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Reform of the United Nations Security Council: Is It Time?

The United Nations Security Council, a chief organ of the UN, is broadly viewed as having a mixed track record. The Council, which under the United Nations Charter serves the primary purpose of maintaining international peace and security, has been highly criticized for its embedded privileges as well as competing political interests ("Charter"). Despite the fact that the geopolitical landscape of the world has developed dramatically since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, the Security Council has failed to make necessary changes (Vaughan et al. 14). Needless to say, modernization and modification of the Council is essential in carrying out the organization's principal goals. In understanding the depth of this topic, one must first grasp the roles and structure of the Security Council, as well as the Council's need for reform, and be aware of solutions currently being proposed.

Beginning with the role of this essential body, the reader will be taken back to June 26th of 1945. With over 100 million individuals dead and a horrendous world war winding to an end, representatives from fifty nations gathered in San Francisco, California to sign the United Nations Charter ("History"). The document expresses each member nation's commitment to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war... reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights...establish conditions of justice and respect...and promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" ("Charter").

The document includes the establishment of the Security Council as one of the six main UN organs. As outlined in Article 25 of the Charter, the Council was given the "primary responsibility" for the "maintenance of international peace and security" ("Charter"). The document goes on to grant the Council a considerable amount of power, stating that "members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter" ("Charter"). According to Butler, "while this language is simple, its weight cannot be exaggerated. The Security Council is the only organ of the UN whose decisions are binding upon all members. The Security Council's decisions have the authority of law" (27).

Moving on to structure, the initial Security Council established in San Francisco was made up of eleven members. Six of these members were elected and considered non-permanent. The remaining five members were permanent, as identified in the Charter. In 1965, the Charter was amended, adding an additional four non-permanent members to the body, bringing the total number of Council members to fifteen (Weiss 149).

In order to be elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a member state must receive at least two thirds of all votes cast for the seat. There are four electoral groups, each of which has a designated number of elected seats. Africa and Asia have 5 seats, Eastern Europe 1, Latin America and the Caribbean 2, and Western Europe and Other 2. Each elected state serves a two-year term beginning on January 1st, with five members replaced each year (Butler 29). Current non-permanent members whose terms ran until the end of 2012 include Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal, and South Africa. Those members whose terms run throughout the year 2013 include Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Morocco, Pakistan, and Togo ("History").

This current election process has been an area of concern for the Council. Whether or not the process is efficient as well as representative of today's international community has been questioned. For example, some member states feel that Western Europe, which receives two elected seats in addition to its existing two permanent members, France and the UK, is overrepresented. Another issue includes relative weight (Butler 30). Are more populated countries adequately represented in comparison to those of less densely populated members?

The five remaining seats of the Council have been reserved for permanent members, also referred to as the "Permanent Five" or the "P5" ("The UN"). Upon the ratification of the UN Charter in 1945, the five permanent members included the victors of World War II and framers of the United Nations: the French Fourth Republic, the Republic of China, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Union of Soviet Socialists Republics. Today, these nations respectively stand as France, China, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia ("History").

Several essential factors distinguish the non-permanent members of the Security Council from the permanent ones. The first, and most obvious, is that unlike the non-permanent members, which must be elected and can serve for only a set term, the Permanent Five have been granted abiding membership, unrestricted with respect to both elections and time constraints. More important, however, as identified in the Charter, the P5 are also given unique powers. Not only do the nations

have a considerable amount of authority as to which issues are important or urgent, but each of the P5 also possesses veto power (Butler 28).

Possibly the most distinctive as well as controversial feature of the Permanent Five, the power of veto enables permanent members to prevent the adoption of any substantive Council resolution. The power can be used regardless of the international support level for the resolution. Essentially, it gives the P5 the power to block any decision made by the Council (Weiss 150). This feature alone has generated criticism in regard to the United Nations. Long-standing misrepresentation of the veto power has led critics to label the Security Council as a "tool of Washington and other Western powers," which "acts upon strategic interests and political motives" (Butler 26).

To date, Russia has cast 126 vetoes, the United States 82, the United Kingdom 32, France 18, and China 7. In total 265 vetoes have been cast since the establishment of the Security Council (Vaughan 18). Largely exemplified throughout the Cold War, it isn't uncommon for nations to cast vetoes due to political motives. For instance, during the Cold War era, both the United States and Russia were guilty of using their powers to defend their client states. Russia typically vetoed on behalf of Eastern European clients, while the United States would typically veto for Israel (Butler 34). Although Russia has cast the most vetoes in the history of the United Nations by far, the United States has now become the most frequent user of the veto. Recently, on February 18, 2011 the Obama Administration vetoed resolutions condemning new Israeli settlements in occupied territory ("The UN"). United Nations Ambassador, Richard Butler, voiced his opinion on the matter, as follows:

Vetoing U.N. action against a state that is clearly in violation of international law and practice because that state is an ally should not be acceptable. This practice was never intended in San Francisco and it should not be acceptable in practical, political reality. Yet, this position has been accepted repeatedly. Using votes as favors is possibly the most significant instance of the abuse of permanent privilege. (36)

The abuse of power brought on by the veto is only one of several issues involving that power. The threatened veto is an additional aspect worth mentioning. Oftentimes members of the P5 will make an informal, but clear threat to cast a veto in a formal session. In this event, member nations will hold informal meetings in order to discuss, revise, and attempt to find a way to avoid the threat. Veto power in combination with permanent membership has also come to create a term known as the "cascade effect." The term is used to describe the Permanent Five's

extension of power, which goes far beyond the Security Council, and into several other areas of the widespread United Nations network. The Five Members unquestionably have been actively involved with and have heavily influenced other UN commissions, committees, and agencies (Butler 38).

Having emphasized the Council's needs for modification, it is essential that the topic of modernization also be made clear. Inevitably, a number of significant geopolitical changes and events have occurred since the establishment of the United Nations 67 years ago. For one, the Organization has expanded greatly. Compared to the 50 member states which signed the Charter in 1945, the UN has nearly quadrupled in size, and stands 193 nations strong today ("The UN").

In addition, populations have grown, independent nations have emerged, and cultural diversity as well as technology have expanded rapidly. Countries such as Germany, for example, which lay in geographic and economic ruins at the end of World War II, now stands as a highly developed, advanced, and economically powerful nation. Contrary to this, the debate as to whether or not the permanent member Russia can still even be considered a world power continues. With that nation's political and military power becoming increasingly dependent upon commodities including oil and natural gas, Russia's status has been highly argued throughout the past few years (Bradshaw 171).

Moreover, drastic changes have occurred in what constitutes or threatens international security in the 21st century. Whereas nearly seventy years ago international security was traditional, straightforward, and could often be addressed by means of a nation's military, today international security is much more complex. In the modern world, issues including global warming, internet fraud, global health problems, as well as the arms trade all fall into the ever-expanding realm of international security (Butler 33). By and large, such facts bring validity to the claim that the Council is simply no longer representative of the international community or the contemporary world (Vaughan 12). The Council is in desperate need of reform.

Reform of the UN Security Council has been a topic of long-standing debate for decades. Over the years, member states, regional groups, as well as other interest groups have developed, agreeing on and pushing for particular positions and proposals. The need for reform most recently resurfaced in 2010, when discussions of Security Council reform actually moved onto the floor of the General Assembly.

In regard to the first issues mentioned involving the Council's structure and size, many nations have expressed enthusiasm for

expansion. In a plan referred to as "*In Larger Freedom*," UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has proposed two options for expansion. In Plan A, Annan calls for the creation of 6 new permanent members and 3 new non-permanent members, bringing the Council's total to 24. The Secretary's Plan B calls for the creation of 8 new seats in a new class of members, which would serve for four years, and the addition of one new non-permanent member, also bringing the Council's total to 24 (Weiss 152). In June of 2005, the Bureau of Public Affairs commented on the United States' overall stance on Security Council reform, stating that "the United States is open to UN Security Council reform and expansion, as one element of an overall agenda for UN reform. We advocate a criteria-based approach under which potential members must be supremely well qualified" (Butler 34).

Another plan addressing the expansion of the Council has been proposed by UN member states including Italy, Argentina, Canada, Colombia, and Pakistan. The group of countries, under the banner "Uniting for Consensus," has proposed that the Permanent Five remain as is, but that the number of elected non-permanent members be raised to 20. The initiative is said to have been "embraced by China" as well (Weiss 154).

Unsurprisingly, a major topic of reform has largely included proposals for permanent members. Unlike the "Uniting for Consensus" group, a majority of UN member nations are in favor of making additions to the existing P5. Candidates mentioned for the permanent seats include Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan. These nations, commonly referred to as the G4, have been under consideration mainly due to their history of commitment to the Council, as well as the representation such nations would bring to the table ("The UN"). Since no African nation has been given a seat on the Council, Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa have also been named as more likely contenders, in the event that membership of an African nation were to be considered (Vaughan 28).

Lastly, in discussing the reform of the Permanent Five, one cannot fail to mention veto reform. A number of proposals regarding the highly controversial power have been made. Some proposals have put forth the idea of limiting the veto power through restricting its use to only vital issues involving threats to national security, in which case multiple states would have to agree in order for the veto to be exercised. Other proposals have been more extreme, including a proposal that the power of veto be abolished entirely ("The UN").

In order to better fulfill its primary duties of maintaining international peace and security as outlined in the UN Charter, it is

essential that the United Nations Security Council assess, and make changes to its currently instilled policies and overall structure. Issues highly emphasized include the election of and number of non-permanent and permanent member states, veto power, the "cascade effect," as well as modernization of principal flaws of the Council, which must be addressed through thorough reform. In addressing such modifications, the Council's focus should be aimed toward restoring the legitimacy, integrity, and above all assuring the continuing legacy of the United Nations, established in 1945.

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ENL 102

The Personification of Good and Evil

Humans exhibit a profound need to categorize; it is comforting when things fit neatly into place, when all of life's complex intricacies and uncertainties, from the motives of human behavior to the ultimate meaning of life, can be ascribed to a few easily understood concepts, sorted, labeled and filed. And the fewer categories, the better; for most of known history dichotomous classification has been the foundation of the categorization process: black and white, rich and poor, heaven and hell, good and evil. In contemporary American literature the personification of good and evil is a common device, so common in fact that readers and film-goers have come to expect a good guy and a bad guy, and may be confused if they don't know whom to "root for" and whom to condemn. Modern works may blur the boundaries between good and evil—the bad guy may be the good guy, and vice versa—but the concept remains in the form of two characters representing the two conflicting moral values. Of course, Eastern views have been permeating the West for quite some time, and the idea that there are two sides to every coin, that good and evil can exist in the same person (the Chinese Yin-Yang, "shadow and light") is beginning to show up more and more in fiction, drama, and poetry: a single character struggles with conflicting principles or desires; the good guy doesn't necessarily prevail; questions are left unanswered. The enlightened reader can accept the ambiguity, is content to discover ideas instead of answers, to gather food for thought—to consider the real nature of good and evil. But whether good and evil are opposite, battling forces, or part of a single, unified whole, authors will continue to personify them in the human character.

