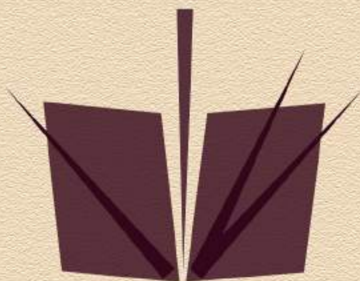

Re:Search

The Undergraduate Journal of Literary Criticism at Illinois

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Re:Search

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Acknowledgments....................v
Editors' Note....................vi
Letter from Department Head....................viii
Aims & Scope....................ix

ARTICLES

Violence of and for the Child in Child and Adolescent Adaptations of *Macbeth*……….1
Author: Laura Bjankini
Mentor: Andrea Stevens

Approaching Toxic Masculinity through #MeToo: Representations of Sexual Assault in *American History X*…………………………….…………………………..….25
Author: Miranda Brookshier
Mentor: Derrick Spires

"The Mirror of Your Words:" Desire and Identity in Saariaho's and Maalouf's *L'amour de loin*……………..………………………………………………..45
Author: Matthew Reeder
Mentor: Robert Rushing

Cinematic Painting: Time in Liu Xiaodong's *Hotbed No.1* and Three Gorges Dam......59
Author: Yutong Shi
Mentor: Anne Burkus-Chasson

***The Glass Palace*: A South Asian memoir of cultural cannibalism……………………...87**
Author: Ashni Gandhi
Mentors: Dale Bauer, Manisha Basu

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This year marks the sixth issue of Re:Search, the Undergraduate Journal of Literary Criticism at the University of Illinois, since its inception in 2014. Although we are saddened that our journey as co-editors of this issue has come to an end, we are ecstatic to show you the manifestation of all the hard work that went into producing this year's journal—from the authors' contributions to those of our exec board. This journal is an accumulation of many stages, with each person involved making a critical contribution to the final product you see today. We would first like to thank our executive board: without their hard work, we would not have copy editors or a way to format the journal, nor would we have had any successful organized events throughout the year. Of course, without our dedicated authors, we would not have a journal to present to you. Their interests and the passion manifested through their writing allows the journal to continue serving as a platform for excellence. From the very first ideas in their proposals to the final edits, we have truly enjoyed working with them and seeing their hard work culminate in such distinct and profound ways. We would also like to thank every faculty member who has contributed to the success of this year's journal: from the faculty members who offered our authors their expertise and served as their mentors, to our very own Lori Newcomb, who has been guiding the journal since its formation six years ago. Professor Newcomb not only significantly contributes to the review and copy-editing processes of the journal, but she goes above and beyond in making sure the standards of the journal are met year after year. This issue would also not have been possible without the help and support from the following people and organizations outside of the English Department: Matthew J. Roberts II, English Librarian; Merinda Kaye Hensley, Digital Scholarship Liaison and Instruction Librarian; and the Office of Undergraduate Research. All of you have given us the support critical to a successful issue every year. We would like to thank Andrea Stevens, Director of Undergraduate Studies; Vicki Mahaffey, Head of the English Department; and, of course, everyone in the English Advising Office: Anna Ivy, Keshia Atkins Kirstin Wilcox, and Nancy Rahn. Having such immense support from within our department plays a large role in its success.

We received many proposals this year, from which we selected five for publication. These papers range from studies of literature, to opera, to classical painting and film, to social justice, to colonialism, showing that Re:Search has in fact become a platform for critical conversation that stems beyond literature to include other forms of media. All of our authors have done an amazing job, and we are proud of the fact we can offer them an opportunity to publish their work as undergraduates. We are also pleased to have received submissions that stem beyond the English department to include the French, Italian, and East Asian Languages and Cultures departments, showcasing that Re:Search fosters critical conversation across many departments.

Lastly, we would like to extend our gratitude to Zoe Stein and Hannah Downing, last year's Co-Editors in Chief of Re:Search. We could not have done any of this without the guidance you

EDITOR'S NOTE

gave us last year. We look forward to seeing the myriad of work future authors publish with Re:Search in the upcoming years, and again, we are proud to have played a role in the process of the journal for the 2018-19 academic year.

Jessica Berbey and Salma Aldaas
Co-Editors in Chief

LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT HEAD

I am delighted to welcome readers to the 2019 issue of *Re:Search: The Undergraduate Literary Criticism Journal at the University of Illinois*. This is the sixth volume of the journal, and features an especially wide range of interesting articles from across the literary and fine arts, including film, opera, and painting. The journal is produced by an undergraduate editorial board, primarily English majors, which receives student authors' proposals, coordinates student peer review, supports authors through their writing process, and then draws other students in again to edit and format the essays. Faculty members serve as mentors for the individual authors, and Professor Lori Newcomb, the journal’s faculty advisor, guides the executive board and authors throughout the year.

Re:Search is a key part of a departmental and campus-wide effort to promote research by undergraduates. Students who contribute to the journal in major roles earn credit toward the Undergraduate Research Certificate offered by the Office of Undergraduate Research. Papers published in the journal have also been presented at the Undergraduate Research Symposium. Work on the journal also give students experiences in collaboration and communication that they can bring to their future employment in any field.

Illinois undergraduates who contribute their time and effort to the process of publishing research essays engage new ideas at a high level. The English majors driving the journal learn that publication requires tremendous teamwork among scholars, editors, and reviewers. It is a pleasure to introduce a volume that represents both the high quality of undergraduate research being conducted on our campus, and our majors' leading role in sharing that research.

Vicki Mahaffey
Kirkpatrick Professor and Head of the Department of English

AIMS & SCOPE

Re:Search: The Undergraduate Literary Criticism Journal at Illinois is an undergraduate produced, peer-reviewed open-access online journal designed to annually publish works exclusively by undergraduate students. We seek to create a place for undergraduate students to showcase and publish literary criticism within a greater academic discourse while nurturing a collaborative community between faculty, administration, and undergraduate students. All published work is by Illinois students; students from any discipline may submit to *Re:Search* as long as the submissions are in accordance with our vision of the journal as a site of critical analysis. We encourage undergraduate students to submit literary, media, or cultural criticism. We accept revisions of papers written previously for a class, current or completed honors theses, and even projects conceived outside the classroom. The most important criterion for acceptance is that the author offers fresh, new critical analysis of a text, film or other work. We welcome an analysis of texts from any period or language, given that modern English translation is provided for any material quoted within the submission. Although theory is not the journal's primary topic, we encourage submissions that refer to, reflect on, and engage with theory to provide richer and more nuanced analyses. Our audience includes university students, instructors, administration, alumni, and prospective students.

