesbian love affair.

The anger expressed by Rich in response to the argument that "Twenty-One Love Poems" may be read as "universal" was truly justified. All of her beliefs and convictions are completely disregarded when the poems are seen as a heterosexual love affair, as Rich firmly concludes "heterosexism as an institution that oppresses all women," regardless of a woman's choice of partners (Cumpston 424). The Dream of a Common Language is not just another book of poetry containing a sequence of love poems; it is a powerful tool with which Adrienne Rich has made a memorable impact upon both the literary world and the general public. She has introduced the idea of creating a new tradition in which women hold the primary responsibility of making their own decisions and choosing their own fates. "Twenty-One Love Poems" is "an appropriate choice for continuing the theme of power, for in these poems Rich shows us a glimpse of the power generated by love, specifically the love of women for women" (McDaniel 320). Discovering the power within her to attempt this grave task of re-writing and re-vision for future generations of women was a feat in itself. Adrienne Rich has truly proven herself a role model from whom women today must learn in order to thrive tomorrow.

Bibliography

IN 'EXTREMIS': A COLLISION BETWEEN FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND MTV

BY ANNA MICKELSEN '99

A Freudian psychoanalytic critique of the music video "extremis," which was conceived and written by the group HAL, might strike the casual reader as a bit bizarre. However, such a reading offers insight into the way that the unconscious tensions that drive humanity are represented in a medium that is not often used for critical purposes. Seen through the lens of psychoanalysis, this text presents the drama of female desire for her father and the struggle between the superego or the "conscience" of cultural norms to repress this desire, concluding ultimately that her self-fulfillment within a waking-dream world is outside the bounds of sanity and society.

Video summary:

Bright lights fade into a black and white city scene where brightly lit skyscrapers predominate. Cars and trucks move in incessant, repetitive patterns along the street. A man's voice speaks, and a male face appears, superimposed on the buildings. Somewhere else, in a place with color, a pale woman lies in bed in a white room that appears to have no walls or other furniture. This woman seems to be asleep, and the setting fades from her "reality" to her dream, where she walks toward a gilded "statue" of a man and woman joined. A voice-over reveals the thoughts of the sleeping woman. Her eyes and mouth appear in stark contrast to her skin and the wall-less background, mirroring the "reality" world. At this point, the "womb-woman," a woman in a blue, fluid environment, attached by some kind of cord, appears. She rotates slowly, arms outstretched, and her image materializes briefly at various times. The dream-woman kisses the male statue, awakening both man and woman to life; strangely, they "flash" between a vaguely robotic form and a normal organic form as they move, but only express their mechanical sides when she is near. A series of interspersed images of a flea, a root system, and blood cells appear along with the womb-woman and the sleeping woman, spliced with shots of the sensual statue-couple. Black and white images of city and male figures also intrude. After voyeuristically viewing their sexual activity, the dream-woman approaches the couple, and as her dress caresses the head of the shifting automaton man, he leaves his partner and follows her on his knees, ultimately rising to confront her. At this moment, the dream returns to reality, as the over-voice asserts its need to know, feel, and taste the future. The womb-woman flashes in and out. The statue-man from the dream appears and wakes the dreamer in "reality." The male voice returns, as does the black and white.

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At this point, the ego ideal attempts to reassert control of the dreaming process by
provided by both the societally-determined “conscience,” which is the ideal self, and the
science” or “ego ideal,” which will “arise [in the subject] from the critical influence of
value are transferred by overdetermination to new elements with low value as a result
that have been repressed. The process of displacement, Freud explained, is crucial in
disguising the repressed unconscious material in dreams; elements with a high psychic
is indeed a correct interpretation of the dream.

The dream-woman's overt sexuality thus reveals her identity as a creative power, as her
womanhood is consistently associated with womb and vaginal images that stress her
fertility; her creative power is confirmed when she brings inanimate beings to life and
motion.

Freud also emphasizes the importance of words and phrases that appear in dreams;
there is, he says, “an invariable rule that the words spoken in the dream are derived
from spoken words remembered in the dream-material” (Freud, Interpretation 145).
In the dream world of the video, the words spoken aloud by the dream-woman have
a greater significance than those uttered only by the inner voice, which is dem-
strated by their placement at critical moments of the dream-text—an indicator of the
moment at which her desires exceed the boundaries of social and cultural acceptabil-
ity.

Freud claims that literature is like a dream text, and his essay on “the uncanny” is
an attempt to apply that principle. Freud’s belief rests upon the idea that “the heimlich
(the familiar or ‘homelike’) and the unheimlich (the strange and unfamiliar) are em-
bedded in each other,” which means for him that an “uncanny” experience is merely
the resurgence of the familiar repressed material from our unconscious to our con-
scious lives (Gray 59). A sense of the uncanny often occurs when a strange repetition
of events provokes a “gut feeling,” but is also present where there is difficulty discern-

living beings from dead material, in the psychic “double,” in belief of control over
destiny, and “in the belief that the other's gaze can inflict psychic harm, always a
projection of the internal critical gaze” (Gray 59). The sense of the uncanny is played
out in the video through the viewer’s difficulty in determining the difference between
dream and reality, between live and автомaton flesh, and in the appearance of the
“critical” eye at a pivotal juncture.

The structural frame of the video, a realm of mechanical and male-dominated
activity, also introduces the first conscious presence in the video: a man's head and
voice. This section was shot in black and white, perhaps to convey the dullness and
repetitive motion of the outer world as opposed to the woman's vivid dream world.
Things in this framing world are mechanistic and linear: cars, buildings, and the flow
of traffic. However, the male face on the building walls is within these things or is
embodied by them, and he has the power to enter (if only briefly), the world of the
dreamer, as demonstrated by the intrusion of black and white images into her colorful
dream world. It is this male figure that represents the authority of societally-deter-
mined repression, in its implied participation in the patriarchal structures of society as
expressed by a linear and daunting world of buildings and lights.

The transition from this framework, to the color-ful room in which the woman
sleeps, and from there to the dream-state, is achieved through a blurring of reality en
route to the dreamer's unconscious (which could also potentially stand in for a sort of
universal unconscious). Because the viewer is unclear which of these worlds (frame,
sleeper's, or dream) is actually the "real" world, a strong sense of the uncanny accom-
panies the transitions from frame to dream. This sensation is further augmented by
the intermingling of all three realities within the world of her dream, and an addi-
tional awareness of the uncanny (for the audience) is supplied by the appearance of
humanoid figures whose identity as living beings is uncertain. The action of the video
centers on the dreamer's interaction with these figures.

In the dream-state, she uses the figures to reenact instincual desires that have been long repressed, and she does so with an "uncanny" perception of the psychological conflict this process involves: "Deep down traumas hound me for days" (HAL 18). When uncanny moments occur, they do so with the feeling or awareness of repetition or familiarity, as material that should have remained in the unconscious leaks up into the realm of the conscious. This line is significant not only in its suggestion of repetition but also because of the fact that it is spoken within the dream, revealing the fact that it is a conscious concern which has been carried into the dream realm. It might almost be conceived as a reverse-uncanny (assisted by the repressive ego); in this case, material from "outside" the dream, the conscious, has access to the unconscious world of the dreamer, emphasizing the potentially "traumatic" effects of her dream-actions.

The psychological development of gender identity through the Oedipal experience is crucial to the development of the dream-text in two ways. First, the visions of the dreamer represent her displaced desire to achieve her father's physical love in a way that allows her to escape (at first) the censorship of the ego ideal. By presenting herself as observer, she initially avoids being censored; however, as she takes an active role, the awakened figures become not only the embodiment of her repressed desire for her father, but through their alternately mechanical and organic nature, they represent the conflict between her conscience and repressed desires. The social activity (driving cars), rigid, linear buildings, and looming male figure of the frame world indicate a sort of "hive" mentality—organized group activities, ceaselessly repeated movement, and colorless staring windows seem to represent a set of social and behavioral norms that is necessarily repressive of destructive primitive desires. In contrast, the realm of the dreamer is fluid, nearly featureless but still vivid, multivalent, colorful, and full of sexual energy, which represents the realm of the unconscious or repressed.