The five works of literature discussed in this essay will be presented chronologically by age, beginning with Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, "Young Goodman Brown," in which a newly wedded man in Colonial America confronts the devil on a wooded path, followed by "Fire and Ice," a concise and powerful poem by Robert Frost about the dangers of both passion and hatred. The film *The Wizard of Oz*, adapted from the children's book by L. Frank Baum, will be examined, as well as the poem "Daddy"--Sylvia Plath's angry attack on male dominance-- and T. C. Boyle's modern short story, "Greasy Lake," about a defiant teenager who discovers his own capacity for evil. A brief analysis of these works

of literature will demonstrate the evolving ways contemporary American authors have personified that great paradox of human morality, good and evil.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1835 short story, "Young Goodman Brown," features the devil himself, personified in the character of a mysterious older man, whom the story's protagonist, Goodman Brown, meets in a dark wood. Confronted with this demon, who resembles his own grandfather, the naive Brown must own up to the evil tendencies within his own character as well as those of his ancestors and his contemporaries. He is torn between his "Faith," his young wife whom he has left behind on this "night of all nights," and his promise to keep "covenant" with the devil (Hawthorne 92), repeatedly trying but failing to resist the devil's enticements. In his book, *Sowings and Reapings*, Andrew Schmookler claims, "We embrace and strive to embody what is good, not what is evil. Yet circumstance can turn us toward the dark side" (17). Brown's wife, Faith, initially the embodiment of all that is good and pure, whom he refers to as his "blessed angel" (Hawthorne 91), is revealed to also be corrupted by evil, and in the end only a pink ribbon, fallen from her hair and blown in the wind, remains to symbolize her former goodness.

Hawthorne manages to personify this pull between good and evil in the characters of mother and father as well. Amongst the "grave and dark-clad company" of the witches meeting, Brown discerns "the shape of his own dead father" beckoning to him while "a woman . . . threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother?" (Hawthorne 97). In these outward personifications of the good and evil in Goodman Brown's own divided heart Hawthorne attempts to inspire his readers to look more deeply into the cast of characters in their own communities, to question the so-called purity of their Puritan roots.

Another way authors make use of the personification technique is to attribute human characteristics and values to something nonhuman. Robert Frost uses this method to compare and contrast good and evil, or more specifically, passion and hatred, in his 1923 poem, "Fire and Ice." The poem's opening lines, "Some say the world will end in fire/ Some say in ice" (Frost 553), could be taken literally, as a prediction of an apocalyptic catastrophe or another ice age, but Frost follows these lines with "From what I've tasted of desire/I hold with those who favor fire" (Frost 553), thus making a comparison to human sentiment (the "heat" of passion). In his critique, "Frost's 'Fire and Ice' and Dante's 'Inferno,'" John N. Serio, who believes Frost modeled his poem on "Inferno," calls Frost's use of fire and ice "figurative representations

of desire and hatred" (Serio). He goes on to say that Frost's verb-use recalls "characters in Dante's upper hell." In his second comparison, Frost writes, "I think I know enough of hate/To say that for destruction ice/Is also great" (Frost 553). Here he attributes the coldness of human hatred to ice. This simple poem, which speaks volumes about the future of a planet given over to ambition, greed and intolerance, gains its power from the use of personification. The terms "fire" and "ice," by the skill of a master, become, in but nine short lines, perfect representations of two concepts—good and evil (in this case the good is actually a second, lesser evil: desire, or lust)—concepts that authors normally take pages, chapters, or volumes to explore.

Speaking of volumes, L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wizard of Oz* children's book series, actually wrote thirteen sequels to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* making repeated use of the personification device through a host of clearly delineated good and evil storybook characters. It was his first volume though, published in 1900, that later became the MGM film *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939. What child doesn't remember being frightened by the green-faced Wicked Witch of the West, or comforted by the wholesome and loving Glinda, the Good Witch of the North? Countless children's books, films, and other dramatic works make use of this simple, dichotomous personification technique to teach children the difference between good and bad. "Are you a good witch or a bad witch?" asks Glinda when Dorothy first arrives in the Land of Oz (*The Wizard of Oz*). Some would argue this leaves children unprepared for the real world, one not so easily divided into right and wrong, good and evil. "So long as we persist in cleaving our complex world into overly simplistic dichotomies . . . our policies will be unbalanced and will leave us tilting toward disaster," claims the author of *Sowings and Reapings* (Schmookler 59). A little defiance and a bucket of water, in the end, is all it takes for good to triumph over evil in this film: "Who would have thought a good little girl like you could destroy my beautiful wickedness?" (*The Wizard of Oz*). Overly simplified or not, Dorothy of *The Wizard of Oz,* like Hawthorne's Goodman Brown, awakens from her dream confrontation with good and evil transformed; she is more mature, self-confident, and world-wise.

On a much more serious note, Sylvia Plath, in depicting the evil of World War II fascist German soldiers in a single character she refers to as "Daddy" in her 1965 poem by the same name, says more about her narrator than she does her nemesis. In his critique of Plath's poetry, Jahan Ramazani claims that "Daddy" "represents her dead father as a dangerous antagonist," but should not be assumed to be autobiographical,

as she is merely "articulating her grief through semifictive [*sic*] selves" (Ramazani). There is no direct, physical personification of the good in this work, unless it is the invisible narrator, a damaged innocent, a victim of the "engine" of destruction that was the Holocaust: "An engine, an engine/Chuffing me off like a Jew" (Plath 866). The first line of the second stanza, "Daddy, I have had to kill you" (866), shows the extent of that damage, the loss of innocence, the violence that has blackened a previously pure heart. Here is demonstrated an advanced use of the personification of good and evil. Neither character is actually present in the poem; the narrator speaks to the accused, and in so doing, insinuates a picture of pure evil: "Not God but a swastika/So black no sky could squeak through . . . Brute heart of a brute like you," and one of tainted innocence: "Bit my pretty red heart in two/I was ten when they buried you/At twenty I tried to die . . . I thought even the bones would do" (Plath 867). Nietzsche, in his classic *Beyond Good and Evil*, said, "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster" (Nietzsche 89). Perhaps the end product of that prediction is the one most accurately personified in this fiercely intense, haunting poem—a poem Ramazani refers to as an "enraged curse" (Ramazani).

Finally, the narrator of T. C. Boyle's 1985 "Greasy Lake" unexpectedly discovers the capacity for true evil within his own person, and is scared straight. The author of this short story bravely uses the first person to explore the uncomfortable subject of good people committing evil acts. The naïve, college-aged narrator, cruising the streets in his mom's car, tries to convince himself he is a "dangerous character." "We were bad characters," he repeats often (Boyle 411)—but the evidence just doesn't hold up. At least not until one fateful night in the parking lot at Greasy Lake, where he and his friends end up in a fight: strung out on pot, alcohol, and adrenalin, the neophyte miscreant strikes a man with a crowbar. The gang then turns its attention to the victim's scantily clad girlfriend.. "We were on her like.. . deranged brothers—see no evil, hear none, speak none" (Boyle 411). While it is true that ethical considerations can fall by the wayside when a group suddenly becomes a mob ("Madness is rare in individuals—but in groups, parties, nations, and ages it is the rule" [Nietzsche 90]), perhaps Philip Zimbardo, author of *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* articulates the truth: "The barrier between good and evil," he says, "is permeable and nebulous" (Zimbardo 3). The act of rape thwarted in the nick of time, Boyle's young character has lost his innocence just the same, crossed over and tasted the bitter poison the dark side has to

offer; “I wanted to get out of the car and retch, I wanted to go home to my parents’ house and crawl into bed” (Boyle 414). Few authors choose to personify the perpetrators of such taboo acts as rape or murder in the first person (Nabokov’s *Lolita* and Camus’s *The Stranger* come to mind), opting instead for the safety and distance of the third person, but total honesty requires courage, and T. C. Boyle won’t allow himself or his reading public the comfort of self-denial or moral superiority.

Authors have long explored the nature of good and evil by personifying it in human (and non-human) characters. Their methods have varied; some, like Nathaniel Hawthorne and L. Frank Baum, personify good and evil in distinct, opposing characters like angel/devil, mother/father, or good witch/bad witch. The protagonists in these stories, by confronting these outward representations of good and evil, learn something about the nature of their own hearts. Others, like Robert Frost, attribute human values to non-human things, another method of personification, in order to explore human nature in a broader, more metaphorical context. And still others, like Sylvia Plath and T. C. Boyle, go straight to the heart, where good and evil lie side by side, personifying the best and the worst humans are capable of in a single character. The methods have evolved in some ways—controversial subjects may be more openly portrayed and less subject to censorship; morally ambiguous characters may take the stage more often—but the concept itself, the personification of good and evil, is timeless and inexhaustible.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to find a resolution to this “great paradox.” Society continues to thrash and struggle, enmeshed in never-ending conflict between nations, religions, races, political parties, and brothers and sisters. Hostility and discord exist everywhere, and it seems the world must divide itself into perfect halves: “our side” and “the other side,” right and wrong, good and evil. Literature can play an important role in opening minds and unifying hearts. In personifying these seemingly opposing values, authors create an imaginary stage where the dichotomy of good and evil can be put to the test on the page, rather than the battlefield, where the human heart can be examined and its capacity for both good and evil explored safely and intelligently. Readers hopefully come to understand others, but more important, themselves, through these fictional journeys, to see more clearly the truth in their own hearts, the contributions they may have made to this “great divide” in the human community, and ultimately, they may grow more tolerant, more forgiving, and more whole.

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ENL 102

Silent Dream of Freedom

Long before Martin Luther King Junior gave his eloquent "I Have a Dream" speech, there were people of color in the United States who harbored their own dreams. However, it was dangerous for them to utter these visions aloud or indicate that they wanted to stand beside whites as equals. In the story "Battle Royal" the nameless narrator learns a brutal lesson about racial inequality, and the reader learns about the way blacks were treated under the Jim Crow Laws in the South before the Civil Rights Movement.

The young narrator has chosen Booker T. Washington, a believer in the Accommodationist Philosophy, as his hero. This belief advocated going along with the white majority. Conversely, accommodationism is also the act of becoming the image of someone else, which is interesting, since the narrator espouses the idea of blacks being equal to whites. Booker T. Washington, however, did not want to cause problems with whites; he was a man of service, believing that hard work could overcome all odds. He promoted the idea of identifying, and being identified, with the status quo, the dominant way of thinking in American life and culture; this philosophy characterized his career.

> Washington accepted racial subordination as a necessary evil until blacks proved themselves worthy of full civil and political rights. As far as blacks were concerned, Washington insisted that industrial education would enable them to lift themselves up by their bootstraps and escape the trap of sharecropping and debt. (Wormser)

Because the young narrator believes in Washington's philosophy, he writes "a speech which focused on humility and preached that through humility, progress would be made" (Murphy). As the "battle royal" progresses, however, the narrator begins to realize that Washington's philosophy no longer resonates with him.

> At the start of the story, the young narrator wants approval from the powerful white man. This form of acknowledgement means everything to him. He has been taught to obey whites, but in the process of being compliant, he becomes an invisible non-person. The tactics of "agree 'em to death" and "undermine 'em

> with grins" (Meyer 278) are the tools that enable the Negro to survive, in essence agreeing to invisibility, until blindness strikes down white society (Margolies 135). In fact, "Battle Royal" is not only a short story; it is also the first chapter in the novel, *Invisible Man*. It is the beginning of the author's depiction of "the struggles and humility of African-Americans attempting to progress and to achieve success, and the satisfaction derived by white society in controlling and intimidating the black community" (Walker).