Re:Search is unique among journals of its type in supporting students throughout the research and publication process by working closely with the Illinois English Department, the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR), the English Student Council (ESC), and the Scholarly Commons in the University Library. The process includes faculty mentorship, in which students work side-by-side with a faculty advisor throughout the writing process. The OUR and ESC will offer opportunities to share work-in-progress and train students in the Open Journal Systems online platform to participate in the peer-review and copy editing processes, and the Library will provide a fully-indexed platform for completed articles. This journal fosters collaboration between faculty, administration, and undergraduate students, and we hope for this to flourish as a long-lasting joint project.

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Violence of and for the Child in Child and Adolescent Adaptations of *Macbeth*

Laura Bjankini, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is one of the least frequently adapted Shakespeare plays for children and young adults and for good reason. The play relies on real and imagined violence about and against children to advance the plot. *Macbeth* also contains traditionally problematic topics such as childbirth, sex, sexism, suicide, execution, and most notably, murder. Despite this, adaptations of *Macbeth* continue to circulate in child and adolescent libraries. Each adaptation examined in this paper, including Ian Lendler and Zack Giallongo's *Stratford Zoo Midnight Revue Presents: Macbeth*, Tina Packer and Barry Moser's *Tales from Shakespeare*, and Gareth Hinds' *Macbeth*, however, heavily relies on censorship, be it through moralizing unjust moments of violence, oversimplifying language, or lacking graphic detail in order to accomplish their purpose: communicate the plot and supposed moral lessons of *Macbeth* to young people. In this paper, I argue that regardless of its problematic themes, there seems to be something inherently worthwhile in *Macbeth* to teach our children despite its violence and problematic themes.

KEYWORDS

Macbeth, Shakespeare, Adaptation, Children's Literature, Censorship

"There are plenty of reasons that *Macbeth* is not suitable for children" - Marina Gerzić

Introduction

Macbeth is one of the least frequently adapted Shakespeare plays for children and young adults for good reason. Much of the plot hinges on real and imagined violence against children, both in language and in onstage and offstage action. It also contains traditionally problematic topics for young audiences including childbirth, sex, sexism, suicide, execution, and murder. Despite the ever-changing and increasingly problematic contexts, child and adolescent adaptations of Shakespeare's most violent plays (like *Macbeth*) prevail, albeit with significant censorship, seeming to argue that regardless of problematic themes, there is something inherently worthwhile in Shakespeare to teach our children.

In November of 2018, parents and pastors in Mitchell County, North Carolina, led a prayer meeting for high school students following Parkway Playhouse's performance of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged* at the local high school. In the apology letter from the Toe River Arts Council who took part in in producing the play, the Council said their intent was for the play to be funny, educational, appropriate, and to replicate how Shakespeare's plays were performed. An executive director from the school district shut down the play mid-performance, citing that it depicted characters drinking from a flask, and suicide (WLOS). Although this play was not specifically about *Macbeth* but Shakespeare generally, this incident suggests that elements within *Macbeth*, such as drinking and suicide, are intensely controversial for young, modern audiences, warranting censorship, suppression, and sometimes prayer. Many of the controversial topics in adaptations of *Macbeth* for young audiences are not only instrumental to the play's plot but aimed towards real and imagined children, further complicating adaptation for young audiences. Addressing the play's unsuitability head-on, critic Laura Tosi concludes that "the implied child reader of this play is therefore confronted with a text that problematizes childhood is perhaps an understatement" (73). Child and adolescent adaptations of *Macbeth* must directly engage with topics historically problematic for young audiences, often amidst backlash and controversy.

In addition to its problematic themes, *Macbeth's* content is generally unfamiliar to young audiences. Unlike young, star-crossed love and teenage rebellion in *Romeo and Juliet*, children and young adults cannot easily relate to the subject matter of *Macbeth*. The younger the

audience, the more adaptations adapt in order to appeal to a young readership, using familiar themes, images, and mediums while censoring potentially problematic content. Adaptations often flatten the major issues, oversimplify conflict to a relationship between good and evil, clearly define characters' motivations, and ignore, gloss over, or completely omit images and language that could potentially be deemed inappropriate for young audiences – especially real and imagined violence against children. *Macbeth* is a seemingly unlikely play to adapt for children and adolescents based on its complexities, problematic themes, and violence directed towards children. Therefore, it elicits the question of why adapt such a violent and unfamiliar play for children in the first place?

The violence in *Macbeth* not only centers around the murder of real and hypothetical children but is persistent and striking. The play begins with a bloody soldier who states that Macbeth acted with "bloody execution" until "he unseamed [Macdonwald] from the nave to th' chops" and ends with the presentation of Macbeth's severed head (1.2.20-24, 5.8.66). In between, the plot fixates on children: born and unborn, dead and alive, and subject to fantasies of infanticide and murder. Vocabulary often associated with childhood and motherhood describe violent acts and thoughts, such as when Lady Macbeth criticizes Macbeth's lack of ambition, saying he "is too full o' th' milk of human kindness" (Shakespeare 1.5.17-33). In order to overcome any possible remorse, Lady Macbeth says, "make thick my blood… Come to my woman's breasts / And take my milk for gall" (1.5.47-55). Lady Macbeth continues, actively convincing Macbeth to kill Duncan using language associated with motherhood, pressuring him to uphold his promise, for if she promised to act, she would. She states, "how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me. / I would, while it was smiling in my face, / Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums / And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you / Have done to this" (1.7.61-67). Although the Macbeths are said to be heirless in the prophecy and implied to be childless at the time through metaphorical language ("barren scepter in my grip" and "I have given suck" (1.5.47, 3.1.67)), Lady Macbeth speaks of infanticide by means of suffocation with her breast. Although violence against children is imaginary in this instance, characters consistently speak of violence in terms of children and motherhood. Compounded with the fact that the plot's progression depends upon the continuation of a familial line of heirs resulting in the murder of Banquo and attempted murder of Fleance, *Macbeth* becomes a tale of and about the killing of children.

Implied violence against children continues beyond the final act. With Banquo's dying breath, he calls out to his young son, Fleance, for revenge (3.3.26). This revenge would prevent any of Malcom's heirs (or Malcom himself) from becoming king – a direct request for a child to commit murder. Fleance would take the throne, fulfilling Banquo's part of the prophecy. In other words, "blood will have blood" (3.4.152). Arguably, the most significant moment of violence of or against children within the play's action is when Macbeth murders the Macduff family, including his only son. Not only is violence against children discussed hypothetically with Lady Macbeth and attempted with Fleance, but it occurs during the play with the Macduff family and is implied in the future with Banquo's call for revenge. Violence is often framed within terms of childhood; much of the action depends on the spilling of children's blood during the events of the play and afterwards.

And yet Macbeth has been adapted for children in a range of genres throughout history, [1] indicating that audiences and authors believe that there is something inherently valuable in the play to teach to young people. However, children receive adapted versions in which violence is censored, omitted, or altered. This suggests that although *Macbeth* is deemed worthwhile for young audiences, the amount of child brutality is problematic enough to warrant censorship – either by way of simplified vernacular, lack of or cartooning of images, and altering of the plot, etc. Although individuals have recirculated *Macbeth* throughout history, including within children's and young adult libraries, the primary plot device of violence against children is censored frequently, implying that there is something beyond the violence that is valuable for young audiences.