Secondly, the male object that the dream-self animates pursues her and the phallic symbol that she possesses as he passes through his own Oedipal stage. Though her desire for a mechanical/organic man of questionable origin might be suspicious, it "feels" quite natural when he pursues his awakening "mother," forcing the viewer to reassess her conception of Oedipal development as a universal that goes beyond gender. It is significant that the dream-woman possesses control through both her sexual-ity and the usurped phallic symbol within the world of dreams, as it indicates the creative (and potentially chaotic) power that she possesses.

When the woman appears, both dreaming and waking, the primary focus is on her sexuality: her mouth, breasts, eyes, and spread legs are emphasized and the viewer witnesses the erotic caresses she gives herself and the statue-beings. Images of root systems and blood reinforce the idea of sexual intercourse—sharing, intertwining, primitive, bodily—as well as images that have received displaced psychic energy. When she approaches the statue-couple and animates them with kisses to the male body, she is overtly participating in an act of creation, bringing life and sexuality in "a union of liquid and virtual flesh" to what was previously inanimate (HAL 12). The union will turn "virtual" flesh to reality in the dream-woman's world, ultimately triumphing over the repressive attempts of the superego to regain control and slide the images of the dream to less charged objects.

At this time, the viewer is also introduced to the "womb-woman," a woman who rotates slowly in her liquid blue environment, attached to some unspecified object by a sort of umbilical cord. Because of the placement of this image in the dream-text, it seems that she is being offered as a vision of grounding or completion; her full-color identity places her in the inner world rather than the outer, but she is a constant in both the "reality" and the dream of the woman. The womb-woman also has a fully defined face and is fully clothed, unlike the automaton-couple, her appearance suggests that she could successfully bridge worlds as the dreamer does, providing perhaps an alternate ego ideal for the dreaming woman.

As the dream-woman kisses and touches the male (and later "steals" him from the female), it is clear that she desires him (kissing only him and "gazing" at him) and identifies with the woman, whose face is better defined, more human, than the male's. Interestingly, the newly "born" man and woman are not detailed in their sexuality—the female has obscured breasts, and the male's genitals, when visible, seem unformed, contributing to the sense that they are not fully formed in her fantasy. This suggests that the phallus has not yet been defined as an entity in the mind of the dreamer because she was never able to physically consummate her desire for her father. The figures thus reflect the infantile nature of the fantasy that she is reproducing as she watches the automaton-figures engage in sexual activity.

An image of the womb-woman intrudes, interspersed with glimpses of the twisting couple and the sleeping woman, creating a sense of connectedness between waking/dreaming and inner/outer life. The dreamer watches voyeuristically at first, open-mouthed, the phallic heel of her shoe foregrounded as the couple writhes in the background. Her possession of both creative maternal power and phallic symbol is indicative of her ability to create both man and woman in her fantasy made flesh, but this is only possible in the unconscious. As long as she keeps a safe distance, the couple retains an organic form, ceasing to slip uncannily between that state and automated flesh, but when she approaches again, the conflict between the mechanistic world of the superego and the force of her desires becomes obvious in the shifting identity of the man and woman.

The uncanniness of her desires reveals itself in two ways: in her need for sexual activity with a figure that is a representation of paternity, and in the fact that this figure continues to shift between organic and mechanical forms. Her need to actively participate in the seduction of the male brings her repressed desires to the forefront, signified by her dream-speaking of the word "extremis," which becomes a symbol of her self-liberation beyond the strictures of societal repression even as it represents real-life concerns transferred to the dream-arena. The action of speaking this word in the dream causes the desires to regain some of the energy that had been displaced and revealing her true motives to the ego ideal, which attempts to warn or censor the dreamer.

Her dream self is not content to simply watch and participate indirectly. This is the crucial moment of her dream, and the music (which to this point has been rather throbbing and backgrounded) suddenly changes tempo. As her primal desires reassert...
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themselves, the liquid eye makes its first appearance, warning that her inner censor is attempting to reroute her dream activity to safer channels; the dream-material has become too overtly un-repressed for both the censor and the black and white world of society, which intrudes into the realm of the dream itself in the form of repressive male figures (some might think it was the band making its cameo appearance, but we know better). In this way, the waking self touches on the repressed desires, forcing her to evaluate them in the mechanistic terms of society, perhaps hoping to repel her attraction by revealing their mechanical nature. This attempted intervention and the reawakening of the mechanistic side of the formerly inert bodies as she approaches them alerts the viewer to the renewal of inner/outer psychological conflict and indicates the importance of this moment.

Disregarding these warnings, the dream-woman allows the train of her dress to slip over the head of the ascendant male, prompting him to look up after her with an uncanny robotic/human gaze. Abandoning the female automaton, he focuses on her phallic heel and crawls after her, attempting to appropriate the life-generating power of the "mother" who created him, continuing the Oedipal cycle. The moment of their confrontation transfers the action back to the "real" world of the dreamer, which is largely indistinguishable from the dream world. The boundaries are further blurred when the automaton man from the dream appears in conscious reality, after the sleepers dream voice asserts the needs that she has been unable to speak consciously:

I don't want to hear about the future
I want to see it
I want to feel it
I wanna taste it (HAL 25-28)

This assertion of the immediacy and magnitude of her instinctive desires places her in "extremis," beyond the reach of the repressive forces of society, and it enables her to join with the dream-man she has created, who assumes a final form as organic, bearing no trace of the mechanistic outer world. These images are interwoven with images of the womb-woman, who seems to form a vital part of this ultimate fulfillment. This acceptable male must be formed within her imagination, and their consummated relationship, untainted by reference to the black and white world (completely within the realm of instinct), might be perceived by the outer world as "madness." Indeed, her mere conscious wish for fulfillment from the father-figure places her outside the boundaries of proper societal behavior.

It is undoubtedly significant that her voice, not the societal voice of repression, is the last to be heard in the video, whispering the word "extremis." This word has come to represent her own freedom through extremes: sexual activity and the fulfillment of her psychic desires across the realms of sleep and dreams as well as conscious and unconscious. In the same way, her "uncanny" experience has partially, in the form of the automaton man, materialized in the realm of the conscious, creating a disturbance in the dominant order. The conclusion reached, then, is that "extremis" provides fulfillment outside the bounds of society. This consummation may be designated by that order as "insane," but offers her with the opportunity to assert the validity of her creative and instinctual desires.

Anna Mickelsen

Bibliography

WHEN EMERSON DESCRIBED THE PERFECT AMERICAN POET, HE IMMEDIATELY AND CONSCIOUSLY WITHDREW HIMSELF FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF FILLING THAT POSITION. HIS POET WOULD POSSESS MAGIC; WOULD POSSESS INDESCRIBABLE TALENT; WOULD SPEAK TO THE WORLD AS IT HAD NEVER BEEN SPOKEN TO BEFORE—AND ALL IN THE FORM OF POETRY. BUT EMERSON WAS NOT A POET. AND BECAUSE OF THIS, IN WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN A HEARTBREAKINGLY DIFFICULT MOMENT FOR HIM, EMERSON PASSIONATELY PUT TO PAPER ALL THAT THIS POET WOULD DO FOR THE HUMAN SOUL...AND THEN STEPPED BACK. AND DID THIS POET COME? WAS EMMERSON'S PERSONAL DISAPPOINTMENT—THAT HE COULD NOT BE THE GREAT POET HE KNEW THE HUMAN RACE NEEDED—ASSUAGED BY THE COMING OF SUCH ARTIST? WELL, PERHAPS. WE OF COURSE HAVE WHITMAN.