The narrator is a young man who is alienated in some degree from himself, his own race, and white-controlled society; he does not know or accept who he really is. He dreams that one day white people will acknowledge him (Doyle 165). However, it is forbidden to express this notion. He also wants his hard work as a student to be approved of. In the elevator, the narrator does not want to be with the other black youth, because he thinks he is better than they are. "In those pre-invisible days, I visualized myself as a potential Booker T. Washington" (Meyer 279). As the scared teenagers literally rise together to another floor, the narrator clings to Washington's image in order to elevate himself above the other African Americans (Johnson). When the boys get off the elevator, they are ushered into a ballroom and are each given a pair of boxing gloves. A few minutes later, they are rushed to the front of the room and pushed into a circle where a naked white woman stands. The protagonist does not know how to react: "My teeth chattered, my skin turned to goose flesh, my knees knocked. Yet I was strongly attracted and looked in spite of myself" (Meyer 279).

> Their position is precarious: the white men place them in a position in which they cannot win. As males they certainly should be attracted to the beautiful, sensual dancer, yet she is white and taboo, they should not look at her nakedness. The fighters do not know how they are expected to behave; therefore, they do not know their place in society. (Murphy)

"Some threatened us if we looked and others if we did not. On my right I saw one boy faint" (Meyer 280).

The stripper, because she is white, represents freedom that is denied to African American males. Ironically, she has a United States flag tattooed below her belly button; this represents the American dream which is denied to black people. She stands there, out-of-reach, stripped and vulnerable to the stares of the men. As a woman and a nude dancer,

she is not on a par with the white men in the room. However, she is held in higher esteem than these young men reduced to near nakedness and helplessness simply because of the color of their skin. Both she and the black school boys are merely part of the night's entertainment.

After the exit of the stripper, the main event takes place. Although the narrator has been invited to repeat his valedictory speech before the white leaders of the town, "these men humiliate the protagonist and some other black youths by forcing them to engage in a 'battle royal:' a blindfolded fist fight in which the last standing participant is victorious" (Magill).

> Quite a struggle was going on. . . . I wanted to see, to see more desperately than ever before. But the blindfold was as tight as a thick skin-puckering scab and when I raised my gloved hands to push the layers of white aside a voice yelled, "Oh, no you don't, black bastard! Leave that alone!" (Meyer 281)

The significance of black men fighting one another shows how white men have taken away the dignity of blacks who have lost control of their own destinies. Putting white blindfolds on these young men symbolizes that knowledge is hidden from them by a white society; they are blind to opportunity; they are kept uneducated by their "equal but separate" schools that are, in reality, far inferior to those attended by whites. A poor education renders blacks ignorant. "The entire scene of the battle royal can be viewed as an extended metaphor for the brutality of chattel slavery" (Samuels 47). Watching half naked schoolmates fight, and calling it entertainment, is like viewing combatting caged animals. In essence, these whites view blacks as less than human and treat them as inferiors.

> The event gives way to the terror of demoralization when the group of drunken buffoons that the town leaders have become immediately cage and pit the narrator against his fellow man in a sadistic boxing match, the battle royal: the evening's star entertainment. (Fosse)

To make matters worse, after the match, "money" is placed on an electrified rug that jolts the blacks as they try to grab their so-called compensation. The irony is that most of the coins are worthless. "This scene symbolically introduces the theme of struggle among blacks for an evasive prize that often remains out of reach" (Walker). After this shocking event, the narrator is finally given an opportunity to present his graduation speech; while he is speaking, he chokes on his own blood due

to being badly beaten.

The narrator's speech is important because it shows that the narrator wants to be seen by the white men, and thus, to no longer be invisible. He uses words of Booker T. Washington that are inoffensive to whites. However, when he blunders and utters "equality," the whites are upset and yell at the narrator because he uses a word he has only before dreamed about, a word the whites find both offensive and dangerous. Once he slips, the narrator understands that Washington's words and ideas no longer work for him. After this realization, he knows that he must remain outwardly subservient and keep his dreams to himself.

An important part of the story lies in the grandfather's deathbed scene. "Ellison's intention here is to deal with the Past, painful as that Past may be" (Bone 201). The narrator's grandfather reveals to the family that the life of a black person living in a foreign "white" America has always been and still is a life of war and opposition, and he urges the young man to keep up the fight. This puzzles the impressionable narrator, for his grandfather has been "the meekest of men," who, as is further revealed, believes himself to have been "a traitor and a spy" all these years, and that his meekness has, in actuality, been "a dangerous activity" (Meyer 278). "As a Southern black, the protagonist has inherited a past that is steeped in a history of slavery which, before he reaches manhood, he must come to understand and accept" (Samuels 51).

In the song, "What Did I Do, To Be So Black and Blue?" lyricist Andy Razaf writes, "My only sin is the color of my skin." The title refers to being very black in color and very blue in mood, but it also means, "What did I do to get the shit beaten out of me?" (Mauer). In the story "Battle Royal" Ralph Ellison shows that being a person of color defers dreams, results in inequality, and causes bruising that is more than skin deep. The narrator discovers that he has not won the respect of the white townsmen, even though he sacrifices himself and swallows his own blood so that these men can be entertained. It remains to be seen how the narrator grows into manhood. His mistaken use of the word "equality" instead of "responsibility" during his speech indicates an awakening; he has inadvertently dared to dream out loud. The author seems to be saying that if the narrator has a responsibility, it is to himself and his race, not to white society; if he has a dream, it is one in which the black man is not only free, but equal.

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ENL 102

Death Lives in the Poems of Dickinson and Frost

Despite ambiguity, or perhaps because of it, the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost has remained popular for decades. What makes these poets resonate with readers in this day of free verse and avant-garde poetry? Although these poets lived a generation apart, they show striking similarities, ranging from what appears to be simplistic rhymes within formal structure to innovative imagery that captures the ordinary things of life. However, both poets also deal with intense themes, but do so using everyday language. No subject is as dramatic as death, and nowhere is this more evident than in two well-known poems, "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

Why is so much attention paid to these poets? This may be due to the fact that while their poetry at first looks simplistic, it is actually mysterious. Perhaps that is because the poets themselves were complex people. "Few American literary figures are as intensely loved as Emily Dickinson, but few remain as elusive" ("Elusive Belle"). Although her poetry is ambiguous, she's a hero, or an object of fascination, to many people, which is why she periodically takes a star turn in culture, as she is doing now ("Outlaw of Amherst") even though "she never had the slightest interest in the public" (Tate). Frost, on the contrary, is thought of as outgoing and sociable. "He is a philosopher, but his ideas are behind his poems, not in them--buried well, for us to guess at if we please" (Van Doren 33).

There are many similarities between the personal lives of Dickinson and Frost that may suggest why they chose similar topics and wrote about the natural world of New England. For example, Death is always nearby, always beckoning, always seducing. It becomes an impetus for thought and finds a way into their poems. Both Frost and Dickinson suffered great losses in their lives; both witnessed death first hand. Dickinson was no stranger to death and the emotional upheaval that accompanies a loss. It is during the turbulent years of the late 1850s and the 1860s, "a time of the deaths of family friends, sickness (Dickinson suffers near blindness) and the beginning of estrangement from Susan Gilbert who is her friend (and who marries her brother), that her artistry emerges, soaring" (Tursi).

When at age eleven Frost lost his father, he, his mother, and

sister, struggling financially, traveled to New England where Frost was determined to succeed. "The loss of William Frost, Jr., would have a startling effect upon Robert, who acquired his father's drive to make something of himself and his passion to excel in whatever he did" (Rueben: Robert Frost). After graduating from Dartmouth College, Frost decided to settle in New England, where he drew strength and fodder for his writing from the local people and the surrounding landscape. However, like Dickinson, he became well acquainted with death; his life was filled with heartbreaking events.

> Tragedy struck Frost many times, as misfortune affected his family in various ways. First of all, Frost's daughter, Lesley, married a man who was unfaithful and who suffered from a nervous breakdown; his daughter Marjorie died of puerperal fever in 1934; his son Carol, who was unable to make friends and sealed himself from others, committed suicide in 1940; his daughter Irma suffered from a mental breakdown and was placed in an asylum; and his wife, Elinor, died in 1938 of a heart attack. (Rueben: Robert Frost)

There are other similarities; both Dickinson and Frost were well educated. Dickinson grew up in Amherst, Massachusetts surrounded by some of the greatest minds of her time. She writes in the Emerson tradition. "She frequently voices ideas of independence and individualism, of reaction against conformity and obeisance to tradition, providing us a poetic variation upon the theme of self-reliance" (Reuben: Emily Dickinson). Frost was born in San Francisco but came to New England after his father died. His mother was also his teacher at school and read aloud to him from such noted authors as Poe, Wordsworth, and Emerson, the last of whom was Frost's favorite (Reuben: Robert Frost).

Interestingly, both poets were rejected by *The Atlantic Monthly,* (now *The Atlantic),* one of the most prestigious magazines of its day. *The Atlantic* takes credit for discovering a number of America's now-legendary authors and poets. But a number of those writers initially met with their share of rejection. It is surprising today to learn that Frost and Dickinson are among those who were rejected. Robert Frost's earliest poems were turned away by the magazine with this message: "We are sorry that we have no place in *The Atlantic Monthly* for your vigorous verse" ("Famous"). Although Emily Dickinson "spurned publication" ("Elusive Belle"), she corresponded for twenty years with a leading *Atlantic* contributor who was also an unofficial assistant to the magazine's editor-in-chief; he found her style "spasmodic" and never prevailed upon the magazine to publish her work ("Famous").

There are also some striking differences between Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost. When pointing out dissimilarities, much is made in biographies about the fact that Dickinson never married, while Frost had a large family. In addition, there is her reclusiveness and his outgoing nature. It was after experiences with death and loss that Dickinson created her public persona of the isolate,

> . . . a lady whom people call the Myth. She has not been outside of her own house in 15 years. She dresses wholly in white, and her mind is said to be perfectly wonderful. She writes finely, but no one ever sees her. ("Elusive Belle")

On the other hand, Frost spent the latter part of his life reading his poetry in front of audiences and remaining in the public eye (Reuben: Robert Frost). Frost and Dickinson came from different generations, and although they each learned from the generations before them as well as from their contemporaries, both developed into singular artists. However, in their non-conformity, they not only emerged differently from the poetic world in which they lived, but each brought a different slant to the ideas they present in their work

In order to find significance within simple words, the poems "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" require close scrutiny; a cursory reading will not suffice. Allen Tate states that "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" is "one of the perfect poems in English" and exemplifies better than anything the complexity of Dickinson as well as "the special quality of her mind" (Tate). It is a poem that readers remember for its imagery, especially the way Death is personified. Along with "The Road Not Taken," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is probably Frost's best-known poem, and as such, readers may feel that familiarity equals understanding, or that a poem read or heard enough times holds no surprises. "This is especially the case with 'Stopping by Woods,' which is not only one of the most popular American poems, but is also one written in a clear and seemingly direct style" (Monte). However, a familiar poem is not necessarily an easy one to understand; it requires the reader to pause and reflect on the intricacies that give depth to the words.

Both poems use traditional rhyme schemes. However, Dickinson's form shows arresting stylistic variations. Although she is inspired by Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and John Keats, her work with her characteristic capitalizations and odd punctuation is more often associated with that of Walt Whitman (Grubin: Emily Dickinson). In "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"

the language remains conversational and uses an iambic rhythm. Like Dickinson, Frost also uses iambic tetrameter. "The insistent rhythms of "Stopping by Woods" —every line except one is exceptionally regular in beating out "ta-dum, ta-dum, ta-dum, ta-dum"—and the frequent rhymes add to the illusion of simplicity" (Monte). Both poems are measured, appear unpretentious, and are deceptively unassuming.

Not only are they structured from simple rhymes, but the poems also use familiar oppositions in relatively few words. Besides life and death, common to both works, Dickinson writes about the world within and without, youth and age, day and night.