Examining why a play like *Macbeth* is adapted in the first place and how Shakespeare is generally adapted for young people provides an opportunity to better understand what stories we want children and young adults to consume, through what mediums, and using what language, thereby informing us about what we believe is important to teach our children. Although adaptations of Shakespeare are not a new phenomenon, authors are adapting Shakespeare's works for a new generation of children and young adults in new mediums and contexts. It is worth considering how and why they are reproduced to better understand what we value enough to keep retelling and reproducing Shakespeare stories in these new mediums to our youngest and

[1] Beginning with Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, written in 1807.

most impressionable of audiences.

To answer these questions, I plan to examine three adaptations' form and content, focusing on their representation (or lack thereof) of violence against children. This essay focuses on three separate adaptations: Ian Lendler and Zack Giallongo's *Stratford Zoo Midnight Revue Presents Macbeth*, Tina Packer and Barry Moser's *Tales from Shakespeare, Macbeth,* and Gareth Hinds' graphic novel adaptation of *Macbeth*. Each adaptation grapples with the issue of violence in novel ways, and when examined together, are helpful for understanding how *Macbeth* is being repackaged for young audiences. This essay exclusively examines textual adaptation not because stage adaptation is unworthy of consideration but because children rarely encounter Shakespeare for the first time as a member of an audience at a stage production. Even though others are interested in similar questions regarding adaptation of Shakespeare for young audiences, few examine *Macbeth* specifically or through these selected primary texts. Fewer examine the issue of violence against children in a children's retelling. Reading adaptations alongside critical scholarship on the subject of child and adolescent adaptation of Shakespeare will inform the extent to which violence is censored in these adaptations and for what purpose.

Numerous scholars have contributed to the discourse surrounding Shakespearean adaptation throughout history, including within the last two decades.[2] Douglas Lanier outlines the major terminology of Shakespearean adaptation and its existence within a larger socioeconomic context and popular cultural consciousness in *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*. Amongst an extensive discussion of Shakespeare adaptations, Lanier explores terminology of adaptation generally. He claims that the very language used to describe an adaptation significantly influences how we read, watch, and consume it. Therefore, we should be cognizant of terminology, including the terminology used in this essay. He notes that words carry connotations and histories and speak to the consumer's perception of a particular retelling. In this paper, I primarily utilize 'adaptation' as it implies that only some aspects of "setting, idiom, plot, or character have been altered and that the essence of the original remains intact" (Lanier 4). This most closely describes the child and adolescent adaptations to be analyzed in this essay in that they make an effort to tell the major plot points of *Macbeth* with (mostly) minor adjustments in form and setting. Retellings maintain an aspect of authenticity of the source material – a close-

[2] Including (but not limited to) Douglas Lanier, Mark Thornton Burnett et. al., Diana E. Henderson, and Naomi Miller.

to-source-text reproduction. Reinventions speak to a shift between cultural statures, or a complete overhaul of contexts and thought processes. Lanier situates reinvention historically, emphasizing the 're' of "*re*-invention" (5). Reinventions refer to alterations made depending on contexts and audiences. Appropriation, however, privileges the original as correct, framing Shakespeare as immobile, intellectual property (5). As Shakespeare's stories recirculate in new forms and mediums, appropriation is becoming increasingly harder to justify – not to mention that Shakespeare himself lifted ideas from other source texts to use for his commercial purposes. Lanier describes this as "textual poaching" (52). Even the word "Shakespeare" now encompasses anything from the bard himself to children's books to stage performances; anything that is somewhat related to Shakespeare is contained within that term (8). Shakespeare has become popularized, appropriated, adapted, and reinvented, and the array of language used to describe these processes hint at the frequency and prevalence of such processes. The discourse and vocabulary surrounding Shakespearean adaptation are clearly complicated and depend largely on context, including socioeconomic conditions and audience considerations which Lanier and other authors, including Diana E. Henderson and Amy Scott-Douglass, consider.

In Henderson's "From Popular Entertainment to Literature," Henderson outlines the relationship between popular culture, high culture, and profit regarding Shakespearean adaptation. She considers how and why Shakespeare was adapted in the first place, focusing both on the economic situation of the theater and its place between high and popular culture. Other scholars explore adaptations of Shakespeare for young audiences, including Amy Scott-Douglass in her essay, "Shakespeare for Children" and Kevin J. Wetmore in his article "Shakespeare and Teenagers." Prior to examining the specifics of Shakespearean adaptation for young audiences and closely reading primary material, it is necessary to understand how and why Shakespeare emerged in popular culture, eventually landing in children's books. I will use the terms outlined in the following secondary material, particularly Lanier, Scott-Douglass, and Wetmore, to read and situate the primary sources.

Shakespeare in Popular Culture

Although Shakespeare has thoroughly permeated contemporary popular culture, Lanier states that the public still primarily perceives Shakespeare as "*the* icon of high or 'proper' culture" (3). However, Shakespeare neither originated within high culture nor currently exists primarily in

genres and contexts of high culture. This tension between how we view Shakespeare as exemplary of high culture and how it actually exists in popular culture illustrates how Shakespeare simultaneously represents and undermines high society (Lanier 4). Henderson situates this concept historically, noting how the plays were performed "alongside whorehouses and animal-baiting arenas but also before queens and kings at court" (7-9). People of all levels of social status attended Shakespeare's plays and were represented on stage. The plays represented what common folk wanted to see while challenging the rigidity of socioeconomic class experience. Any actor could portray anyone – from a king to a porter, and as Shakespeare emerged in new mediums, his work only appealed to a wider audience, including children and young adults.

Although Shakespeare has always appealed to a popular audience, his work has also generated controversy and conflict between upper and lower classes. Lanier considers how popular culture is representative of what a majority of people consume while exemplifying what a higher class (the producer of the content) deems popular, stemming from what he calls the "culture industry," a form of business elite who determines and profits from what people consume (5). Henderson, like Lanier, stresses that theater existed primarily to make money. And to make money, it had to appeal to what people wanted to see. Questions of profit therefore drive decisions about media. What is popular is determined both by the general public and by the elite. For this reason, determining whether or not something is "popular" culture is complicated and based heavily on systems of socioeconomic status and consumerism. Both consumers and producers contribute to this process, ultimately collaboratively determining what is appropriate to produce and for what audiences.