The Transcendentalists were not a normal bunch. They argued; they fought; they spoke to the public; they contemplated in solitude. Their one common foundation, Emerson, served as a link tying them together, but by no means tying them down to similar ideas. The Transcendentalists were nothing if not independent and original individuals, each taking Emerson's words and interpreting them in their own ways. Whitman, Hawthorne, and Dickinson are perfect examples of such differing points of view. Living in a time at which Transcendentalism was floating around, these three had their own ideas, and their own ways of expressing them. Regardless of whether each was an actual, full-blooded, loyal Transcendentalist, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Dickinson all had his/her own way of doing things, and it is in fact these ways on which I intend to focus in this paper. Whitman was the endless-line poet, the landscape poet, the people poet, the body poet, the soul poet. He took Transcendentalism and became its second master, its second teacher (Emerson being, of course, the first). Hawthorne chose a different medium, prose, and applied the practice of Transcendentalism on a fictional community bearing no small resemblance to the actual tried-and-failed Utopian Brook Farm. Dickinson did neither of these. She, I propose, can be seen as a product of Whitman and Hawthorne's ideas/styles, formulating her own medium, her own meaning, her own art. Dickinson was like no other, and she liked it that way. While Whitman professed that he knew the Truth, and intended to spread it to all his pupils, Dickinson intended no such teacher-student relationship with her poems. She was not a teacher, she was not a student. She didn't apply Transcendentalism to her work, hoping, as Hawthorne hoped, that her work might force some aesthetic reality onto her readers. Dickinson wrote for herself, for she herself was the poetry. She "dwelled" in it. If Whitman and Hawthorne are the two extremes of Transcendentalism, Dickinson is the mean of these extremes, creating, in her house next to her bed and writing desk, a unique, comfortable place for only herself and only her poetry.

In three ways might we compare the work of Whitman, of Hawthorne, of Dickinson, so that we might also illustrate the relationship between them. In purpose, in "why" each artist did what s/he did; in content, in "what" each did; and in style, in "how" each artist did what s/he did. Whitman, to begin with, chose a lofty purpose. He saw himself as, in fact, that great American Poet Emerson so lovingly foresaw and described. His poetry emphasized not only Emerson's ideas of nature, of the spirituality which comes from connection with nature, of the ability of art (poetry) to "embody the beauty of nature" in new forms (Nature 30), but emphasized also his own ideas of body, of touch, of coexistent place and time. In Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, this coexistence is explained in the metaphor of a ferry full of people traveling from one shore to the other. This ferry, for Whitman, represents the individual, and the river represents the distance between individuals. The distance, then, symbolizes both the actual space between two bodies (two souls), as well as the chronological, historical time between peoples and cultures. "And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose" (Crossing Brooklyn Ferry 160), he writes, illustrating the fact that we are all the same no matter where we are in time or place. Whitman thrives on this truth—that we are all unique but connected. It is this uniqueness, this individuality of each one of us, in fact, that Whitman sees as the very characteristic which binds us together ("Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt, / Just as any one of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd" (Brooklyn 160)). Whitman encourages us, and urges us as our teacher to embrace our independence, but not to forget to reach out to those around us who share that same sort of unique nature: "For enough people to be able to be in a crowd, each without losing self-identity, self-respect, and dignified particularity, would be to transform the meaning of 'crowd' utterly" (Hollander 180). Emerson's idea of self-reliance is Whitman's central theme and purpose for writing. By learning what Whitman has to say, he claims, we will then reach out and touch (always touch) and connect with the other souls around us, and, accordingly, transcend. We receive "identity" (Brooklyn 162) by our bodies, and hence we need to touch one another in order to "feel" that thing—skin—which both separates us and, in touching, also has the ability to unite us. Whitman writes his poetry because he believes himself to be the teacher of transcendence, of soul-realization, of humanity. He believes he has found the Truth.

Hawthorne, on the other hand, seems to say, in his The Blithedale Romance, that Whitman's lessons oftentimes have too much tendency to go awry. "Of all varieties of mock-life, we have surely blundered into the very emptiest mockery, in our effort to establish the one true system" (The Blithedale Romance 203). Zenobia cries, having realized, too late, that their efforts to create a Transcendental community have tragi-
cally failed. This, Hawthorne claims, is the reality of Transcendentalism. This, he says, is what happens when you try to force anything (even if it be Whitman’s Truth) onto human nature. Like Thoreau, Hawthorne began a literary experiment of Transcendentalism. However, Hawthorne’s experiment failed because it tried to create a “formula” for humanity. His experiment, the literary Blithedale Farm, took un-transcended persons and foolishly stamped “enlightened” onto their foreheads, hoping that this would be enough to create a perfect community. Interestingly, it seems that Whitman never considered the “un-transcended,” or, rather, the effects of forced supposed “Truths” about humanity on these “un-transcended.” Hawthorne sees the repercussions of such an assumption. His Blithedale is a way for him to show the public, and Transcendental reformers, that it is nearly impossible to begin perfection of the soul (in strictly Transcendental terms, at least) without “bringing baggage” with you, without ignoring the self, the soul, and thereby unnaturally forcing some sort of transformation into transcendence. In fact, the doom of failure is sure to come to any Transcendentalist-wannabe who takes Emerson’s, or Whitman’s, or any Transcendentalist’s preachings, to be scripture, and does not form his/her own unique ways to transcend. Hawthorne writes Blithedale to show us the way Transcendentalism can be mishandled, so that we may not make the same mistake ourselves.

If Whitman was an observer by choice, Dickinson was an observer by force—“she had, professionally, nothing to do but look” (Kazin 159). How thankful we all are, then, that she decided to put her observations on paper. Dickinson literally lived in her poems—they were all she had, all that made up her life, all the product of her life. As Kazin again puts it, “what unites all her writing...are the power and depth of her solitude” (Kazin 143). Her thoughts, her imagination, her poetry were her entire self and soul, her entire personal means of transcendence. Dickinson doesn’t worry that there are other people around her, that there are other writers, other thinkers, other “lonely women” who might teach her something about herself. Nor does she worry that she might have something to teach them. “I dwell in Possibility...A fairer House than Prose—/ More numerous of Windows—/ Superior—for Doors—” (#657), she writes, telling us point-blank that her poetry is her body and brain and heart. And this subject—herself—is endless enough in its brilliance and complexity to create 1775 just-as-brilliant-and-complex poems. She writes to transcend beyond all the other voices of the world—to make a place for her own voice: “[Dickinson] knows...that we are always besieged by perspectives. Dickinson’s entire art at its outer limits...is to think and write her way out of that siege” (Bloom 285). One way to do this is to reject supposed self-proclaimed teachers. She does not allow Whitman’s ideas of Transcendentalism to affect her writing, or to teach her how to “find” her soul. And, by relying wholly on herself in this way, she avoids what Hawthorne says is the result of such complete dependence on the ideas of others, i.e. by pasting another person’s—the teacher’s—meaning onto oneself, it is like trying to blot out one’s true meaning, and, in the end, only winds up tragically failing. In #670, Dickinson describes herself (living in her body of poetry, in her own personal “Haunted” house) as “Ourself behind ourself, concealed—”, and she means this—she means that she has fallen into her own soul by writing her poetry, and, in doing so, is struggling with her own humanity by dealing with such major (and horrifying) themes as erotic approaches to death, God, and love. Death, for this poet, was her very reason for living (or for writing—both are, in her case, the same). “In its finality and futile heartbeat, death remained all too real to Dickinson, its ancient promise turned about in her ultimate recognition of life’s limits—and the limits of death” (Kazin 146)—in other words, Dickinson wrote for herself and herself only. It just so happened that “herself” was obsessed with mortality.