The two elements of her style, considered as point of view, are immortality, or the idea of permanence and the physical process of death or decay. Her diction has two corresponding features: words of Latin or Greek origin and, sharply opposed to these, the concrete Saxon element. It is this verbal conflict that gives to her verse its high tension. (Tate)

This opposition of Latinate and common everyday vocabulary begins with "Death" and "Immortality." It continues with "labor" and "leisure," "his civility," the dews that grow "quivering and chill," and the "cornice" that is only a "mound." In the last lines, the words "surmised" and "horses' heads" lead the way toward "eternity."

Robert Frost also writes about opposites besides life and death: man and nature, masculine and feminine, emptiness and fullness, business and pleasure, movement and stopping, society and solitude, activity and sleep (Monte). "'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' stages its play of opposites at typically Frostian borders between night and day, storm and hearth, nature and culture, individual and group, freedom and responsibility" (Rotella). Such familiar contrasts may make the reader feel at home in the poem, but they may also be disquieting. Like Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop Death," Frost's poem alternates between inner thoughts and descriptions of the world outside. As Steven Monte says, "Suddenly we see depths and ambiguity." Brower adds, "Throughout the poem—brief in actual time, but with the deceptive length of dream—we are being drawn into silence and sleep, yet always with the slightest contrary pull of having to go on," carrying the reader to the conclusion.

The closing lines combine most beautifully the contrary pulls of the poem, with the repetitions, the settling down on one sleepy rhyme running against what is being said, and with the speaker echoing his prose sensible self in "I have promises" and "miles to go" while he almost seems to lose himself in the woodland scene. (Brower)

Whatever depths "Stopping by Woods" possesses, it gives

readers the impression of simplicity. How does the poet manage this? Most obviously, his language remains conversational throughout, and it generally avoids inverting the word order of spoken speech. Also, "Stopping by Woods" contains only one word with more than two syllables. "The very tentative tone of the opening line lets us into the mood without our quite sensing where it will lead, just as the ordinariness of 'though' at the end of the second line assures us that we are in this world" (Brower). Dickinson's poem is similar in form, but her meaning seems more ambiguous as the journey ends. This may be part of Dickinson's appeal. "In part it is her fantastic language: the words with destabilized meanings, the dissonant hymnbook cadences, the instinctive tone of voice: defiant, witty, spiritually yearning but skeptical, emotionally fervent but guarded" ("Elusive Belle").

Furthermore, within the two poems selected here for analysis lie examples of repetition. Stylistically, this is significant. The recurrence of words and the similarities between these poems is obvious not only in their structure, but in their diction; the most obvious is "stopping/stop." In the Dickinson poem, the poet repeats the words "stop" and "passed/passing," words euphemistic of death. In fact, the word "passed" is repeated four times in stanzas three and four. They are "passing" by the children and grain, both still part of life. They are also "passing" out of time into eternity. The sun passes them as the sun does every day. With the sun setting, it becomes dark, in contrast to the light of the preceding stanzas. It also becomes damp and cold ("dew grew quivering and chill"), in contrast to the light and warmth of the preceding lines. In Frost's poem, he repeats the words, "stopping/stop," "woods," "sleep," which may also be euphemistic of death; in addition, the drowsy repetition of the last two lines cause the reader to wonder if the narrator will be able to keep his promises. The ending emphasizes the speaker's commitment to his responsibilities and emphasizes the repetitive tedium that makes the woods an attractive alternative to those responsibilities (Rotella).

In addition to repetition, both poems use figurative language. One example is that of personification. However, there is a difference in what each poet personifies. In Dickinson's poem, the word "kindly" is particularly meaningful, for it instantly characterizes Death (Glenn 586).

> Now it is absolutely clear that in her poem Dickinson intends to personify Death as a male suitor who has come to pay a civil call on a woman. The carriage-ride towards eternity suggests that nature of his gracious, if inevitable, call. The Masculine-Feminine courtship is

> Dickinson's trope for the inevitable pairing of Death and the Poet. Dickinson's metaphor is courtly, and as such she chooses to personify Death as masculine. (Monteiro 100)

She speaks of Death's coming for her, yet has him arrive in a carriage to take her for an afternoon's drive (Larrabee 115). "'Because I could not stop for Death' is a superlative achievement wherein Death becomes one of the great characters of literature" (Johnson 222).

Personification works a little differently in Frost's poem; he uses the horse to wake him from his reverie and makes the animal a sentient creature.

> *My little horse must think it queer*
> *To stop without a farmhouse near*

Frost may be humorously taking the horse's point of view (Brower), or it may be that the narrator's "'reading into' nature intensifies to the point where harness bells 'actually' speak" (Rotella).

Other literary techniques used in both poems are alliteration and assonance. Dickinson's "My labor and my leisure too," "At recess, in the ring," "gazing grain," and "setting sun" are examples of alliteration. There are also the "g" and "t" sounds of stanza four: "grew quivering and chill/For only gossamer my gown/My tippet only tulle." Finally, the "horses' heads" deliver the narrator and the poem to an end. Assonance is immediately evident in "Because I Could Not Stop for Death;" notably in the short "o" sounds in stanza one and the long "a" sounds in stanza two. However, Frost's alliterative "watch his woods," "He gives his harness," "sound's the sweep," and "dark and deep" are more than poetic devices; they add to the mood of the poem, "which has been moving along at a fairly brisk pace, stops attentive readers--especially those reading aloud--and squeezes them through a dense sieve of sound. Then we are almost ready to fall into the snow with the speaker" (Harrison). Most examples of assonance in "Stopping by Woods" are found in the end rhymes: long "o," "ear," long "a," and long "e;" their placement in the poem emphasizes the tonal quality of the journey.

Examining content and meaning, the reader recognizes the use of a journey motif, as the narrator moves through life toward death. However, while Dickinson's Death is a suitor inviting her to accompany him on a trip, Frost's death is an inviting, whitening wood where he stops while traveling. In fact, Dickinson has shown convincingly that people structure much of their experience of the world through the metaphor of life being a journey (Freeman 645). "Stopping by Woods" shows both the process and the effect as the poet-traveler composes himself for sleep

(Brower). Although there is much to speculate about meanings buried within the words, Frost and Dickinson invite the reader to travel by horse through the countryside toward journey's end.

An analysis of both poems also shows that the narrators constantly alternate between inner thoughts and descriptions of the world outside. Understanding the poetic implications of "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" necessitates examining conflicting and sometimes undefined ideas central to the poems. They have two major themes in common – the inevitability of death and the cyclical nature of life; both are not only related but interdependent. Of the two, the importance of death, although it is never named in Frost's poem, cannot be understated. Ironically, the interpretation of this theme and the way each poet contains and masters Death within the confines of verse tells the reader something about how each poet viewed life. The questions become "is Dickinson looking forward to death" and "is Frost putting death aside for another day?"

Central to Dickinson's poem is the interpretation of mortality from the standpoint of immortality. A theme stemming from that perception is the defining of eternity as timelessness (Glenn 586). Can the poet be anticipating an afterlife contrary to the Calvinistic beliefs in which she was raised? Because of her questioning soul, the time period in which she lived when science was creating doubt about accepted religious tenets, and her own observations of death, it is certainly possible that her ideas were out of step with those around her. In "Because I would Not Stop for Death," immortality is a passenger in the carriage. What does that say about eternity; is Dickinson hinting that a person's immortality dies with her? Yet, her narrator does not seem afraid; she is simply curious. Not having experienced it herself, Dickinson cannot explain death metaphysically and resorts to describing it in everyday images. She treats "Death as a caller and describes the grave as a little house" (Larrabee 116).

Death also invites Frost to stop. The dark nowhere of the woods, the seen and heard movement of things, and the lullaby of inner speech are an invitation to sleep—and winter sleep is again close to easeful death (Brower). "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" may initially appear to be a light-hearted poem about nature, but on closer inspection, the poem seems to take on a more ominous mood. Initially, the speaker tells the reader that he has no practical reason to stop, but that he is stopping to take in the beauty of the scene. However, in line 7, when the speaker emphasizes the cold with "frozen lake," an element of darkness seems to appear. According to one critic, the theme

of "Stopping by Woods"--despite Frost's disclaimer--is the temptation of death, even suicide, symbolized by the woods that are filling up with snow on the darkest evening of the year (Meyers). However, whether or not the poem is actually a death wish is not important. Having paid tribute to the dangerous seductiveness of the woods, the narrator seems to be trying to shake himself back into common-sense reality by invoking his 'promises' or mundane responsibilities (Ogilvie).

The idea of death is pervasive in both poems. Dickinson's narrator receives a visit from death. She looks directly at Death; personifies him; accompanies him; and finally, figuratively embraces him. On the other hand, it is as though Frost's narrator is the one visiting death. The deep and lovely woods entice him like a seductive woman, causing him to pause and, for just a moment, wish to linger, perhaps even to remain; however, he moves on, leaving death to her own dark mysteries.

"Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" describe the New England scenery in pastoral terms. If Frost marveled at his surroundings; Dickinson questioned them. A fascination with nature is evident in her poem; she uses nature to depict the rural cycle of life with children at play in the vital beginnings of life and the harvest or the fullness of life before winter and life's end. "Dickinson was enormously sensitive to the natural cycles of the seasons, the recurrent change from day to night" (Freeman 661). This is seen in the poem as the narrator states

We passed the setting sun.
Or rather, he passed us;

Then the tone changes from a pleasant afternoon's ride to the "quivering and chill" of the grave. (Freeman 661). Dickinson speaks of Death as "the logical culmination of nature" (Larrabee 117). For her, nature resembles "death in that it can, for the moment, be brought within her garden walls, but still spreads around her life and beyond her door, impossible to hold or to measure" (Larrabee 117).

Frost's evening woods are "dark and deep;" winter's snow is filling them; it is a time of silence and death. After the narrator pauses to admire nature's beauty, he says he needs to return to the real world and stop dreaming. He leaves nature and returns to society, and in so doing makes the reader feel that there is some irony in the poem's title: he was only "stopping by," making a social call on nature (Monte). The speaker finds the woods attractive; however, he has obligations both to the woods and to a world of 'promises.' The latter, filtering like a barely heard echo through the almost hypnotic state induced by the woods and falling snow,

is a part of what gives this poem its singular interest (Ogilvie).

After examining the form and the content of both poems, the serious reader may ask, "Is there a message that is common to "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening?" It seems that both poems focus on the ideas of death or sleep and whether to stop or move on. However, commonalities are not evident. In the case of Dickinson, she believes that "The truth must dazzle gradually" ("Elusive Belle"). She writes "poetry of faith in the interrogative voice" ("Outlaw of Amherst") and questions such themes as time and eternity; she returns constantly to her preoccupation with death, as it is incorporated in all of nature. Death is, in fact, her poetic affirmation (Larrabee 116). Her style may appear straightforward, but deeper meaning often lies within the words. When she speaks of death, she does so plainly; there is no emotion attached to the words. "She is not the poet of personal sentiment" (Tate).