Because of this phenomenon of needing to appeal to the general population to sell tickets, theater "encouraged representations of 'lower class' experiences and opinions… [and] provided an adaptable occasion to defend the common people's perspective" (Henderson 13). Shakespeare only became synonymous with the high class experience with the publishing of the (rather expensive) First Folio. Prior, Shakespeare represented what the people wanted to see at the time – a spectacle of violence, humor, or love. Shakespeare negotiated what the people wanted and what the elite produced (or could produce) within their given confines. Working within the sphere of popular culture did not come without consequences; for example, English theatres were periodically shut down for a range of reasons, one justification made in 1612 arguing that

"unruliness onstage is held responsible for unruliness beyond it" (Henderson 10). Fear of the transfer of "unruliness" remains true for children and young adult adaptation; laws, rating systems, and parental limitations restrict what children can consume for fear of them replicating observed behaviors – the very same concern in the 1600s. This undoubtedly contributes to the censorship in textual adaptations for young audiences to this day, especially in the context of violence.

Although adaptation of Shakespeare is widespread and not a historical oddity, it is not necessarily widely accepted. This applies to both Shakespeare purists and a general audience. Lanier describes the source of this unacceptance, stating that popular culture Shakespeare, or "Shakespop," is "relatively unburdened with worries about historical accuracy, interpretive precision, or faithfulness to the letter of Shakespeare's scripts . . . [and] is at best an amusing form of kitsch and at worst a travesty that threatens to displace the real thing" (9). Shakespop departs from the folioed, high-brow Shakespeare. Adaptations for young people certainly undermine "the very principles of aesthetic and moral cultivation for which Shakespeare is symbol and vehicle," focusing instead on "what is titillating, violent, archaic, banal, or silly" (Lanier 100). Through this process of adaptation, Shakespeare further enters the realm of popular culture. Rather than consider child and adolescent adaptations of Shakespeare travesty, adaptations are particularly worthwhile because of precisely this insight into the relationship between high and low. Modern adaptations are situated in the space between high and popular culture and when examined, provide an opportunity for careful analysis of what is valued by either group. In the case of the representation or censorship of violence within child and adolescent adaptation, it informs us of what values we wish to instill in our children, particularly how violence should or should not be taught and read by our children for fear of reproducing said "unruliness."

Shakespeare in Print

Shakespeare's shift from the stage to the page was a result of much of the above discussion on its place among individuals of varying socioeconomic status and the stigma of the playhouse as a purveyor of unruliness. Lanier claims that putting a play to print creates a permanent literary quality that simply cannot emerge from a performance alone (24). As opposed to experiencing Shakespeare in the theater, audiences began engaging with his plays in new ways: first in folios

and quartos and eventually in film, fanfiction, self-help books, fiction novels, insult books, picture books, storybooks, graphic novels, etc. Although Shakespeare is widely available now in a plethora of forms, its initial publishing largely contributed to its solidification in the literary canon as exemplary of high culture. The act of printing the plays opened the door for Shakespeare's place within the literary canon, simultaneously creating and upholding its status. Only after Shakespeare emerged in new mediums did he once again converge with popular culture and make adaptation and criticism permissible once again.

Despite modern Shakespeare having exited the stage and settling between high and pop culture, readers tend to first experience Shakespeare within institutions and spaces that uphold the notion of Shakespeare as exemplary of high culture and teach it for its perceived literary value (Lanier 51). However, schools are increasingly leaning on texts such as *No Fear Shakespeare* and *OMG Shakespeare* in conjunction with the source text, slowly departing from the notion that Shakespeare is the height of culture. Despite Shakespeare being firmly embedded in the literary canon, young people are now experiencing Shakespeare in its unruliness and debauchery through new mediums, new interpretations, and new contexts. They are just now interacting with Shakespeare as Shakespop. Although this process of reproducing and adapting Shakespeare within new mediums and for younger audiences is not new, expectations of audience appropriateness and patterns of revision have changed. Several authors are interested in the choices that modern storytellers make while adapting Shakespeare for children and adolescents.

Adaptations of Shakespeare for Young Audiences

Amy Scott-Douglass, for example, offers a history of Shakespeare adaptation for children since 1807; her insights are also applicable to very recent adaptations, however. Scott-Douglass argues for the adaptation of Shakespeare for children for their lessons and social commentary. At the same time, she, as well as Tosi, realize that there are issues with oversimplification, including flattening violence, simplifying characters' motivations, and streamlining moral lessons into a debate of good vs. evil (Scott-Douglass 350-51; Tosi 76). The source of Macbeth's desires is unclear, and therefore the violence that ensues has imprecise origins. To combat this, authors turn the story into a prose narrative in which moments of potential uncertainty are explained away, moralizing to make Shakespeare more appropriate for children (Tosi 74). Scott-Douglass

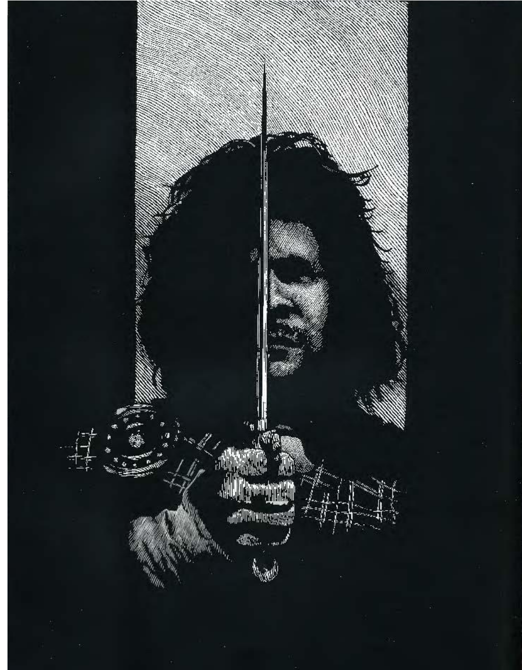
writes that “few early children’s adaptors have a problem with violence per se. Instead, they are opposed to violence that is not justified or punished, violence that does not fit into a larger moral framework” (352). *Macbeth* certainly fits this description, particularly with the murder of the Macduff family. To justify unjust violence, authors add a narrator and use simplified language, explaining away any questionable decisions. In “Just Shakespeare! Adapting Macbeth for Children’s Literature,” Marina Gerzic considers exactly how adaptations change to appeal to and censor for young readers. She claims that adaptations often utilize narration and directly explain characters’ motivations, unfamiliar language, and theatrical conventions. Using these methods, adaptations flatten and justify much of the potentially problematic moments while retelling main plot points and maintaining aspects of traditional theater such as dialogue and audience interaction. The issue, according to Scott-Douglass, Tosi, and Gerzic, is not that violence exists in the source text but how violence is rationalized within adaptations. Ambiguity and moral uncertainty are central to Shakespeare’s plays, but they seem unacceptable for young audiences based on how they are adapted. It seems that unjustified violence is vastly different from rationalized violence when adapting for a young audience. Glib moralizing, then, appears to be the agenda of adaptations for young audiences. This will only become clearer through close reading primary texts, particularly *Stratford Zoo Macbeth* and *Tales from Shakespeare Macbeth*.