Content-wise, Whitman chooses a number of ways of making his message clear. One of these is to unite all of time—just as he unites all of the human race—into one. Whitman is in love with the past, the present, and the future, and he sees them all as exactly the same thing because “It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not” (Brooklyn 160). In order to convey to us, his students, that we are just as connected with our own souls as we are connected to the person who sits next to us, as we are to Whitman as he sits writing his poetry, he paints a picture of “the similitudes of the past and those of the future...strung like beads” in “the simple, compact, well-jointed scheme, [himself] disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme” (Brooklyn 160). The words he uses, the “barbaric yawp” (Song of Myself 89) he specializes in, are no different than the simple, original words used in primitive times by newborn-humans. “The past and present wilt—I have fill’d them, emptied them,...And proceed to fill my next fold of the future” (Song of Myself 88)—Whitman knows time is circular, and wants us to reach back and touch him just as he reaches forward to touch us. He seeks to reform us in this way, however, not only by emphasizing the simultaneous past, present and future, but by cataloguing all the details that make any time the glorious creation it is. “The poet insists that he stands for all America—that he is America, and lest you not believe him, he will play out that theme in energetically crowded detail” (Hollander 178), and so this is true. At very this moment, millions of things are happening simultaneously, and yet Whitman shows us how many of these things are astonishingly similar: “The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm’d cloth is offering moccasins and bead-bags for sale...The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him...The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly...The Missourian crosses the plains toting his corn and his cattle” (Song of Myself 42-43). As we act, others act. We are united by what we do. But Whitman does not stop there. We are also united by who we are; he says, what we are made of. Before we may transcend by touching another one, we must first understand why we are able to reform ourselves this way, why the body in its details is so beautiful. And, as he has told us a thousand times before, the answer to this is that we share our bodies, as well as the beauteous parts that come with it: “Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under-leg,...Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel; All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of my or your body or of any one's body, male or female” (I Sing the Body Electric 100). The land in its parts, the body in its parts, the soul in its parts, time in its parts...all of these are parts of the Truth Whitman seeks to teach us so that we may reform ourselves.

This expansion, this transcendence, this comprehension of touch Whitman speaks of are all insured if we do one thing, and that is listen to the Poet. And this makes
Whitman seem as haughty and arrogant as he really was. However, he would claim that every one of us should be so arrogant, should be so proud of him or herself so that we may revel in the beauty of the human race together. The Poet Emerson spoke of is the Poet Whitman has become (or so Whitman believes), and the goal of this Poet is to expand his knowledge to those who will listen, and thereby create a nation of poets: “The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy” (Preface 1855—Leaves of Grass, First Edition 719). Walking around in Whitman’s poems, we get the sense that we have been here before, and that he knew we would come. We belong with him just as we belong with each other, embracing the Truth—transcendence of the human soul—and becoming as Adam was: newborn, powerful, wholly unique, naming things and making them his own. Whitman is a master at naming things, detailing them, cataloguing them, repeating them over and over until our heads spin. Hopefully, he thinks, this spinning will be a good thing, and we will want more and more until, finally, we are on his level, having transcended and seen the light.

I bring up light because I think it is so inherently important in Whitman, Hawthorne, and Dickinson’s work. Light embodies many things for each of these writers, but in only Whitman’s case does light seem to embody goodness, and goodness only. Once we have reached this light, so to speak, we have reached the epitome of what Whitman has to teach us. Literally, light in Whitman’s Leaves of Grass represents a variety of things—all “good.” Take Crossing Brooklyn Ferry and Song of Myself, for example. The time of day during which Brooklyn takes place is sunset: “Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high…” (Brooklyn 159). Why is this important? It is the end of the day, people rush home to their families, another day is done, and another one will soon begin. Sunset is the end of the cycle of days, of weeks, of months and years and centuries—this cycle represents the circularity of time and soul and humanity. The sea-gulls Whitman describes in this poem fly in “slow-wheeling circles” (Brooklyn 161) as the light fades and prepares to brighten again. Like the light, we may fade, but we will always brighten again, and may indeed brighten permanently if we read Whitman and achieve transcendence. At the end of Song of Myself, Whitman becomes the dirt beneath our feet, dying, in essence, and becoming part of yet another cycle. But, again, this death takes place at sunset: “The last scud of day holds back for me / It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk. / I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun…” (Song of Myself 89). Light represents sex, soul, nature, all of what Whitman writes about because sex, soul, nature are all pathways to, or the results of, enlightenment. Whitman’s light, unlike some forms of light portrayed in Hawthorne’s work, is not artificial, and cannot be faked.

Hawthorne’s light we shall get to a bit later, after first giving attention to his terribly obvious affliction with the past. He is burdened by it. Can’t get rid of it. The past weighs Hawthorne down. Right away we should see the contradiction between him and Emerson, who believed Transcendentalism to be the letting-go of the past, and embracing of the present. The reason Hawthorne is so burdened by the past is because he believes such a “letting-go” to be almost virtually impossible. As aforesay-
was, indeed, a foolish dream! Yet it gave us some pleasant summer days, and bright hopes, while they lasted. It can do no more; nor will it avail us to shed tears over a for it can indeed be achieved, and, even if it is not, can still cause some sort of temporary pleasure. But those who falsely believe that a Utopian community can exist (for Hawthorne certainly seems to think it is impossible) are only fooling themselves: “It was, indeed, a foolish dream! Yet it gave us some pleasant summer days, and bright hopes, while they lasted. It can do no more; nor will it avail us to shed tears over a broken bubble” (Blithedale 203-204). Those who came to Blithedale were good actors who experienced tragedy as soon as they began to tire of playing parts (“What an actress Zenobia might have been!” (Blithedale 212)). This tragedy, of course, came with Zenobia’s loss of Hollingsworth, Coverdale’s loss of those he wrote about, and Hollingsworth’s loss of “innocence,” so to speak. Earlier in the book Coverdale again and again mentions that Hollingsworth’s obsession with the reform of others would work better if Hollingsworth were to “commit a crime” and instead work on the reform of himself. Well, Coverdale gets his wish: “Up to this moment,” I inquired, “how many criminals have you reformed?” ‘Not one!’ said Hollingsworth, with eyes still fixed on the ground. “Ever since we parted, I have been busy with a single murderer!” (Blithedale 215). Transcendence can be an evil thing, if forced or misapplied.