On the other hand, Frost's verse is sometimes considered sentimental and romantic. This is true of "Stopping by Woods." His message seems simplistic--pausing and reflecting on experience that helps the narrator re-enter life with a new understanding and sense of direction (Monte). The story Frost tells could easily be true, but it is hard not to interpret it symbolically. Many readers over the years have felt that the traveler's journey toward sleep represents life's journey toward death (Monte). However, as Frost himself warns the reader, "I'm always saying something that's just the edge of something more" (Reuben: Frost). Frost is describing man's rejection of the woods as an acceptance of social duty and personal obligation. But "Stopping by Woods" is a much stranger poem than it may first appear. From the opening lines, the story is told from the speaker's point of view; he is thinking "aloud" to himself. This odd, subjective perspective is worth puzzling over (Monte). After all, he is situating himself in place ("Between the woods and frozen lake") and time ("The darkest evening of the year"), where "darkest" may imply that the narrator has reached a low point or a moment of crisis in his life (Monte). The reader can only wonder.

Dickinson and Frost clearly did not want to be clear; they chose ambiguity. "Emily Dickinson held her poems as privately as she held herself" (Grubin: Emily Dickinson). Moreover, "When asked to reveal the hidden meaning of his poems, Robert Frost's response was 'If I wanted you to know I'd have told you in the poem'" (Grubin: Robert). However, Emily Dickinson reverses the ordinary physics of fame; she seems to grow more luminous the further she retreats in time ("Elusive Belle"). She speaks of ideas such as death and divinity and

"lived a life for us that we could never live ourselves, which is what saints do. No wonder we hunger to know her" ("Elusive Belle"). Frost also remains popular today; his world offers nature's quiet and solitude with the realization that there is also another world of people and social obligations (Ogilvie). Through him, the reader recognizes the power of nature, especially of snow, a force that obliterates the limits and boundaries of things (Poirier), but for Frost's narrator, his longing for rest cannot cancel his responsibilities. In both poems, death is inevitable; each speaker has the choice to accept or discard the invitation, to go quietly or resist the certain end.

In their poems "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," Dickinson and Frost use words deliberately, and in their diction lie secrets that will be explored for generations to come. Both constantly alternate between inner thoughts and descriptions of the world outside. Both poets connect with readers because they write simply, but they remain favorites of many because one reading is simply not enough. Dickinson creates a "uniquely American poetic voice" in literature (Grubin: Emily Dickinson). "Her poetry has that effect. Ambush is its strategy. It knocks the breath out of you and leaves you giddy, like a nanosecond-long roller coaster ride" ("Outlaw of Amherst."). Furthermore, "Among the brightest names in the vast and expansive collection of great American poetry, few individuals have attained the stature, widespread recognition, and distinguished position of Robert Frost" (Reuben: Robert Frost). In both poems studied here, death's presence is very real, and as such, it lives forever in simple lines of verse, even though the meaning of Dickinson's and Frost's poems are shrouded within the folds of their distinctive personal experience and artistry. They leave it to the reader to explore further and delve deeper.

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ENL102H

The Cask of Amontillado: An Analysis of Literary Techniques and Thematic Expression

A classic tale of revenge, "The Cask of Amontillado," written by Edgar Allan Poe, takes the reader on a dark journey into the mind of the witty yet undeniably disturbed protagonist, Montresor. Cleverly crafted into nearly every line of the story, Poe's constant but subtle flow of irony serves as one of the story's principal structural devices. Also placing an emphasis on a number of other literary techniques, including indeterminacy, foreshadowing, and symbolism, Poe's use of minute details presents the reader with a story of moral depravity, screaming that evil triumphs in the world.

Beginning with the opening statement, Poe introduces the reader to an indeterminacy regarding the exposition of the story, stating, "The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge" (Poe 727). Here, the reader is presented with the information that Montresor has been insulted by Fortunato prior to the story's beginning. However, the specifics of such insults go unstated, and are left for the imagination of the reader. It is not long until Poe throws out yet another seemingly trivial aspect of the story, declaring, "You, who so well know the nature of my soul will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat" (727). The statement leaves the reader with a list of possibilities concerning who "You" could be (727). One could affirm this individual to be a family member, a priest, God, or possibly Montresor speaking to himself while looking at his reflection in a mirror.

Lying within both character and circumstance, irony develops the thematic underpinnings of the "The Cask of Amontillado" (Stockton). Poe casts situational irony on the names used in the story, and their

parallel meanings. The name Fortunato, for example, directly translates to "the fortunate one" or "lucky man" in Italian. It is known by the both the reader and Montresor, however, that Fortunato is anything but lucky, considering that he is about to be murdered. With this, one could also assert that "Montresor's desire to repress Fortunato stems from his quarrel with 'fortune' itself" (Hess). As indicated by the text, Montresor states, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter" (Poe 728). This statement, along with several others, serves as confirmation to the reader that like Fortunato, Montresor was once was of higher status, but is no longer.

Situational irony lurks beneath Poe's choice of wardrobe for both Fortunato and Montresor as well. "The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells" (727). Dressed suitably for carnival festivities, Fortunato's attire is representative of that of a clown's, symbolizing a lighthearted atmosphere. Nevertheless, Fortunato's soon-to- be situation is anything but blithe. Also ironic is the fact that Fortunato is a man of high respect and wealth, but is dressed as a clown (Hess). The outfit can also be symbolic of Montresor making a clown out of Fortunato, humiliating him to death through giving him countless opportunities to escape, all of which are denied by Fortunato (Stockton).

Contrary to the attire of Fortunato, Montresor is clothed with a black roquelaure, completely unrepresentative of the carnival season. One could assert that Montresor's costume is symbolic of a priest's black cape typically worn during funeral masses. "Ironically, as a symbolic priest, Montresor buries Fortunato alive, without a chance for confession" (Hess). Montresor's "mask of black silk and... roquelaure" also serve as an archetypal symbol, representing death and evil (Meyer 728).

Much of the story's dialogue is masterminded into a perpetual strand of verbal irony. What one may consider one of the most prominent examples of verbal irony throughout the text, Montresor greets Fortunato stating, "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met" (727). Such circumstances can certainly be considered lucky for Montresor, who can now execute his diabolical plan. As for Fortunato, the exchange represents the very beginning of what will soon be a slow death (Stockton). Further use of verbal irony is represented by Montresor's constant concern for Fortunato's health as they venture deeper into "the vaults that are insufferably damp" and "encrusted with nitre" (728). "My poor friend...come...we will go back; your health is precious" says

Montresor, after several minutes of Fortunato's cough worsening as a result of the dampness of the catacombs (729). The reader is aware, however, that Montresor is by no means disturbed by the poor health of his enemy, but instead is rather appeased by it (Zayed 329).

Poe does not fail to successfully envelop dramatic irony in the eerie setting of "The Cask of Amontillado" as well. In response to Montresor's continuous "persuasion" to turn back while in the catacombs, fearful that Montresor will contact Luchesi, Fortunato insists on forging forward, referring to his cough as "a mere nothing." "It will not kill me" says Fortunato. "I shall not die of a cough" (Meyer 728). Fortunato's words reenforce his apparent obliviousness to the grave situation which he is in (Zayer 329). Similarly, when presented with a glass of wine, Fortunato naively toasts to "the dead that repose around us" (Meyer 729). Once again, such words are indicative of his lack of awareness, for Fortunato will soon be joining those who repose around him (Tibbett).

Also significant in Fortunato's toast is the wine itself, De Grave. The wine's label serves as an example of situational, not dramatic irony, incorporating the literary technique of foreshadowing. De Grave suggests Fortunato's approaching fate of death (Tibbett).

Poe's cunning use of irony throughout "The Cask of Amontillado" undoubtedly contributes to the story's horrific tone. With that said, however, while themes of betrayal and revenge are conspicuous in the story, "the pervasive irony of Montresor's narration complicates attempts to understand his motives and other conflicts at the heart of the tale" (Sheets-Nesbitt 298). Considering this, "The Cask of Amontillado" attracts extensive analysis, representative of a broad range of perspectives. While some literary critics assert that the story's thematic expression contains strong biblical echoes, emphatic of the contrast between good and evil, others suggest "The Cask" stands as a mirror tale reflecting the ultimate failures of revenge (Sheets-Nesbitt 299).

Critics who mark the theme of Poe's work as being highly biblical insist that "The Cask" is a story of good versus evil. While "Montresor represents a man who seeks the light of salvation but sacrifices a part of himself in vain," "Fortunato's character represents the dark side of a man easily lured by his sins" (Hess).

Supporting the theory, interpreters note that the fact that Montresor is retelling the tale fifty years after its occurrence is a clear indication that the story is in fact a confession. Poe's indeterminacy, "You, who so well know the nature of my soul" (Poe 727) is interpreted as Montresor revealing the details of his deeds to a priest. Moreover, the

story is perceived as Montresor interpreting the burial of Fortunato as a moral action, resulting in his lack of remorse. Montresor's confession, however, demonstrates that he possesses a conscience, and did find his doings to be evil after all. Thus the confession is symbolic of holiness (Hess).

Furthermore, analysts also assert other biblical aspects of Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" to lie within the wine itself. That being said, Poe intends for the Amontillado to symbolize the blood of Christ in communion, offering the salvation which Montresor seeks. However, with the sin of pride Montresor lures Fortunato to taste the wine. "Ironically, the pursuit of the Amontillado leads Fortunato to his burial" (Hess).

On a more profound level, the "Cask of Amontillado" can serve as an even deeper example of Poe's ingenious use of irony. If intentionally killed by non-replenishment or additional fortification, a cask of Fino will be reclassified as Amontillado. Considering this, one could say "ironically, even the wine Fortunato seeks is intentionally killed and made darker" (Hess). Relating to the theme of good versus evil, the dark Fortunato's desire for the wine stems from the sin of pride; however, Montresor's choice of Amontillado is a reflection of his longing for "the sacrament of communion and salvation" (Hess).

With a differing perspective, some critics believe "The Cask" is a cleverly written tale of revenge, which has been reversed by pervasive irony. Poe's ironic parallels between Fortunato and Montresor suggest that the characters are mirror images of one another. With this, the tale also hints at the ultimate failure of revenge (Felheim and Moon 300). In the beginning of the story Fortunato mimics Montresor, repeating "Amontillado!" At the end of the story, however, roles are reversed, and it is Montresor imitating Fortunato. In his madness, Montresor "re-echoes...the loud and shrill screams" (Poe 730) of Fortunato, surpassing them in volume and strength.

Montresor's success in his revenge is a reflection of the ironic sense that in actuality, Montresor has failed. Fortunato's last appeal to the cruelty of Montresor, "For the love of God, Montresor!" is replied to only with mockery. Following this, the last sounds heard from Fortunato are those of the jingling the bells on his cap. Here, "Fortunato has escaped to the haven of the fool. By his silence and by his death it is he who leaves Montresor and has gone [because of] "the love of God" (Felheim and Moon 301).

Furthermore, Montresor fails in his ultimate goal to "punish with impunity" (Poe 727). "My heart grew sick" says Montresor, shortly

after the silence of Fortunato (731). This point in the story marks the beginning of Montresor's retribution, which continues for half a century. Unlike Fortunato, who rests in peace, despite his deplorable demise, Montresor does not. "This carefully built ironic parallel points to the crucial irony--the profound failure of the revenge" (Felheim and Moon 301).

Like many works of Edgar Allan Poe's, "The Cask of Amontillado" stands as a blackish narrative representative of malevolence, amorality, and death. Throughout the tale, Poe craftily and successfully uses literary techniques ranging from situational, verbal, and dramatic irony, to symbolism and foreshadowing in order to weave the story's plot.