Despite seeing value in repackaging Shakespeare’s moral lessons to children, Scott-Douglass criticizes the long-held belief that “all Shakespeare is inherently worthwhile and needs to be adapted no matter what… the outline of the story *must* be presented, to our young readers” (354). She argues the difference between early and modern children’s Shakespeare adaptations is that early adapters were conscious that they were shaping children, but now, many “disavow the part they might play in using Shakespeare to inculcate good morals or to ‘correct’ behavior” (374). Because of this, she argues that censorship is prevalent in twenty-first-century children’s Shakespeare and particularly problematic plays are avoided so that Shakespeare can still be advertised as being inherently ‘good’ for children (374). Nobody would adapt Shakespeare for children or buy those adaptations if they didn’t believe that something in Shakespeare was worthwhile to teach despite the violence. Scott-Douglass makes her uneasiness with this sentiment evident, likely because the cultural and literary authority of Shakespeare is so socially and historically situated within the canon by institutions and economic systems that uphold its literary value.

Kevin J. Wetmore advances the discussion to teenagers in his article "Shakespeare and Teenagers." Rather than oversimplification, he states that the primary areas of interest in young adult adaptation are in relatability and accessibility, particularly in the context of education (Wetmore 379). Relevancy is achieved "by focusing on the teenage elements present within Shakespeare's work, or translating Shakespeare's work into something recognizably 'teen,' something recognizably 'cool'" (379). By translating original text into modern language and/or slang and by reducing the amount of text while clinging to relatable themes, Shakespeare becomes accessible (379). Without doing so, Wetmore claims writers worry teenagers will fear Shakespeare or find it boring (379). To achieve readability and relatability, some adaptations borrow from popular in teen culture "just as popular culture has appropriated Shakespeare" (381). *Macbeth* presents singular difficulties for teen adaptation, then, due to a lack of relatable themes and an unfamiliar language. Shannon R. Mortimore-Smith also considers the benefits of utilizing aspects of teen culture to teach Shakespeare in her essay, "Shakespeare Gets Graphic: Reinventing Shakespeare Through Comics, Graphic Novels, and Manga." She identifies that what makes Shakespeare worthwhile is also what makes it complex – the words (Mortimore-Smith 82). She suggests that graphic novel adaptations of Shakespeare offer more than just a gateway into Shakespeare; rather, they are worthy of consideration in their own right. Gareth Hinds' graphic novel adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* exemplifies Wetmore and Mortimore-Smith's statements on how Shakespeare is made accessible to adolescents in its inclusion of images to aid in reading the text and its more familiar (and "cool") form.

Macbeth in Children's Adaptation

Tina Packer's *Tales from Shakespeare* is a storybook anthology of adapted Shakespeare retellings. Her adaptation of *Macbeth* retells the entire plot; it contains every major point of conflict, includes internal struggle, maintains a theme of violence against children, and utilizes several of the more famous quotes. Packer communicates the plot of *Macbeth* by limiting details in both images and text, favoring plain, prose narration, allowing her to convey all aspects of the plot while omitting or glossing over problematic themes. This version is told in a total of thirteen pages, containing only two black and white images – one that depicts Macbeth and one that depicts a serpent encircling a sword (Moser 66, 83). The text contains few descriptive details but clearly explains characters' motivations. Matter-of-fact language and prose narration almost



entirely deliver the plot and state moments of violence, except for the occasional direct quote from the source material. In this version, not a single moment of violence is cut from the play, but every instance of violence lacks description. This version communicates the entire plot to readers, leaving nothing to the imagination but manages to censor nearly every problematic moment by failing to describe it or provide images. As a result, this adaptation simultaneously includes and avoids all violence. This could be attributed to the limitations of the form of the storybook in that each story is short, containing few images by definition. But, regardless, Packer's adaptation is unique in its ability to include everything without actually giving readers the time or description to visualize or think about what is happening in the text.

The play begins, retelling the story of a "bloody rebellion" where Macbeth had "slain the revolt's leader," quickly introducing the witches as "three grotesque, rag-clad figures" (Packer 69). These sentiments are exemplary of how violence is characterized in this adaptation; it is briefly but frequently mentioned. The revolt was bloody, the leader was slain, and the witches were grotesque. Also, rather than relying on names or costumes to designate characters, a narrator directly communicates characters' relationships and actions. For example, when the story introduces Banquo, he is called "Banquo, the Scottish general who rode alongside [Macbeth]" (69). The narrator also explicitly defines motivations. For example, after having heard the prophecy, the narrator speaks: "one had now come true...Would the other? Would Macbeth someday take Duncan's place? And how might that come to pass? He wondered…[Duncan] had two healthy sons, both in line for the throne" (71). While this still implies violence by mentioning Duncan's sons and violent language (the words "blood" and "bloody" are used repeatedly throughout this adaptation), it lacks further description or

explanation. Violence is present but not dwelled upon. The most graphic moments come from direct quotation from the source text and include but are not limited to the "milk of human kindness" and "is this a dagger" speeches (72, 73).

In addition, *Tales from Shakespeare's Macbeth* uses children to advance the plot in alignment with the source text. Duncan's sons are mentioned on the first page, the Macbeths are described as having no children, and much of the text involves discussion of Fleance as heir to the throne: "and the witches had said nothing about *their* heirs," "if it be so, for Banquo's children have I defiled my soul," "Fleance was young. There was still time to take care of him" (Packer 75, 76). During the cauldron scene, a bloody infant emerges and tells Macbeth that none of woman born shall harm him. The child is described as a "blood-covered infant" (78). The third apparition was also a child, telling Macbeth about Birnam Wood and Dunsinane (78). Immediately following the new prophecy, Macbeth decides to kill Macduff's family to make him "wish himself dead" (79). The text does not describe the Macduff murders nor what the bloody infant looks like in detail. However, the text does include each significant plot point, including those involving children but lacks description or images to aid in a reader's understanding or analysis. These moments are neither ignored nor fully recognized.

The most significant censorship aside from a general omission of violent details and images is Lady Macbeth's suicide. The only mention of her suicide is that she "is dead by her own hand." Macbeth briefly mourns her and states the "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" line (Packer 80-81). This omission avoids the topic almost entirely. Because so many of the play's events are explained in a matter-of-fact tone, much of the emotional effect and moral ambiguity disappear. Although the adaptation includes Lady Macbeth's suicide similarly to how it appears in the original text (it occurs offstage and without much grief), this moment departs from Packer's established conventions of explaining confusing or violent moments but doing so plainly. Lady Macbeth's suicide seems easy to miss due to a lack of matter-of-fact explanation. In contrast, when Macduff confronts Macbeth, the line, "Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped" remains intact, and the narrator explains that "Macduff had had a cesarean birth. In this narrow sense, he was not of woman born" (82). Here, the narrator fully explains the nuances of this aspect of the prophecy and explicitly discusses what not being born of woman means to an audience that had likely not yet been taught where babies come from. Suicide is included but glossed over whereas a cesarean section birth is explained fully and literally spelled

out – the author opting for "cesarean birth" rather than "c-section." All aspects of violence against children (as well as general talk of parenthood, motherhood, and suicide) are maintained, albeit dampened through vague prose.