For Hawthorne, as with Whitman, light may be seen as a representation of love, individuality, and soul. However, again, this light must be attained on one’s own terms, and no one else’s. Zenobia’s “light,” feminism, was killed by her other “light,” love. Contrarily, one might also say that her whole light—both feminism and love—was killed by forced Transcendental education and an unnatural setting. From the very beginning of the book, we see the lack of light at Blithedale and accordingly accept this lack of light as a bit of foreshadowing on the Farm’s eventual success: “The snowfall, too, looked inexpressibly dreary. (I had almost called it dingy)” (Blithedale 45). Hawthorne himself experienced such snow during his own stay at Brook Farm, and, in a letter to his fiancé, expressed his own disheartened nature at what the weather might mean for his future stay: “Through faith, I persist in believing that spring and summer will come in their due season; but the unregenerated man shivers within me, and suggests a doubt whether I may not have wandered within the precincts of the Arctic circle, and chosen my heritage among everlasting snows” (Letters to Sophia Peabody 416). But the light which interests me most in this novel is the contrast Hawthorne has created between fake and natural light. I speak here of fire versus transcendental light/the enlightenment of the soul/true happiness. Fire is a created light—it keeps out the cold and, eventually, dies. Pure, spiritual “light,” on the other hand, creates itself and deals with the cold—it does not merely cover the cold up, and this light never dies. Anyone with glowing eyes in this novel has a passion burning within them (“Hollingsworth looked at me fiercely, and with glowing eyes” (Blithedale 136)), and whether that passion be good or bad, it is undeniably honest (pure) passion. The light of hope is given forth in this novel in examples such as a scene involving Zenobia, who is currently fired-up and driven by her feminist passion, as well as by her love for Hollingsworth—this light, before it is put-out by the effects of the Utopia, is cheery and heartening: “Zenobia...looked as bright as the very day that was blazing down upon us” (Blithedale 102). Misfortune in this novel is always a persistent “shadow” (Blithedale 143), easily blotting-out the fake light (abundant at the
person, and this is suicide, she would say. And, if not suicide, is simply entirely too painful, or entirely too impossible. The reformer, the Transcendentalist, who believes him/herself better than all the rest is made fun of in #214, as Dickinson plays the part of the Transcendentalist. In this poem, she taps into that golden knowledge of the Transcended ("I taste a liquor never brewed"); and then grows to giant-height as she becomes the "drunk" of transcendence, "the little Tippler / Leaning against the—Sun—". But this Transcendentalist is foolsing herself because no one can become that which is not natural to him/her. On this point she would agree with Hawthorne, but she would not, and does not, publicize her views so that everyone will listen. Instead, she turns this idea over in private, contemplating its meaning for her, taking a person who tries to reform his/herself and comparing this person's struggle to Dickinson's very own pain at not being able to be with a lover. In #640, Dickinson's longest poem, she immortalizes the pain she feels at not being willing to change herself and be with the one she loves. She cannot live with him, for "It would be Life—", she cannot die with him, for one of them would be left behind to suffer without the other ("For One must wait / To shut the Other's Gaze down—"), she cannot share his views because he is religious and she is not ("They'd judge Us—How— / For You—served Heaven—You know, / Or sought to—to— / I could not—"). That pain which separates them is as large as an "ocean", is "that White Sustenance— / Despair—". And yet even this pain might not be as painful as the one she would feel if she were to change for him and conform to his ideals, letting herself go and denying her true self, becoming like the Blithedale farmers and living one life but longing for the old one. Dickinson likes who she is and does not need to be a student. Nor does she need to be a teacher and not at all intending to incorporate anyone names away, making the poem her own and not at all intending to incorporate anyone else under her pen. Dickinson's transcendence is just that—Dickinson's transcendence. It is not a lesson for others to learn, but for only her to learn. Her transcendence is "her thing"—she feels the pains of death and love and God and isolation; she sets out to understand the truth of poetry, beauty and truth. This is no one else's journey but her own, and no amount of time in a Brook or Blithedale Farm, no amount of time reading the work of Whitman, can give her the knowledge she learns from writing her poetry. Her own personal expansion and private enlightenment is what happens to her soul when she writes: "The Soul selects her own Society— / Then—shuts the Door— / To her divine Majority— / Present no more—" (#303). There is no question that Dickinson attempted to transcend, to achieve some sort of higher knowl-

edge, but did she get there? "We can tell from her manuscripts that she regarded both 'terror' and 'rapture' as alternative words for 'transport" (Bloom 277)—does this mean, since she used these words and ideas so much in her writing, that she did indeed succeed in transporting herself, in transcending herself? Or did hope give out? Kazin seems to think hope gave out and cites #254 as evidence of this giving-out; his interpretation of this poem is of a hope-bird "that perches in the soul" and sings beautiful songs, but never achieves anything more than that ("She was just past thirty when she seems to have given up hope that her outward life would somehow be transformed") (Kazin 160). But this is her outward life, not her inward life. She never married, never did much of anything except live always in the same house, go out every once in a while, and write poems. Outwardly, perhaps she was disappointed. Inwardly, I propose that the transcendence she was looking for, the hope for something more, was fulfilled.

Bloom points out that Dickinson's "best biographer, Richard Sewall, remarks in a fine understatement that 'she was something of a specialist on light'" (Bloom 282). However, her light is quite different from Whitman's (which always brings good), and Hawthorne's (which sometimes brings bad, but has the potential to bring good). Dickinson's light is always blinding. Love, knowledge, God...all these might be represented in light, but one thing is for sure, once you have seen this light (as Dickinson undoubtedly did) you can never "go back." The damage is done: "Before I got my eye put out / I liked as well to see— / As other Creatures, that have Eyes / And know no other way— / ...So safer—guess—with just my soul / Upon the Window pane— / Where other Creatures put their eyes— / Incautious—of the Sun—" (#327). In this poem, we're given the person who once saw as the other un-transcended did—normally, easily, comfortably. However, some sort of transcendence has hit and the light has poured forth from the sun which once seemed so harmless when s/he "knew no other way." Perhaps this light was always visible to Dickinson, and this is why she was able to write like she did. Or perhaps her writing caused this transcendence, and suddenly she had to write in order to create some outlet for all this blinding whiteness coming her way. "Had I not seen the Sun / I could have borne the shade / But Light a new Wilderness / My Wilderness has made—" (#1233), she writes, suggesting that although she might have enjoyed the shade, this new light has made her life more complex in a way that encourages her to explore the "wilderness." What is this light made up of? The usual Dickinson stuff. Death ("There's a certain Slant of light, / Winter Afternoons—" (#258)), God ("There interposed a Fly— / With Blue—uncertain stumbling Buzz— / Between the light and me—" (#465)), etc., etc. However, in death there is no light, and in this respect perhaps Dickinson preferred no light at all—she had already had enough of it. The light in her outward life was snuffed out when she became a woman ("How odd the Girl's life looks / Behind this soft Eclipse—" (#199)) because a) there were few choices for women in Dickinson's time, and b) one of her choices, marriage, never happened. Perhaps, her outward life being dark, and her inward eyes being painfully-blinded by the very personal, transcendent light, she wanted nothing more than no light, no anything at all. And there is no light in a coffin: "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers— / Untouched by Morning / And un-
In style more than anything, I think, do I see the Whitman + Hawthorne = Dickinson equation. Whitman published his work in *Leaves of Grass* over and over and over again. He wrote his poems to be read, and read they were. In Whitman's mind, as in Emerson's, the Poet's job was to encapsulate absolutely everything—not just the human aspect—in his poetry. "He spans between [the Atlantic and Pacific coasts] also from east to west and reflects what is between them" (*Preface 1855 713*), and, therefore, since the Poet writes about the land, those who live on the land should read his poems and learn what they can from them. Whitman published his poems to get his message across, and he knew the exact Transcendental reasons for this: "The master knows that he is unspeakably great and that all are unspeakably great...that nothing for instance is greater than to conceive children and bring them up well...that to be is just as great as to perceive or tell" (*Preface 1855 722*). He wanted to bring us up to his level, and he did this using language we could understand.

This language is what makes Whitman the poet he is. He uses raw words, rough words, uncommon words—"...rest the chuff of your hand on my hip" (*Song of Myself* 83)—that grab our attention. He also uses very sensual language to convey to us his ideas of touch and contact and body: "Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers! / Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution! / Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or public assembly!" (*Brooklyn* 164). He is repetitive and repetitive and repetitive and gets his catalogues through to us if it kills him—he wants us to remember his words. He wants us to use them.

He chooses poetry, of course, because that is the form of the truest Transcendental art. Poetry is the way through which we the public will recognize the genius of the Artist and flock to him as we would flock to Christ. Whitman is a poet because, as Emerson says, "as we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols" (*Nature* 33). Poetry corresponds with some primitive chord in all of us because it represents nature and all its beauty, just as a song does, just as the opera which Whitman so loved does, just as the bird does with its sweet song "in the swamp in the secluded recesses" (*When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* 330).

What made Whitman so different, so unique, so noticeable, however, was the way in which he revolutionized the poem. Whitman breaks the mold of standard rhyme, meter, and *length of line*, and, in doing so, extends poetry into his own personal realm. Each line is like speech—endless, like one breath, like the words of an orator standing before a crowd of hundreds. What stopped Emerson from being the Poet he predicted was the fact that he did not see what Whitman saw, that "the poetic quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul" (*Preface 1855 716*). Nothing holds Whitman down, and yet his poems still have some sort of magical rhythm that continues to make his poetry sound like music, making it that much more appealing to his readers: "But the fixer and finisher, the poet himself, is far more crafty a puller of waves than the coldly regular moon. [Whitman] might just as well have likened his long anaphoric catalogues to urban

crowds through which the reader himself will pass, jostling, pushing, sometimes striding, sometimes pausing" (*Hollander* 183).