While themes of revenge and deception remain on the story's surface, Poe's use of irony yields deeper thematic expressions and meanings, which run in between the ironical lines of dialogue throughout the text. With this has come great ambiguity and diverse views of interpretation. However, ambiguity is often what stands as the foundation of beauty in a successful piece of literature. Some critics point toward Poe's use of biblical underpinnings in the story's theme of salvation. Others see Poe's use of irony in a broader sense of reflection, used to build a theme which emphasizes the failure of revenge. What is certain, however, is that "The Cask of Amontillado" defines Edgar Allan Poe's theory of short fiction, in that each narrative detail of the story serves to provide a distinct and intense effect on the reader.

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David McKee
ENL102

Symbolically Released from Society's Shackles

In her 1894 short story "The Story of an Hour" Kate Chopin dramatically exposes the restrictions placed on married women by American society during the late Victorian Age. Upon hearing of her husband's death in a railroad disaster, the protagonist, Louise Mallard, withdraws to her bedroom to grieve and reflect. There she comes to the realization that she is now free from many of the repressive elements of 1894 society. Chopin's perspective on this matter was certainly considered taboo during this time, supremely evidenced by the fact that in advance of its printing the publisher forced a title change to "The Dream of an Hour" (Bender 80).

"The Story of an Hour" is clearly a very personal story to Chopin. At the age of four, her father was killed in a railroad accident. Her knowledge of both married and widowed lifestyles came from the experiences of her mother and great-grandmother (Seyersted 63). Chopin's short story expresses many of the feelings of contemporary Suffragettes and those of the many feminine movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Chopin uses several literary symbols to emphasize Mrs. Mallard's feelings of repression upon women of both society and marriage. Chopin has the young Mrs. Mallard shut herself in a bedroom with a comfortable chair, where she is "pressed down by a physical exhaustion that… seemed to reach into her soul" (Chopin 15). The armchair is described as "comfortable" and "roomy" (15). Most married

women of the time were familiar with being relegated to managing the household and it was therein that they experienced the least amount of social restrictions. Meyer points out that Mrs. Mallard's first name isn't revealed until later in the text to place emphasis on this homebound, married identity (17). Chopin chooses the symbol of "clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west" (Chopin 15) to represent the future of Mrs. Mallard's dreaded long-married life. Briefly, Mrs. Mallard seems to fall victim to the status quo. Even though she has been told that her husband is dead and she realizes that her liberation from marriage is at hand, still "she was striving to beat it back" (15). However, the story then provides a clear description of how Mrs. Mallard now feels about her life; she can now live for herself without the will of another imposed upon hers.

Chopin's symbolism is also used to describe Louise's hope for the future. The window in the bedroom is open, allowing the spring-like setting outside to permeate the room and Louise's thoughts. Chopin first exposes Louise to hope through her use of archetypal trees "all aquiver with the new spring life" (15) and having her notice that patches of blue sky are showing through the clouds. Louise finally senses hope despite her grief, acknowledging the symbols presented to her through sight, sound, and smell.

Louise's newfound hope even elicits physical responses. As a symbol of emotional excitement she experiences a quickening heart rate. She even symbolically embraces this hope for the future by spreading her arms in a welcoming gesture. A simultaneous reading reveals her increasing pulse as a foreshadowing of her death. The story's exposition explains that she "was afflicted with a heart trouble" (15).

Skaggs explains the theme of the story by writing that "Mrs. Mallard…discovers that no amount of love and security can compensate for a lack of control over her own existence" (Skaggs 102). In 1894, this theme was considered radical and the work was met with hostility from society in general. However, as time has progressed, "The Story of an Hour" has gained notoriety for its forward thinking. It offers readers a reminder that sexual equality should be a reality, not fiction.

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ENL102

Carpe Virginem

How far are men willing to take their love for women? Andrew Marvell and Ann Lauinger have an answer: as far as the bedroom. Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" and Lauinger's "Marvell Noir" paint a very similar picture, regardless of three centuries' time difference. Though the speakers of both works find themselves in vastly different situations, the argument can be made that they are practically the same character. Structure, tone, and theme demonstrate a kindred spirit in the speakers. On the other hand, differences in imagery and slang provide readers with a reminder of the changing times.

Two structural elements lay the foundation for these poems. Both works are built on the distinct rhythm of iambic tetrameter, i.e. four iambs in every line, and both employ the use of couplets. Andrew Marvell sets the stage for his speaker with a warning: "Had we but world enough, and time,/This coyness, lady, were no crime" (Marvell 384 ll 1-2). In establishing the rhythm, Marvell has stressed the importance of the words "world," "time," "coyness," and "crime" to demonstrate possibility with a foreboding edge. Likewise, Ann Lauinger begins, "Sweetheart, if we had the time,/A week in bed would be no crime" (Lauinger 387 ll 1-2). In those first couplets, the same rhyme is used as well; it's a subtle reminder of Lauinger's allusion to Marvell's work.

The most obvious of the allusions used in both works is Ann

Lauinger's title itself, "Marvell Noir." She is referencing Andrew Marvell, drawing a direct comparison to his work, "To His Coy Mistress." The latter half of the title, "Noir," is a reference to film noir, which are black-and-white gangster movies from the 1940s and 1950s. In effect, Lauinger has put a dark, modern twist on Marvell's work. Conversely, Marvell's allusions are more of a biblical nature, such as, "I would/Love you ten years before the Flood" (Marvell 384 ll 7-8). The capitalization of the word "flood" demonstrates that the speaker is talking about Noah's Ark in the Book of Genesis. This also works to set the first tone.

Andrew Marvell's speaker begins with a sweet, sentimental, and loving tone. He explains, "My vegetable love should grow/Vaster than empires and more slow" (Marvell 385: ll 11-12). This invokes imagery of nurturing and patience. It takes a gentle hand, and dedication of time to cultivate a plant as well as his love for his mistress; however, the speaker moves into a frustrated tone: "But at my back I always hear/ Time's winged chariot hurrying near" (Marvell 385 ll 21-22). The speaker is beginning to let her know that his patience is running thin, and he gets harsh with her by saying, "Nor in thy marble vault shall sound/ My echoing song; then worms shall try/That long preserved virginity" (Marvell 385: ll 26-28). In these cutting words, the speaker is issuing his final plea, because, if she doesn't give herself to him, she'll never let it go and die a virgin. There is a renewed sense of hope in the last tone of Marvell's poem, especially in the last couplet, "Thus, though we cannot make our sun/Stand still, yet we will make him run" (Marvell 385: ll 45-46). Nothing can be done to prevent time from running its course, but the speaker wants to enjoy the time he has with his mistress.

Much like the previous speaker, Ann Lauinger's character initiates with a sweet tone, as if he's daydreaming to her: "When you got up to scramble eggs,/I'd write a sonnet to your legs/And you could watch my stubble grow" (Lauinger 387: ll 5-6). Numerous people want the same picturesque scene of two lovers who can simply enjoy each other's company. This speaker tells his lover they could have it, if only they had the time for it. He then elaborates on the situation she has found herself in. Forced into a life of crime, she is accused of murder and faces jail time through her claims of innocence. In a life of crime, everyone is guilty, and the speaker gets frustrated and brutal with her, saying, "Aw, can it sport! Make no mistake,/You're in it, doll, up to your eyeballs!/ Tears? Please! You'll dilute your highballs" (Lauinger 387: ll 16-18). The speaker has no sympathy for his lover, and the tone, which had remained true to that of Marvell's work, starts to diverge from the previous speaker

and ends sarcastically:

> But Irish bars are more my taste
> Than iron ones: stripes ain't my style
> You're going down; I promise I'll
> Come visit every other year.
> Now kiss me sweet—the squad car's here. (Lauinger 387: ll 32-33)

Carpe diem. These two speakers have the same philosophical values. The difference is the approach. Andrew Marvell's speaker wants to stay with his mistress. No matter how frustrated he gets, he professes a love for her that will mean something. His words are poetic and thoughtful, even when he's harsh, but the fact remains that he cares more about physical love. Ann Lauinger's speaker is despicable. Not one for chivalrous acts, he won't defend his lover and prefers to "get back to Archie's wife" (Lauinger 387: l 25). Unbeknownst to his lover, all he wants is an affair as long as it is beneficial to him. When viewed from that light, both speakers are less convincing, but throw in some old Latin, and it's suddenly romantic. Take the opportunity while it's there; make the most of life and undress.

Times have changed. If Andrew Marvell's speaker had been around in the twentieth century, he most likely would have ended up like Ann Lauinger's speaker, and vice versa. Some things time may never change: that age-old adage, carpe diem, and men, who will forever follow the lead of the wrong appendage. They saunter on through, unscathed.

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David McKee
ENL102

A Profound Depiction of London's Industrial Blight

William Blake's 1794 poem, "London," from his *Songs of Experience* collection, is a social and moral exploration into the sights and sounds of early industrial London. His poem is written in iambic tetrameter rhythm, and is arranged into four quatrains using a rhyming pattern of abab. Blake uses the technique of "s" alliteration to help draw the reader into his late eighteenth century, steam-powered, London setting. He craftily increases the use of this alliteration as the darkness in his poem builds; just as when steam builds, the hissing gets louder.

Blake was born in London in 1757 and spent the majority of his lifetime there until his death in 1827 (Kunitz 55). Erdman points out that ultimately the reader's goal is "to locate…the moment and place in which he stood, to discover what he saw and heard in London's streets-- what loomed on the horizon and what sounds filled the air" (25). Taking into account that England was in the throes of a coal-fired, steam-powered, pollution-filled industrial revolution (Briggs 180), Blake's poetic description of his persona's urban environs is an appropriately dark and depressing one. He begins by describing the streets, and even the River Thames, as "chartered" or owned by people, and makes note of the "marks" of weakness and woe on the faces of the poverty-stricken to help illustrate their misery (Blake 850). He also connects readers with the sounds of this urban plight through the cries of men and infants.

Blake connects readers with the social restrictions imposed upon the populace of London during this time through his persona's reference to "every ban" (850). He may, in fact, be specifically referring to the 1792 Royal Proclamation against Seditious Writings, "the intent of which was to put manacles on such men as…Blake" (Erdman 25). Blake was a sympathizer with the French Revolution, and the British government certainly did not want the same feelings of revolution and empowerment of the masses to spread and spawn a similar event in England (25). Critics still debate over whether Blake's choice of the term "mind-forged manacles" (Blake 850) refers to this 1792 proclamation, and other similar intellectual bans, or if he was implying that repressed people are "victims simply of manacles forged in their own minds" (Erdman 25).

Blake's persona continues with his social objections when he describes the "Chimney-sweeper's cry" appalling "Every black'ning

Church" (Blake 850), which refers to the Church's indifference to the plight of the urban masses (Price 18). He continues this theme when he speaks of the unfortunate, unhappy "Soldier's sigh" running "in blood down Palace walls" (Blake 850), evidence of the English royalty's lack of gratitude towards the soldiers who fought for their worldwide empire. Blake's third quatrain points out the suffering of the masses, and the lack of awareness of the Church and State to that suffering.

Moral objections are voiced in the last quatrain; here Blake chooses the time as midnight to accentuate his pervasive dark picture of the city and his allusions to death. Midnight is when church bells strike twelve times in an eerie sort of death knell. Here the persona hears another common sound of late eighteen century London streets, the curse of a prostitute. Blake may have chosen this symbol to represent the rampant physical and moral diseases that plagued the city at the time (Briggs 181); however, when put in context with the crying infant, the implication is that of the death of innocence. The prostitute's curses seem to literally carry disease and death as they "blight" the "Marriage hearse" (Blake 850). Seeing marriage as a moral institution, the persona's description of the marriage coach as a hearse tells readers that Blake is referring to the death of morality.