In *Stratford Zoo Midnight Revue Presents Macbeth* by Ian Lendler and Zack Giallongo, Shakespeare's tragedy takes the form of a children's picture book in which zoo animals escape their cages to stage performances of Shakespeare's plays at night. It is the first book in a series of two that retells Shakespearean tragedy through this method. Although a children's picture book, it frames the story as if it were a live stage performance, complete with an audience and reactions. It maintains some aspects of stage performance that are frequently lost in textual adaptation such as audience interaction and awareness, intermission, and the use of fake blood (ketchup). The majority of the plot is prose dialogue or narration, containing only small excerpts of famous lines or vocabulary of tragedy throughout. Of the three adaptations explored in this paper, the plot of *Macbeth* is most altered in this version. This text censors murder, suicide, the origin of children, and implies only one death. The book opens with a comical misspelling of "written by Willy Shakespeer," corrected to read "Willy Shakespeare" (Lendler and Giallongo, 1). If the premise of the book did not do enough to set the tone, this misspelling does; this book is not meant to be a true-to-text retelling of *Macbeth* but a comical version friendly to children with some jokes only parents would catch.

The book first features a scene of animals like a giraffe, a skunk, and a seagull as groundlings near a stage. Some are selling items such as peanuts, earthworms and "rotting carrion" (Lendler and Giallongo, 2-3). The *OED* defines carrion as "a dead body; a corpse or carcass," cited as "obsolete" (sense 1). Here, gore and censorship first appear in the play. It is doubtful that children (and many adults) would know the meaning of carrion. This shows the book's self-awareness of the reality of what animals eat but does so in a way that most children would not understand, thereby censoring it. The inclusion of an interactive audience in the pit of the playhouse is true to original practices, but as the story continues, sections of the book change perspective to include just the action on stage, shifting the audience to the background until the audience makes further comments. Including an audience in a textual adaptation of *Macbeth* is uncommon, particularly with children and young adult adaptation. Including an audience, combined with comic-book-like panels and vivid images produces an immersive, play-like experience. However, this version departs from the original in its retelling of the story, especially

in how violence is represented – or not represented.

Macbeth, played by a lion, is the hero at the beginning of the story. He is said to fight battles heroically, dress heroically, eat breakfast heroically, and kiss Lady Macbeth (a cheetah) heroically (Lendler and Giallongo 5). He is even offered a "hero gyro" (full of ketchup) from a street vendor (6). A narrator presents this information to readers, clearly defining him as the hero. This moment is one example of how *Stratford Zoo* clearly explains characters and how they should be understood by readers. In addition to narrating potential ambiguities, adaptations of Shakespeare for children and young adults also simplify Shakespearean language to a modern vernacular and eliminate poetic meter. This book is no exception; unfamiliar concepts and words are translated into a form and vocabulary that are accessible without footnotes or further explanation. *Stratford Zoo's Midnight Revue Macbeth* mimics a graphic novel: it has panels, speech bubbles, clear and colorful images, and narrations that make it easy to understand. Despite the book's physical form and narration, it most closely resembles a stage performance, implying that the author and publisher found it important to reproduce qualities of stage performance in a picture book.

The first major intervention in plot is that the king, an owl, rewards Macbeth's success in battle by giving him "the world's largest hot dog." Macbeth claims to be bored with the same food - he is hungry for something else (Lendler and Giallongo 7). He follows a smell, drawn by a line of purple smoke, with his friend Banksy, a hyena, to a swamp where he meets the witches (8-9). The witches' prophecy begins "double, double, toil and trouble, fire burn and cauldron bubble," borrowing directly from Shakespeare, diverging with the next lines, "eat the king, the plot will thicken, go on Macbeth, he tastes like chicken," referencing the king as an owl (10). On the next page, Macbeth makes the realization that he is "hungry for… POWER" (11). "Power" is capitalized and placed within a red speech bubble, signaling the turn of the plot to violent events. The story utilizes hunger as a primary motivating desire in conjunction with power. Hunger is explained as a metaphor for power. Macbeth returns to his wife and tells her of the prophecy. She is intrigued by the thought of giving orders, wearing a crown, and sitting atop a throne, simplifying her motivations. In this version of the play, Lady Macbeth convinces her husband by making him read a book entitled "100 Ways to Cook a King" and constant nagging rather than giving the milk of human kindness and dash'd the brains out speech (14-15).

Although the imagined dagger scene is present, it is censored. Rather than a dagger,

Macbeth sees a set of silverware above the door of an imagined diner. The narrator then says, "what followed was horrible and gruesome and definitely the best scene of the whole play" (Lendler and Giallongo 19). However, to the frustration of the audience, when the page is flipped, an elephant blocks the stage, looking for his seat, red splatter behind him. An animal in the audience asks their mother what the "red stuff" is, and she says that it is "just ketchup" (21). This is confirmed on the next page when Macbeth says he had to use ketchup because the king tasted poorly. Lady Macbeth is later tasked with getting the ketchup stains out (the spot) of Macbeth's clothes . Meanwhile, detective Macduff, a stork (not born from a mother), further confirms that the 'blood' was ketchup (24). Macduff immediately suspects Macbeth, and Banksy remembers that the witches said this would happen (27). Macbeth eats Banksy, fearing his suspicion.

As opposed to ghosts emerging during the banquet, Macbeth's stomach begins to talk, signaling to readers that neither the king nor Banksy are really dead. Here, potential moments of violence are retracted by signaling that the characters are actually alive and well inside of Macbeth. To combat her husband talking to his stomach, Lady Macbeth offers him ketchup, but he responds by banning it from the castle (Lendler and Giallongo 36). It could be inferred that Macbeth feels overwhelming guilt because of what he has done, and ketchup is a reminder of that violence. Feeling his guilt, the narrator tells the audience that Macbeth is going to begin a long, dramatic, and important speech. However, the zookeeper returning to the zoo to clean interrupts Macbeth (39-41). He skips the rest of the soliloquy per the requests of the audience to "get to the good part" (42). Macbeth travels to the Macduffs, when a truck of ketchup arrives (53). He proceeds to eat the Macduff family, but again the violence is shown off page, represented by red splatter.