Hawthorne, like Whitman, published his work, as well. He wanted his words to be read. More specifically, he wanted people to hear what he had to say about Transcendentalism, Brook Farm, Utopias in general. He hated them. And this was not the voice of an outsider—he himself had once liked the idea of a Transcendental community, had joined one, had realized he did not belong there, and, intelligently, left. He did not need to take on Brook Farm's problems—had his own beliefs and goals to attend to, and one of these was to write a book so that no one would make the same mistake he did. Hence, his part as Coverdale in *Blithedale*. "In my own behalf, I rejoice that I could once think better of the world's improbability than it deserved. It is a mistake into which men seldom fall twice, in a lifetime; or, if so, the rarer and higher is the nature that can thus magnanimously persist in error" (*Blithedale* 51). In Hawthorne's own letters to his fiancé, he states quite bluntly the disenchantment he had run into at Brook Farm—the disenchantment which probably fanned the first flame of *Blithedale* ("But really I should judge it to be twenty years since I left Brook Farm; and I take this to be one proof that my life there was as unnatural and unsuitable, and therefore an unreal one" (*Letters* 420-421)).

Hawthorne has no rhythm. He has no meter. But there is reason for this—he is a novelist. However, why choose prose over poetry, if, as Emerson said, poetry is the language of nature? Perhaps because Hawthorne wanted anyone and everyone to understand what he had to say, and putting it into the context of "everyday speech" was the best way to do so. *Blithedale* was written for the present-day, and therefore his readers would have been able to identify with the lives and personalities portrayed in it (mesmerism, Transcendentalism, Utopias, Margaret Fuller, and so on). And yet there is an undeniable fiction that comes to us when we read this novel. First, it comes in the actual words he uses: "[Hawthorne's] narrator, Coverdale, uses words and phrases that are archaic, quaint, far from the America of the 1840s and 1850s" (*Introduction: Cultural and Historical Background* 20). These words (such as "shoon" as the plural for "shoes") add a slightly fanciful-, fantasy-feel to the novel. Second, *Blithedale's* fiction comes to us from its label as a "romance."

The fact that Hawthorne termed his novel a romance instantly gives it an almost-but-not-quite feeling, gives us the assumption that the novel will be "caring on the utmost verge of a precipitous absurdity" (*Introduction* 20). But does this make *Blithedale* less convincing? Or does it simply say that any *Utopia* is a romance, and always will be a romance, because any Utopia will "almost succeed, but not quite?" Coverdale himself says that "real life never arranges itself exactly like a romance" (*Blithedale* 114), and this novel certainly does not end with lovers loving and happinesses overflowing.

*Blithedale Farm*, like Brook Farm, was a failure and only a "foolish dream," as Zenobia puts it. Utopias were the Romances of the Transcendentalists.

"Emily Dickinson did not have a career, a publisher, or an audience in her own time" (*Kazin* 142), and, in all probability, she didn't want one. As already stated, Dickinson did not write her poems to be read by others. After all, she *dwells* in her poems—she is not going to sell herself. She makes this idea quite clear in #709 when
she writes that publishing one’s work is to “reduce [the] Human Spirit / To Disgrace of Price—”. Publishing would be too much like conformity, which Dickinson hated. In her opinion, Transcendentalists “leansing against the sun” become too much like one another when they receive money for their writing, and she wanted to be anything but “the Majority,” in which all one needs to do is to “Assent—and you are sane—”. Dickinson was “Demur—”, and, by God, she was “straightway dangerous—” (#435). She “selects her own society.”

The world had not run into anything then, nor has it run into anything since, that is like the language used in Dickinson’s poetry. If Whitman’s “poetry...looks easy and proves hard” (Hollander 178), Dickinson’s is downright agonizing. Seemingly random capitalizations, dashes in the middle of sentences (which, according to one critic, “[enable Dickinson] (and the reader) to breathe” (Kazin 155), mysterious rhymes, sing-song Bible-like meter—all these make for one complicated poem. She uses the smallest number of words she can, and yet somehow creates so much meaning; her words seem to take on lives of their own in our heads, growing uncontrollably until one poem has fifty interpretations. Is this not brilliance? Like Whitman, Dickinson creates a poetic-language for herself...and why shouldn’t she? If only she was reading the poems, shouldn’t they be particularly-suited to her own unique way of thinking? Isn’t this what transcendence is all about?

Perhaps the reason Dickinson chose poetry over prose was the same as Whitman’s reason—poetry is rarer than prose, more musical and natural than prose. Maybe she felt that only poetry could do justice to describing death, God, and love the way she wanted to describe them. The poem to her, after all, “distills amazing sense / From ordinary Meanings—” (#448). Prose has too many words, too many distractions and instructions about what to think and feel. As Kazin puts it, “fiction seems to have been as foreign to her as it was to Emerson. She was so far from belonging to any literary sorority that she would not have understood Hawthorne’s rage at best-selling women novelists crowding him out of public favor: ‘A damned lot of scribbling women. I wish they were forbidden to write on pain of having their faces deeply scarified’” (Kazin 152). Dickinson “wanted poetry” (Bloom 279), and poetry she got—poetry she could change and make her own—poetry she could use to draw from the ideas of Emerson, but in a starker sense than did Whitman.

And, indeed, Dickinson takes this “starker sense” as far as she can possibly go. Her poems are not like standard poetry, and even less are they like Whitman’s poetry. Her poems are stripped to the bone—quick, concise, saying as much as she can in three or four words per line (“Dickinson demands so active a participation on the reader’s part that one’s mind had better be at its rare best” (Bloom 277)). With no titles, the poems become even shorter, even more difficult to figure out. They are virtual mysteries in themselves, and once you solve them, even more mysteries seem to present themselves. Her poetry haunts you both because it is so good and because it is so creepy in subject. Take Whitman’s “lines of breath,” add in a little of Hawthorne’s extensive prose, and you get the synthesis, the child who learns what she can from each writer, the artist who draws her own conclusions. You get Dickinson’s barest of “peppercorn informations” (Nature 34).

The result of all this hocus-pocus might be to conclude that Dickinson is the true Transcendentalist Poet—that she has taken the best from both Whitman and Hawthorne, two extremes of Transcendentalism, and become her own creation. But is this so accurate? Is she the voice of the people which Emerson described—full of magic, talent, and speaking to the world as it had never been spoken to before? In this respect, such might be true, for she certainly possessed these qualities. But is this all it takes to make the great American Poet? Or does she contradict that title in too many ways? Yes, Dickinson is a woman, and she writes about this fact in her poetry quite often: “I’m ‘wife’—I’ve finished that— / That other state— / I’m ‘Czar’—I’m ‘Woman’ now— / It’s safer so—” (#199). Who better to speak for the people than a woman, or, rather, who better to speak for the people who haven’t, as yet, been heard? Did Emerson overlook something when he called the upcoming Poet a “he?” Chances are, yes he did. But that Dickinson is this Poet, because of the fact that she writes about women, I am not so sure about. Why? Because women are not all she writes about (and she would not agree that simply because she is a woman, her poetry speaks to the feminists both of her time and ours). Death, love, God, loneliness, and self (among other things) serve as the subjects which populate the majority of her poems—the subject of “woman” is not nearly as rampant as would be necessary if we were to call her a Poet of the People because she writes about women. However, death, love, God, loneliness, and self are universal issues that affect us all, and in this respect she might indeed be said to write of the human condition, as well as of ways in which we may transcend and accept death and knowledge and the true meaning of pain. But, even so, she did not ever consciously write “for us all” in the way that, say, Whitman did. “She did not use her poetry as prayer; she did not write to mollify God, to ward off evil; she wrote because she and she alone could find in religion the adventures of her utterly independent, endlessly speculative soul” (Kazin 151). Whatever reasons she had for writing were reasons relating to herself, and not to the People. If she is a Transcendentalist, it is only because we have made her one.