Many critics and biographers have referred to William Blake as possessing a life-long, childlike innocence and demeanor. This may have lent him an especially sympathetic ear and eye to the London that he called home. His powers of observation were great; as Gilchrist writes, "he would have something pertinent to say about most objects they chanced to pass, were it but a bit of old wall" (273). These elements of Blake's personality help readers to acquire his imagery and auditory stimuli in order to relate closely with the setting and theme of his poem and sympathize with the plight of the poor in 1794 London.

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Ralph Bousquet
ENL 150-63

Wily Coyotes and Rascally Rabbits: Trickster in North America

The trickster archetype is one of the oldest and most complex in world mythology. Wherever Trickster may be found, one senses a general atmosphere of disorder always resulting in a changing of the guard, a new twist on fate, a world turned upside-down, hemispheres repolarized and gravity reversed. Like all polytheistic figures, Trickster, primarily portrayed as a male, exists in ecclesiastical and literary traditions across the world to help give form and meaning to the infinite complexities of the human psyche. Symbolically, he reflects aspects of human behavior and personality which do not typically agree with common connotations of "divinity;" he focuses on man's inconsistencies and hypocrisies. Within this broad arena he wears many different masks, leaping across every spectrum – he may exist as either man or woman, god or beast, divine or secular, a hero or a torment. He is a chameleon who is thus able to teach many lessons from a collage of perspective. Among other things, Trickster always serves to remind readers of the eternal fools that reside within them. He is not the only comedian allowed to revel in the comic nature of the human tragedy and it is by recognizing and celebrating this fact rather than repressing it that one may be freed from shame and sorrow. This particular aspect of Trickster's unbounded nature is most prominent in the tribal folklore of the North American Indian, and through his tales, Trickster has been helping to uphold the cultural norms and taboos of his tribe for countless generations, a tradition which has covertly and elegantly woven itself into the fabric of modern American society.

Hermes steals Apollo's golden cattle in Greece; Eshu casts palm nuts with diviners in Africa, and Loki toys with the immortality of his divine kin in the icy northern tundra. These heroes are named Trickster in other parts of the world and share much in common with their transatlantic counterpart. However, the American Trickster stands apart; the diversity of his forms, the quantity of tales devoted to him, and his impact on the oratorical and literary traditions of his devotees shed light on a cultural hero more fully developed and integrated into daily life than any other. He is at once childishly ignorant in a way that is almost endearing, humorously care-free, and grotesque in his generally improper behavior. In some literary circles he is called a villain, one that "overlaps to some extent with the archetype of the Shadow, which represents aspects of the psyche perceived by society as dangerous, negative, and antisocial" (Garry 160). As is common with Trickster, such a limited definition falls short of painting a complete portrait of this multifaceted hero. Jarold Ramsey reminds readers that stories of Tricksters' ridiculous deeds and their calamitous consequences serve to reaffirm those cultural norms and values the community holds sacred, while at the same time providing a vicarious liberation from those very same social restraints (xxxi). Among the many tribal nations that once ruled the North American continent in the age before European colonization, this is precisely the role Tricksters such as Coyote and Rabbit played in the lives of the people. In Paul Radin's prefatory note preceding his treatment on the Winnebago Trickster, he provides his now classic definition of the character:

> In what must be regarded as its earliest and most archaic form, as found among the North American Indians, Trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself. He wills nothing consciously. At all times he is constrained to behave as he does from impulses over which he has no control. He knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being. (xxiii)

Trickster is a super-natural disaster and an agent of chaos representing every taboo imaginable, demanding by his very existence the necessity for the laws and codes of behavior and honor that dictate the lives of men. He is a character so complex that simply referring to him as "he" or "she" would not be entirely accurate; he wears both guises of sex whenever he sees fit. He has no need for mortality either, nor does

physical pain ever seem to stop him. According to famed cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor, "The trickster is comic nature in a language game, not a real person or 'being' in the ontological sense." Trickster rises above the shortcomings of mortality. As a necessity to the people, he enjoys a type of hero status that makes him immune to the arrows, clubs and plagues which otherwise define mortal man's torment upon the earth.

Many stories surrounding Trickster play an important role in calibrating the moral compasses of the tribe – particularly its youth – teaching younger generations as well as reminding elders of the proper way to behave in tribal society by using a worst-case-scenario approach. According to the chapter "Trickster's Turn" from Joseph Bruchac's *Our Stories Remember: American Indian History, Culture, & Values through Storytelling*, "Teaching by negative example [the stories] reinforce the very cultural norms that their foolish heroes ignore: *Don't be like Coyote when he is that way*" (102). Parents in the tribe depend on the trickster to be this anti-role model and trust the humor of the stories to penetrate the exquisitely imaginative minds of their children and sow the seeds of integrity whose blossoms promise the continued survival and prosperity of the community. This dependence is articulated through the sentiments of one account recorded by Bruchac: "Many things about the story are funny but the story is not funny. If my children hear the stories they will grow up to be good people; if they don't hear them, they will turn out to be bad. If coyote did not do all these things, then those things would not be possible in the world" (90). Here is another reference to the creative wile of Trickster. It is necessary to pass down tales of his legendary bad behavior, because he is, in fact, the creator of those evil impulses and the very reason man is plagued with them today. In Lewis Hyde's impressive treatise on Trickster, he frequently remarks on this singularity, noting at one point that "we must now add creative lying to our list of Trickster's inventions. Trickster discovers creative fabulation, feigning, and fibbing, the playful construction of fictive worlds" (45). Later on, Hyde recounts the tale of how Trickster witlessly severs the connection between life and death, creating the permanence of the afterlife. Typical of his impulsive nature, Coyote attempts to touch the spirit of his dead wife before the ritual of her resurrection is complete, and she is consequently sent back to the afterlife. A spirit of death arrives and berates him for his thoughtless indecency, "You, Coyote, were about to establish the practice of returning from death. Only a short time away the human race is coming, but you have spoiled everything and established for them death as it is" (86). In a brief moment of weakness, Coyote commits a shameful and nearsighted sin which dooms humanity to suffer the impenetrable

partition between life and death – another prank, another lesson learned. All translations and symbolism aside, the story is at the very least a wonderful precautionary tale to young men in the tribe – *do not touch your wife before the appointed time, or you shall be shamed like coyote*. In this way the myth is able to brilliantly establish both an important cultural code and shed some light over the mysteries of life and death.

> The trickster is inescapable in North America; he is often depicted in his aimless adventures as a wide array of animals, a general shape-shifter in an endless wilderness. The species of the fool vary by region and tribe. Coyote is the most popular trickster, appearing in tales across the North American continent. Raven flits through the shaman's woven words in tribes that dotted the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Spider is the choice fool among the Great-Plains-dwelling Lakota, and Rabbit frequents the woodlands of the southeast. However, regardless of his form, be it a wily coyote or rascally rabbit, Trickster is more than a wanderer in the wilds; he is the bringer of destiny, altering fate and turning the world upside-down wherever he wanders.

According to Bruchac, Trickster's singular nature is consistently inconsistent throughout. "In every case, the hero-fool alternates between being Promethean and pathetic. He may be the savior of the people or a horrible example of how humans should not behave" (99).

This recurring sense of bipolarity and incidental purpose is a universally accepted notion for Trickster. Lewis Hyde refers to tricksters the world over as "lords of the in-between," going on to explain that "[h]e is the spirit in the doorway leading out, and of the crossroad at the edge of town (the one where a little market springs up). He is the spirit of the road at dusk, the one that runs from one town to another and belongs to neither" (6). In short, as the coyote wanders, following his belly, so trickster wanders, following his belly. Rabbit darts here and there, evading hounds and hunting horns – so Trickster is always moving as well.

It should come as no surprise that such an animated and locomotive archetype should remain a fixture in American mythology today as well, a world clogged with planes, trains, and automobiles and populated by millions of furiously scurrying and stubborn individualists – all comic tricksters in their own right. One finds Trickster in American cartoons, television, film, and literature, proving that so long as Coyote has a continent to wander, it matters not what tribe sings his praise or what tongue tells his story – Coyote will still wander. In his abandonment

of commonly accepted codes of behavior for a life of debauchery and crude humor, Trickster is allowing mankind a glimpse into its own very curious nature, revealing the dearest values of the human heart as well as the ugly truth of a communal, exposed shame.

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ENL219

The Art In and Of Murder

The raven, a harbinger of death, has been used to tell stories for centuries. Edgar Allen Poe immortalized the creature in his poem "The Raven." Alfred Hitchcock pierced the hearts of many in *"The Birds."* The ancient Greeks told the story of a princess named Sedna, who angers a giant raven, after which the creature breaks into thousands of itself and drowns her in the sea. It is no mere coincidence that a group of these ominous birds is called a murder. Horror fiction, along with its counterparts in film, music, and fine arts preys upon those who fear death, and more specifically, those who fear a painful one. Many people would argue that the sadistic acts one person can perform upon another represent the inherent violent nature of human beings. On the other hand, perhaps murder is an act of artistic expression.

Maybe committing murder is not a representation of humanity's inherent violent nature, but a representation of a person's need to express what is in their heart to make sense of the world.

Those who dabble in the sadistic arts have an infinite number of interpretations for what drives humans to murder. Clive Barker's "Dread," and Stephen King's "The Monkey" capture the bone-chilling terror often equated with death and murder. In Barker's short story a few intellectuals fall prey to each other's fears and murderous needs. King's "The Monkey" follows a father trying to thwart the efforts of an evil toy monkey who is the fate of death incarnate. In Michael Shea's work, "The Autopsy," Dr. Winters is tied to a table and mutilates himself to avoid becoming a puppet to a parasitic alien. The pop culture sensation *Dexter* is a show that traces the life of a serial killer who struggles with his own humanity. While television and literature are the main media that people are exposed to, murder and death can be found in the photographs of artist Joel Peter Witkin, who uses the body parts of real cadavers to make artistic expressions about life. Music is also a popular medium for exposing humanity for what it is. The popular metal band, From First to Last, released the song "The Wings of Pestilence" in their first full length album *Dear Diary My Teen Angst Has a Blood Count*, in which the singer talks about murdering someone and pretending to be them. It seems that death and killing can be found in all avenues of the creative world. Art in all its forms is meant to explore the very nature of the human consciousness. However, literature, film, music, and paintings, no matter how accurate they appear, lack a certain realistic quality that can only be found in the physical world. Murder in its own right is the truest and most accurate artistic expression of the human psyche, because it evokes a response through all the senses.

The tactile experience of murder is as powerful as the contemporary sculptor's work. Sculptors may find harmony as they manipulate a wet block of clay. The artist may pour his heart and soul into a masterpiece as he constructs a human sculpture. Perhaps a murderer finds the same cathartic release in the dismemberment of his own human block of clay. Like a teenager taking apart his computer or bike to see how it works, so does a killer. If art is meant to make a statement about human experiences, so does the slasher film. One of the most common powerful experiences in a human's life is sex. Clover describes how a serial killer in a slasher film uses phallic-like instruments as substitutes for one of the most basic biological needs of an individual, sex. Clover discusses the film, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre,* and describes a scene where the killer, Leatherface, holds a

chainsaw against the heroine's thigh, "and against her crotch, where he holds it unsteadily as he jerks and shutters in what we understand to be an orgasm" (Clover 26).