Lady Macbeth has since locked herself in her room, desperately scrubbing her permanent spots (Lendler and Giallongo 58). Failing, she eventually disappears in a cloud of bubbles. The notion of suicide as well as infanticide are all but ignored in this adaptation as is any discussion of childbirth. The final fight scene censored as well; Macbeth uses a brush to fight instead of a sword, and Macduff wins the fight, rescuing everyone from Macbeth's stomach (67-71). The narrator claims that Macbeth "paid the price for his greedy appetite" but specifies nothing and implies nothing about what happens to him afterwards (71). The last we see of Macbeth is his open mouth and all of the animals emerging from it. It is unclear if Macbeth is killed during this

process, and he is most definitely not beheaded during the fight. In this adaptation, Macbeth suffered no tangible consequences. Although readers are told he "paid the price" for his unjust actions through moralizing – a primary marker of a children's adaptation – it is unclear whether or not Macbeth died.

A Graphic Retelling

As opposed to children's adaptations of *Macbeth,* Gareth Hinds' graphic novel adaptation is aimed at adolescents due to the length, the visual and textual descriptions of graphic violence, and the inclusion of mostly original text. It is significantly longer, grapples with much of the original text in meter, and contains graphic images of violence. This version is organized by scenes and utilizes characterization through visuals on an illustrated page. It uses color (red) to symbolically show violence. Even the cover of the book, and the shiny, fresh-blood-red text of the title hint at how color and images convey the sense of violence in this adaptation. Hinds' *Macbeth* maintains nearly every scene from the original. Departures occur, however, in how those scenes are illustrated.

This play, like the original text, opens with soldiers returning from war, wrapped in bloody rags, retelling Macbeth's actions in battle (Hinds 3). Deep red surrounds the panels that depict action from the war (4-5). Like the original text, the opening of the play sets the tone for the violence that is to come later. Shakespeare's language fills the speech bubbles in these first few pages. Hinds writes, "for brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name – distaining Fortune with his brandished steel, unseamed him from the nave to the chops, and fixed his head upon our battlements" (4). Although there are some changes made from the original text, including eliminating strict line breaks, removing contractions (th' becomes the), and substituting the occasional Shakespearean word for a modern one, Hinds mostly maintains an iambic rhythm and much of the original text. Despite the maintaining of a majority of the original text, Hinds recommends reading the unabridged play in his "Notes on the Text" section because he admits making cuts and edits to the original (137).

Hinds' *Macbeth* includes all moments that are potentially problematic for a young readership, including the "milk of human kindness line," the "unsex me here" speech, the "dashed the brains out" speech, images of bloodied hands and daggers after killing Duncan, a bloody and pale Duncan, the murder of Banquo and attack of Fleance, the return of Banquo's

ghost at the banquet, an imagined sea of blood at the banquet, a bloody infant and child from the witches' cauldron, the murder of the Macduff family, the incessant washing of Lady Macbeth's hands, Lady Macbeth's suicide, and the beheading of Macbeth. In this version, censorship does not come from the omission of scenes or plot points within the text but from how they are represented. Because the story is shown through graphic panels, the author had the choice of what part of the scene to show. For example, during the murder of Banquo, the viewpoint of the panel is from afar, so readers are unable to see defined blood and wounds (Hinds 75). With the Macduff murders, readers see the murderers entering the home and a knife being pointed at the son, but the panels are then made small and elongated, only showing a sliver of action – a bloody knife, a knife pointed at Lady Macduff's back, and the murderers themselves (99). That said, the text departs from the two other adaptations examined in this essay as Hinds' *Macbeth* censors very little, and he depicts much of the violence as it is described in the text in color and with relative realism. For this reason, this adaptation is more clearly for an older audience.

This adaptation includes several moments of explicit violence against children, and the way they are presented greatly influence this adaptation's reading. For example, most of the text is presented within white speech bubbles, but Lady Macbeth's "dashed the brains out" speech is presented within black speech bubbles and surrounded by red (Hinds 31). There is no setting. Rather, red lines extend outwards from her, signaling violence and anger. When looking at this image, the violence in her speech is read as violent and unjustified – Macbeth's face is one of fear and worry, signaling to the reader how to interpret her speech and the implied violence against a nonexistent child. This adaptation both censors and represents violence through images. Like Packer, Hinds' *Macbeth* includes every major plot point, but the way they are shown to the reader in both speech and text limit the readers' access to violence. Due to the inclusion of images, readers are not dependent upon the text for comprehension. This adaptation is most visually striking, reads very quickly, and preserves every violent moment, making it attractive to adolescent audiences.

Conclusion

Clearly, a multitude of approaches for adapting violent moments in the play exist, each adaptation approaching violence against children in nuanced ways. Packer includes every major event in the play and several direct quotations, but she does so quickly and without much space

devoted to conveying violence or violence against children. Of the three adaptations examined, Lendler most alters the plot and most obviously censors violence, using ketchup rather than blood, skirting the issue of childbirth by including storks, framing Lady Macbeth's suicide as a glorified bubble bath, and by making clear nobody (except maybe Macbeth) dies. Both Lendler and Packer utilize a narrator to talk readers through potentially confusing ambiguity, such as Macbeth's status as hero or villain or what "none of woman born" means. Although Hinds includes much of the original text, his choices in assigning viewpoint and framing panels successfully censor the most violent moments, directing readers towards a particular interpretation. Macbeth's and Banquo's horrified expressions towards imaginary or real violence against children are shared by the reader. Violence, although shown and glorified in the context of war, becomes a topic of horror and disgust when against or about children. Regardless of child or adolescent adaptation, authors censor violence, particularly when children, real or imaginary, are involved. The amount and method of censorship differ significantly between the child adaptations and adolescent adaptation, but it is present nonetheless. Although authors deem it necessary to retell Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for young audiences, they also reshape it in new mediums through various filters. Crafting children's renditions of *Macbeth* in this way, utilizing varied methods of censorship and alteration, allows authors to communicate any desired aspect of Shakespeare and/or *Macbeth*.

All examined adaptations retell or recreate some aspect from Shakespeare's work, finding something within it important enough to tell young audiences, often forgoing accuracy when it comes to representing issues surrounding violence of and against children but maintaining accuracy through direct quotes or aspects of Shakespeare's theater. It seems as though these three adaptations, especially Packer's and Lendler's, see something in *Macbeth* worthwhile to reproduce for a young audience *despite* the violence. They treat violence as something to overcome and as a means to an end for teaching morality and the inherent importance of Shakespeare. They retell *Macbeth* generally, using varied strategies to censor potentially problematic moments. Packer includes every major plot point, and censorship comes primarily from a lack of images and narration, indicating that to her, the important information to convey to children is the plot. Lendler greatly alters the plot but conveyed aspects of stage performance such as audience intervention and intermission while teaching vocabulary of tragedy. Through illustration, Hinds acts like a director, choosing how to interpret and represent scenes visually.