And yet there is still something more to be said—on the subject of Dickinson as Poet—because of the undeniable fact that she scares us to death. She terrifies us. Why is this so? Why does a poet who was not insane, who wrote only for herself, who did not consciously write about the human race or about us...why do her poems send chills up our backs? Well, there is the literal reason—that she writes about freaky, spooky things (“I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—” (#465)). There is the poetical reason—that she erily, almost magically packs pounds of meaning into ounces of words (the metaphor for the stiffening of a dead body in #341). And, finally, there is the psychological reason—that she speaks what we are ourselves afraid to admit (“We wonder it was not Ourselves / Arrested it—before—” (#448)). As Blooms says, “Whitman...stays ahead of us... Dickinson waits for us” (Bloom 273). She is with us more than Whitman is, for he is far too “superior than us” to really speak our language, and, additionally, she is with us more than Hawthorne, for he also assumes superiority in his “tsk-tsking” of the situation in which he believes Transcendentalism has placed us. When we read Dickinson, we read our deepest, darkest secrets not as a lesson, not as an application of those secrets on others, but simply as themselves.
In this respect, Dickinson does speak for us all. After all, she was not stone or marble (in life, anyway...)—she was a sponge like everyone else, and no doubt absorbed many of the Transcendental ideas that were going on around her in her own time. But, disregarding Whitman's sweet demand that we take him by the hand and learn from him, disregarding Hawthorne's fervent need to turn his writing into a critique of society, she created a way of transcending that was her very own, that dealt with her own pressing issues and questions. Maybe Emerson's Poet has come, but maybe it was destined that this Poet never know her own identity. Dickinson is not a Transcendentalist in the strictest sense, following Emerson and Thoreau exactly and precisely and to-the-mark, but she certainly is transcendent. She certainly is fighting, like the rest of us, against whatever mortal, human stones that persist in weighing her down.

Bibliography


Female insanity is central to the plots of both Lady Audley's Secret and Jane Eyre. While the characterizations of 'insane' women in these texts contrast greatly, their violent acts against men result in their being labeled by society as insane, though their deviant acts are largely motivated by self-defense when the institution of marriage fails them. In both novels, acts of female 'madness' are the reactions of women to threats to their domestic role and livelihood. Both works illustrate the tensions which resulted from the Victorian beliefs that insanity was a natural facet of the female mind but that it was also incompatible with their domestic role. In addition, the 'insanity' of Lucy Audley and Bertha Rochester can be interpreted as a means of defense and self protection made necessary by the failure of their husbands to provide them with the stability and security which Victorian marriage was supposed to offer in return for the wife's submission to the husband. These novels suggest an anxiety about Victorian marriage, that in the only way women can assert their rights and protect their rightful and 'natural' position in marriage is by committing violent acts of 'madness.'

Victorian psychology viewed women and certain types of insanity as inextricably intertwined. Insanity, particularly hysteria, was considered a natural part of the female mental makeup. Hysteria was described by a Victorian psychologist as "that changeable disorder which vexes the female constitution, and baffles the medical practitioner," and articles that discussed mentally disturbed persons often referred to patients as "she," even in hypothetical situations which would usually merit the generalized masculine pronoun "he" (Dubois 110). According to one psychologist, a diagnosed female hysterics didn't actually suffer from a disease, but was merely a bit more "female" than most women; her hysteria was "a variety of womanliness" (Richet 91). Women were believed to suffer "a predisposition to derangement" due to their unruly bodies and tyrannical hormones (Showalter 322-323). Matus observes that between the dangers of menarche, menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause, there was very little time in a woman's life where she was not believed to be at severe risk of mental disturbance due to her hormonal condition (Matus 343). In particular, pregnancy and childbirth were supposed to present imposing threats to a woman's mind, which is reflected in both Lady Audley's Secret and Jane Eyre. The intimate relationship between maternity and madness is demonstrated in Braddon's novel when the reader learns that the birth of a child heralds the onset of bouts of insanity for both Lucy and her mother. Insan-
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remorse function as evidence of “latent insanity” (Braddon 379). The same doctor admits that Lucy might only succumb to true insanity once or twice in her life, and only under the worst of conditions; however, he also believes that this makes her enough of a threat that she should be locked away forever to protect society (Braddon 379).

Like Lucy, Bertha shows no respect for ‘womanliness’ when she attacks Rochester and her brother; in fact, she is described as a drunkard and “demon,” possessed of a “virile force” (Brontë 296). Rochester’s description of Bertha’s “madness” consists for the most part of accounts of her fits of “temper,” his personal dislike of her personality and habits, and the fact that she was “at once intemperate and unchaste,” which lead, predictably enough, to a medical diagnosis of insanity (Bronte 308-309). Through behavior which supports their own desires and passions instead of a repressive social code, Lucy and Bertha act in ways which cause them to be labeled by a patriarchal society as insane, and therefore unsuitable as wives. This judgment results in their confinement, virtual invisibility, and eventual deaths.

Ironically, the most striking instances of both Lucy and Bertha’s insanity occur in defense of their traditional roles as wives, despite their seeming rebellion against these roles. Lucy’s violent attempts to murder George, Luke, and Robert are motivated by her desire to keep her past a secret so that she can remain Sir Michael’s wife and enjoy the power and security that the position offers. Though it is true that Lucy seems to attack nearly every man she comes in contact with, she never attacks Sir Michael because her marriage to him provides her with security and happiness. By attacking her first husband, her blackmail, and the man who seems almost inhumanly committed to exposing her past, Lucy defends her status as the wife of a powerful man in order to protect herself from the vicissitudes of poverty and hardship with which she is painfully familiar.

It is significant that Lucy’s ‘insane’ acts are originally motivated by her abandonment by her first husband, George. This desertion tears each of the benefits of marriage from Lucy’s life yet leaves her with all the hardships and responsibilities of a wife, plus the added responsibilities of father and provider. When the institution of marriage fails her through the negligence of her husband, Lucy is forced to seek work, which eventually leads to Sir Michael’s proposal. Considering her first experience with marriage, it is perhaps not surprising that Lucy feels justified in violating her wedding vows by taking another husband; in fact, as the Dawsons observe, “it would be something more than madness in a penniless girl to reject such an offer” (Braddon 9). Lucy’s second marriage, though illegal, is in fact merely a practical way to provide what her first husband fails to: financial security for herself and her family. All of her subsequent deceptions and ploys are further attempts to preserve that security.

Though Bertha’s brute violence and animalistic appearance distract the reader from any pattern in her seemingly random rampages, a pattern of behavior emerges which suggests that she, like Lucy Audley, commits her ‘insane’ attacks in order to protect the marriage which provides her with everything a marriage is supposed to: loyalty, dependability, and security. While Bertha apparently possessed a temper and abrasive personality before her confinement, as well as immoral tendencies, she never

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becomes truly violent until her confinement by her husband. The diagnosis of insanity was apparently made on account of her unwomanly vices of drunkenness and licentiousness, which represented the "germs of insanity" (Brontë 309). Each of Bertha's violent acts coincide with a threat to her marital rights through attempted infidelity or abandonment by Rochester. Bertha's first violent deed is her attempt to burn Rochester in his bed. Interestingly, Bertha chooses to attack Rochester in this manner soon after he has told Jane of his past sexual indiscretions (and not incidentally, his infidelities) with several women, including Adèle's mother. By setting her unhappy husband's bed on fire, Bertha commits an act which suggests that, despite her apparent insanity, she is fully aware of the wrong he does her through his infidelity, and is capable of devising a fitting punishment for his transgressions (Gilbert and Gubar 353). While it may be doubtful that Bertha has actually heard Rochester's confession to Jane, by placing the confession directly preceding the attack, Brontë links the two occurrences by proximity, and the importance of this connection is proved significant by the pattern which emerges as the book continues, in which each attempted infringement by Rochester upon Bertha's marital rights is followed by her swift and violent retaliation.