Sex is a very important biological imperative that is tackled in the slasher film, while religion is just as important to many on a cerebral level. The Showtime series *Dexter* has created quite a following in its now seventh season. *Dexter* has kept audiences on their toes as they find themselves cheering on a serial killer. In the sixth season, *Dexter* comes across The Doomsday Killer, who murders unsuspecting citizens to recreate scenes from the Book of Revelation. The murder scenes are often stunning visual experiences showing angels hanged, and bodies dismembered and reconnected to show the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. The serial killer feels justified in his acts because he believes he is acting out the will of God (*Dexter*). The art of dismemberment is meant to strike unease in the readers of "Dread" as Barker makes note of the pleasure Steve feels as he gashes Quaid with a fire axe. "The little clown laughed to see such fun….The axe was his friend forever….It would cut, and cross-cut…Steve was happy as a lamb" (Barker 367). Barker's masterpiece is so horrific because his story touches upon multiple senses.

Death can have as poignant a scent as any devised by artistic expression. If anybody has had the luxury to savor the scent of a kitchen while a gourmet chef creates a brilliant dish, she will know there is an unimaginable feeling of delight and excitement. Subsequently, the scent of sweat and pheromones envelops the senses at any rock concert, while a painter is fueled by the stinging burn emanating from his paintbrush as he develops his paintings. People rarely smell art, and so smelling it can be thrilling. The scent of rotting corpses, blood, feces, and other scents that are equated with death are rarely experienced: "…it is this ambiguity as to the nature of reality…that generates the horrific effects…we don't know, and that doubt disturbs us, horrifies us" (Hartwell 10). Art is meant to evoke powerful emotions, often of things individuals rarely come across, including unfamiliar putrid scents of death. It is interesting to note the importance of the sense of smell. It is the weakest of the five senses, and in and of itself lacks in usefulness, but it aids in one's ability to taste food. However, perhaps the most impressive uses of the sense of smell are related to its cognitive powers. Smell is the greatest sensory memory trigger in the human body. With its power to trigger memory it is interesting to note that Michael Shea ignores its importance in "The Autopsy." As Dr. Winters mutilates his own body to minimalize the alien invaders' usefulness, he never attempts to destroy his sense of smell. "He took the scalpel…and plunged the blade deep in his ear" (Shea 201).

Winters then continues to slash his vocal chords and stab his eyes out (Shea 201). It can be argued that Winters left his nose alone because it would not aid the alien in communicating with others. However, one can imagine a Freudian spin in which Winters is unwilling to let go of the secret powers of smell. While Shea dismisses this unique sensory organ, the power of scent is not ignored in "Dread," when Cheryl is held captive in a room with a brilliant cut of steak. She fears the steak and her fear grows stronger as it festers over time and starts to grow maggots. Quaid tells Steve, "It's quite warm in her little room; and there's a few flies in there with her. They've found the meat: laid their eggs. Yes, it's ripening up quite nicely" (Barker 352). The scent of the rotting steak is a powerful metaphor for the human body as it decomposes. Her role in this short story ends with the sounds of her gnawing at the thing she fears most.

One may forget a song but will never forget the sounds of a person's demise. Screams are a common theme in a slasher film. The sounds of terror resonate in the serial killer's mind as well as the audience's. The sounds of these screams are meant to express the fear in the victim, but also create fear in the viewer. Stephen King says in his book, *Danse Macabre*, "I recognize terror as the finest emotion and so I will try to terrorize the reader" (King 6). The horror genre has also found its way into the music industry. In 2004, the metal band From First to Last released their debut album *Dear Diary, My Teen Angst Has a Body Count*. The album was well received in the hard rock community in large part due to the song, "Ride the Wings of Pestilence," in which vocalist Sonny Moore sings a song about murdering a person and wearing their skin. He sings, "I'll hide you in my walls/Your body will never be found/ I'll wear your skin as a suit/Pretend to be you/Your friends will like you more than they used to." While utilizing effective harmony, the song also allows young adults to visualize themselves acting out deep dark high school fantasies without actually committing murder. In the horror documentary, *Nightmares in Red, White, and Blue: The Evolution of the American Horror Film,* a popular film director explains that those who write horror are not naturally violent or evil. It is a vehicle for writers to release those atrocious desires (*Nightmares in Red, White, and Blue*). "Dread" toys with sound in a number of ways. Steve has a fear of being deaf. So of course Quaid uses this fear for his experiment. "A harness is strapped onto him, and locked in place. It clamps plugs deep into his ears, preventing any sound from getting in….Steve was deaf" (Barker 358). Although Quaid surrounds Steve with silence, Quaid is listening for the one word that will validate the artistic nature of his experiment: "'*Mama*.' That was the word. Quaid heard it plainly, in all its banality.

'Mama!'" (Barker 360). Sound also plays a pivotal role of terror in "The Monkey." King always makes note of the terror Hal Shelburn feels when he hears the monkey crash its symbols together. Hal remembers a time when he dropped the evil monkey in a well and ran as it clapped at him. "…still he could hear it, even through the boards, muffled now and somehow all the worse for that: it was down there in stone-faced dark, clapping its cymbals and jerking its repulsive body" (King 387). King uses this sound to represent looming death, while Barker's character, Quaid, uses sound to manipulate Steve, and food to manipulate Cheryl. Each scene involving sadistic actions or murder in these stories and songs paints a clear picture in the reader's head.

A tableau can evoke a response whether one is staring at art or a crime scene. There has been a growing trend in this country that many find to be repulsive, and many find to be beautiful. People are donating their bodies to be turned into art exhibits across the country. People can pay money to go to art exhibits featuring real deceased human bodies. This is legal. This is art. If this growing trend in art is meant to elicit a powerful response, then it has done what it has set out to do by combining death in a beautiful artistic atmosphere. "It is Lovecraft's essay that provides the keystone upon which any architecture of horror must be built: atmosphere" (Hartwell 5). Why then is a crime scene not considered art? A mangled body on the side of the road is in essence the same exact concept with one detail difference. The art exhibit on the side of the road was not a donor body. But photographer Joel-Peter Witkin does not need donor bodies for his art. He simply needs access to a mortician willing to look the other way. Witkin's art is comprised of photographs of the grotesque placed in a beautiful setting. Using remains of human bodies, Witkin often photographs these corpses in natural settings or scandalous ones. The art evokes powerful emotional and sensory details. Mickael Sand, a freelance editor, wrote about Witkin's art on one of Witkin's webpages explaining its power: "…what makes a photograph so powerful is…as opposed to other forms, like video or motion pictures, about stillness....When you really want to say something to someone, you grab them, you hold them, you embrace them. That's what happens in this still form" ("Joel-Peter Witkin"). King's story "The Monkey" ends in a powerful tableau as he describes the death of all life in the pond where the monkey has been laid to rest . Although King uses a newspaper headline to illustrate this murder, it effectively represents how a scene of death can be more powerful than the written word, or paint, or music. It seems silly to describe the genocide of fish in a pond as murder, unless one looks at it as a metaphor on a far larger scale.

The interaction of the senses through art and murder are all meant to stimulate emotional and psychological responses.

The emotional and psychological imperative for creating art is the same as what causes one to be a serial murderer. Referring back to *Dexter*, it becomes easy to find a parallel between art and murder. Any artist will drone on about the benefits of art. The list can seem endless. Some artists feel that their work is an effective tool for escapism. To remove themselves from their droll existence they pick up a paintbrush. Other artists will express the comfort and release of writing and performing their music. One will also hear of the satisfaction that comes from experiencing a piece of art that allows a person to experience something they may never experience in real life. A photograph of two lions wrestling, or the surreal work of Dali comes to mind. The same can be said for the act of serial killing. It is an art form; it is a release from the ordinary. Sonia Baelo Allue explains this fully in her article "The Aesthetics of Serial Killing: Working Against Ethics in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and *American Psycho."* (1991) She discusses why serial killing has become such a popular phenomenon in fiction. Allue argues that readers and viewers have many sources of enjoyment from "the control over disorder, the pleasure of pattern-discovering…and of course the enjoyment, from the reader's secure position, of the murders as art or simply as an intellectual game" (Allue 8). This *art*, this *intellectual game* is fully explored in *Dexter*. It is no surprise that followers love this television show. Wrapped in plastic wrap, his victims are forced to relive their past discrepancies through photographs strategically placed around dim lighting just before Dexter raises his knife in an angelic tableau and takes their life's essence (*Lindsay*). With the same result as art, the viewer is allowed to relate to the work in various ways. Jeremy Hawthorn describes a viewer's position in "Morality, voyeurism, and 'point of view: Michael Powell's Peeping Tom." A memorable scene in the last *Dexter* season occurs when the Doomsday Killer ties his sister up in a nursery dressed like an angel with gorgeous glowing white feathered wings. As the police enter they spring a trap that drops Doomsday's sister where she is punctured in the neck by nails, creating a bleeding angel very reminiscent of Joel-Peter Witkin's work. Hawthorn says "A scene in a film involving the murder of a woman by a man can be experienced by a male viewer in very different ways" (Hawthorn 303). His examples support Clover's book perfectly. He continues, "Is he led to feel the horror of the event and to experience vicariously the terror arid suffering of the woman? Is he, alternatively, invited to experience the perhaps perverted pleasure attributed by the film to the murderer?" (303). He

gives a third option, suggesting that the viewer feels nothing but is left with the ability to distance himself and view the kill on an intellectual level. In regard to the scene in *Dexter*, the answer to his proposals is "yes." The brilliant camera play in that scene allows the male viewer to empathize with the woman, simultaneously living vicariously in the moment while intellectually reviewing the events through the eyes of the spectators in the scene.

Murder is a clearly defined term, while art is loose and runs rampant with grey areas. If someone were to say art is murder, those around him or her would roll their eyes and pity such an uncultured person. But if this same person said that murder is art, now a new conversation presents itself. It seems that all goals set out by artists can be accomplished by a serial killer through their work. Allue and Hawthorn have analyzed and discussed why people enjoy murder in a safe setting such as in front of a television or reading a book. King and Hartwell have set out to discover what the horror genre is really about. It seems that artists have taken either round-a-bout ways or literal ways to explore the same idea. *From First to Last* set out to relate to young adults navigating what is known as a chaotic maelstrom of hormones and emotional roller coasters with their debut album. Meanwhile, Clive Barker wrote about the fear and terror that can from the five senses. King's "The Monkey" represents a harbinger of death who terrifies its victims with the clanging of its symbols and Shea's "The Autopsy" finds a way to show the serenity and peace that comes from losing all of one's senses. Additionally, Joel-Peter Witkin's photographs, however disturbing they may be, capture a certain beauty in death and mutilation from the positioning of his subjects to the careful way in which he develops his film. Finally, *Dexter* is a show over which fans find themselves losing sleep each week, hoping that a serial killer is not in danger of being discovered. All these art forms are meant to release inner struggles of the artists and writers, while simultaneously allowing onlookers to live vicariously through the artist's portrayals of reality. But are there social implications for the current trend of popularity in regard to the grotesque? Perhaps currently a shift in moral values is presenting itself in modern society.

It takes an extreme minority's recruitment of a majority's support to exact any social change in society. In any major social reformation an idea is brought to a nation's attention, which is usually met with violent push-back. Usually the need for change is addressed by the disenfranchised, and their ideas often seem to go against a long-standing moral belief of a society. At the moment it is safe to say that

in American society, murder is, to say the least, highly frowned upon. However, the strong emotional desire to vicariously experience such horrendous acts of violence cannot be ignored. People are conditioned from their early years to disagree with murder in any circumstance. Murder will probably never be legalized, nor will it ever become a social norm, but all it takes is a single person's idea to set social change in motion. Perhaps it is as simple as drawing a parallel from murder to art.

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