Bertha's next act of insanity is the mauling and gnawing of her brother, Richard Mason, which occurs during a house party attended by the presumed soon-to-be Mrs. Rochester, Blanche Ingram. Rochester's apparent courtship of Miss Ingram and charade marriage to her are the prelude to Bertha's attack upon her brother later that evening. With this in mind, Bertha's act can be interpreted as both a protest against the presumed usurper to her role as well as a punishment to a brother who allows her to be confined in such an inhuman way. Bertha strikes again when her position as wife is threatened even more overtly by the incipient marriage of Jane and Rochester. While a violent madwoman might be expected to attack her rival, Bertha does not; she merely rips up the bridal veil that symbolizes her husband's ultimate dereliction of marital responsibility and then leaves. Like Lucy, Bertha does not vent her violence upon those who have not wronged or threatened her, but upon those who have knowingly wronged her, yet blithely continue to ignore their responsibilities as men in a patriarchal society while enjoying the privileges of that position. Therefore, instead of mauling Jane, Bertha destroys the veil, symbolizing the defiled and incomplete mockery of marriage which has left her a caged animal and which threatens to make Jane a glorified mistress.

Bertha's final desperate act, the fiery destruction of Thornfield, is enacted while Rochester feverishly searches for Jane, so that he may look after her welfare and provide for her comfort, even from a distance. The irony that Rochester is willing to do so much more for a former employee and intended mistress than for his own wife is obviously not lost on Bertha, who exacts a final revenge by destroying the house which has not been a home, but a prison to her. As Jane earlier points out to Rochester, his worst crime is his hatred for the woman he married due to her 'insanity.' His lack of compassion for his afflicted wife indicates that 'for better or for worse' was an empty clause in his wedding vows. Rochester's failed attempts to control Bertha's personality and behavior early in their marriage, and his caging of her in her own house when this fails both function as extreme forms of confinement from which 'madness' seems the only means of escape. Her marriage ultimately becomes a prison to her that only death will deliver from: his or hers. Rather than be rescued by Rochester, presumably only to be confined again, Bertha chooses to end her life and her imprisonment through suicide. Again, another unsettling question surfaces—if all women are naturally and inherently insane to some degree, and insanity is actually a reaction to and defense against the failed marriage due to the reneging of men on their marital duties, where does that leave the institution of marriage?

Confinement is a recurring image which female characters throughout both novels use to describe marriage. Brontë specifically links the themes of marriage and imprisonment through the charades skit performed by Miss Ingram and Rochester. Bridewell, a notorious prison, is identified with the bride in a marriage, specifically, the bride of Rochester (aptly so, considering Bertha's location at that exact moment). Both Jane Eyre and Lucy Audley associate marriage with slavery and bondage, particularly when their rights and wishes are ignored by their spouse or prospective spouse. When describing her unhappy marriage to George, Lucy bitterly remarks that she "his wife, and the mother of his son, was a slave" (Braddon 353). Interestingly, it was at this point in her life that "the hereditary taint" of madness first affects her, suggesting that her 'madness' is in fact her resentment of her husband and her defense against his injustice to her (Braddon 353). When Jane is engaged to Rochester, she also likens her position to that of a slave to Rochester's sultan (Brontë 271). Rochester himself warns Jane (albeit playfully) that upon marriage he "will attach [her] to a chain," suggesting both slavery and prison imagery in conjunction with marriage (Brontë 272). The implication is clear—to the woman at least, marriage is a means of confinement that lasts as long as both parties survive. If the woman resists this confinement, as both Bertha and Lucy do, they will face an even stricter form of captivity (Rigney 18). Their subsequent acts of 'madness' represent determined efforts to reject both of the types of imprisonments enforced upon them by their husbands—the original feminine submission and passive behavior of the 'proper' woman, as well as the slavery which results from being tied to an improper and irresponsible husband incapable of providing his wife with the support and security he is supposed to.

Having exposed the shortcomings of marriage and the horrendous position of the woman tied to an inadequate husband, both authors retreat from the unsettling questions about marriage raised by Lucy and Bertha's experiences, and hide behind the sensationalistic gimmicks of madness and the 'inappropriate' woman as lunatic wife. In each case, the secret of the woman's madness is dramatically revealed in such a way as to shock not only the other characters, but the reader as well. Right on the heels of this revelation comes another: the madwoman is not only mad, and therefore an inappropriate spouse, but she is also an interloper, an impostor who gained her position of wife through subterfuge. Lucy is revealed to be a working-class opportunist, while Bertha is unmasked as an exotic, immoral, racially impure Creole woman. In addition, both women were aware of their propensity for insanity (due to their mothers' insanity) before their marriages, making their deceptions doubly treacherous to the men who marry them. These revelations serve to cancel out much of the reader's sympathy for the 'madwomen', and most, if not all sympathy on the parts of the other
characters.

Jill Matus argues that the sensationalistic focus upon madness draws attention away from the economic politics of gender and marriage, but I would argue that it goes much further (Matus 344-346). The concentration upon madness and otherness which define both Lucy and Bertha serves to both exonerate and obscure the failure of men as husbands to provide for, protect and support their wives, as well as the failure of marriage itself as an institution to deliver to women what society promises them as their due for their submission to men. By labeling the retaliatory and self-protective actions of Lucy and Bertha as merely symptoms of an insanity which is both an inherited disease and a sign of the low morality one would expect in both a working-class schemer and a half-breed drunken whore, Braddon and Bronte are able to obscure the fact that marriage failed both of these women before they 'became' mad. The dark irony that the very acts which most strongly define the unsuitability of Lucy and Bertha as wives are actually perpetrated in order to protect their status as wives is completely obscured to make possible a formulaic 'happy' ending which "leaves the good people all happy and at peace" (Braddon 447).

Both novels close with brief sketches of contented and rustic existences lived out in isolation from the rest of society. New marriages are made, children are born, the sun shines, the birds sing, and souls heal. The unmentioned, and indeed unmentionable condition for such a happy ending is the death of the impostor lunatic, the outsider who brought insanity, violence and grief into the lives of the "good people." Both authors try to minimize the tensions created by the deaths of their anti-heroines by relating their deaths through distant, second-hand reports, and then set the scene for joyous celebration. However, the fact that these unhappy and wronged women must be cruelly confined and finally die in order for the "good" people to be satisfied with life undermines any attempt at an unconditionally happy ending, as do the abandonment of Audley Court and the utter destruction of Thornfield. Despite new marriages, the tensions surrounding the earlier marriages are still left unresolved. Marriage fails both Bertha and Lucy for reasons that have little to do with their own inadequacies and more to do with the failures of both their husbands and of marriage as an institution. Despite diversionary tactics by both authors which put the blame on the 'outsider' who is then expelled from society itself, the fact remains that marriage represents confinement and imprisonment so rigid that the only means of escape are madness and finally, death.

Both _Lady Audleys Secret_ and _Jane Eyre_ expose tensions about Victorian marriage which remain unresolved even at the close of each novel. Marriage functions throughout both novels as a means of confining women, while men fail to fulfill even the most rudimentary of their marital obligations. In response, both women resort to actions labeled as insane by society but which can be interpreted as defensive actions on the part of wronged wives to assert and protect their marital rights and positions against those who would deny them those privileges.

While this aspect of self-defense on the part of Bertha and Lucy is obscured through the sensationalistic manner of revelations pertaining to both their identities and their 'insanity,' the tensions which are created involving marriage and its failure hover dis...

Bibliography