His primary goal seems as though it were to reproduce *Macbeth* in a form that appeals to teenage readers, preserving enough violence while sparing readers the goriest of details related to violence against children. Packer's *Macbeth* is for the parents who cannot bear to read their children Lendler's *Macbeth*, and Hinds' *Macbeth* is for the teenagers who do not want to read it in the first place. In some way, each adaptation made *Macbeth* "appropriate" for the selected audience, implying that regardless of age, there is something worthwhile in *Macbeth* that warrants retelling but requires (sometimes significant) adaptation and censorship. In Packer's, that something is the plot, Lendler's is stage production, and Hinds' is staying true to source. In all three, however, the obvious teaching of morality is central, disallowing youth the option to explore the moral ambiguities inherent to Shakespeare, suggesting that the obligation of adapters is to teach the importance of Shakespeare to young audiences through any adaptation necessary.

The end goal for adapting "this most bloody piece of work" for young audiences remains relatively unclear (Shakespeare 2.3.150). Each adaptation explored in this essay focused on conveying a different aspect of Shakespeare. And in the case of *Macbeth*, a story in which the entirety of the plot, motivations, and action rests upon violence against children, it seems that adaptations can include or ignore as much as necessary to communicate their point (be it plot, elements of stage production, relatability, inherent importance of Shakespeare, etc.), ultimately telling us that almost anything in Shakespeare can justify adaptation. In this process of adapting for young audiences, a central focus of *Macbeth* – violence of or against children – is often lost. The nuances of how violence against children functions to advance the plot is all but ignored, and not a single adaptation explored in this essay implies that violence, namely Fleance's revenge, continues beyond the final page. Each adaptation teaches something different and censors violence differently, but at the same time, each relies heavily on the implied importance of Shakespeare as a subject to justify adaptation. In the case of Packer, Lendler, and Hinds' *Macbeth*, each author decided to reproduce the play but censored violence against children, signaling that there is something inherently worthwhile to reproduce, but it could not possibly be reproduced for young audiences without significant alteration. It can be argued that even the simplified and censored versions of *Macbeth* affect children by exposing them to a violent narrative and mature themes. Even censored *Macbeth* is still *Macbeth*, and although the most inappropriate content is frequently censored in child and adolescent adaptation (violence of and towards children), the play is violent enough to make one question what in it is truly that

valuable that it cannot be taught through other means. Shakespeare's violence is simultaneously fascinating and frustrating, particularly when thinking about adaptation for young audiences, and that combined with the fact that today's children are flooded with violence in all aspects of media might inform how we adapt and teach Shakespeare to our kids today and in the future.

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Re:Search

Approaching Toxic Masculinity through #MeToo: Representations of Sexual Assault in *American History X*

Miranda Brookshier, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

Since its inception in 2006, Tarana Burke's #MeToo Movement has continued to affirm and support the experiences of survivors of sexual violence. Other outcomes from the #MeToo Movement include more open conversations about sexual assault and toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity has been linked to the prevalence of women's sexual assault; however, in a culture dominated by its values, coming forward proves to be that much harder for male survivors, who are conditioned to believe that assault is a form of weakness. Film operates as one medium that strongly perpetuates this notion; through film, viewers create and take in ideas from popular culture. Highly heteronormative films like *American History X* subtly reinforce the biases and barriers created by toxic masculinity. This essay develops working definitions of rape, assault, and the prison rape trope and applies these definitions to an analysis of Tony Kaye's 1998 film, *American History X.* Through my analysis of *American History X*, I will show how the trope preserves heteropatriarchal values that undermine the work of #MeToo and its critiques of toxic masculinity, thus muting conversations among male survivors of sexual violence. In spite of the challenges men experience in coming forward, former football player and current actor, Terry Crews, has sought to use his testimony to encourage others to realize that they, too, can find support in speaking up.

KEYWORDS

American History X, Tony Kaye, #MeToo Movement, Sexual Assault, Prison Rape, Toxic Masculinity, Terry Crews

Founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke, the #MeToo Movement seeks to support survivors of sexual violence by offering individualized resources and community-based relief in a way that "affirms empowerment through empathy" (*#MeToo*). In its inception, Burke primarily worked in communities with working-class people of color, witnessing the structural barriers to reporting sexual assault that many women faced. Burke reports common themes among survivors of sexual violence: feelings of shame or fear, tendencies to blame themselves, and the large amounts of courage required to tell their stories. These patterns were further exacerbated when survivors felt as if they had no alternative but to tolerate a boss's unwanted advances, a family member's prodding, or a friend's manipulation—leaving many silenced and in the dark about resources for healing. Due to the United States' historic rape culture and discrimination against Black, indigenous, and other women of color, the #MeToo Movement focuses on "help[ing] survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls and other young women of color from low income communities, find pathways to healing" (*#MeToo*). Following Burke's call to action, millions have joined in the campaign to share their experiences and fight against the apathy toward sexual assault.

One outcome of #MeToo includes more open conversations about sexual assault through its social media hashtag. This has created a space for many to share their experiences and promote awareness, though the space has been limited to privileged groups—namely white women with the backing of their prestige and wealth. Since 2006, millions of people on various platforms have shared their #MeToo testimonies; yet these masses encompass only a portion of those affected by sexual violence. While the viral hashtag, #MeToo, quickly populated social media feeds, Twitter user @akdwaaz, rightly acknowledged that "#MeToo is just [the] tip of the iceberg. There are millions without any computer [or] internet access who have worse experiences of daily abuse" (qtd. by Stevens). Tarana Burke's goal of providing aid to survivors has succeeded by equipping many people with resources; however, this is only a starting place in creating awareness on such issues.

The #MeToo Movement not only sparked a "national dialogue" about sexual assault; it also excited conversation around toxic masculinity (*#MeToo*). This designation reflects "the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of the passing year," showing the United States' recent, overwhelming concern about sexual assault and men's attitudes toward it. Originating in gender and women's studies, "traditional masculinity ideology," or toxic masculinity, refers to the

constructed ideas that men should suppress emotions, maintain an illusion of toughness, and view violence as a measure of power (Salam). Men aspiring to these ideals often experience harmful notions about gender that lead to an inability to handle difficult emotions and increased "aggression and violence" (Salam). The phrase made a comeback in 2018 amid allegations against high profile men like Harvey Weinstein, Brett Kavanaugh, and Matt Lauer. The phrase's usage was so noteworthy that the *Oxford Dictionary* deemed "toxic" to be its 2018 word of the year ("Word of the Year"). Toxic masculinity has been linked to the prevalence of women's sexual assault; however, in a culture dominated by the values of toxic masculinity, coming forward proves to be that much harder for male survivors.

Although dialogue on female sexual assault fills newsfeeds and rallies support, men like Terry Crews are simultaneously silenced or dismissed when they try to come forward. This tension results from the public's conflicting tolerances of sexual assault for men and women. While allies view female victims as survivors, their male counterparts are shamed by toxic masculinity's rigid beliefs about masculinity. These beliefs not only hinder male survivors of sexual assault, but they also permeate into media and perpetuate a cycle of toxicity. Through film, Americans create and take in ideas from popular culture. Highly heteronormative films like *American History X* subtly reinforce the biases and barriers created by toxic masculinity. This essay develops working definitions of rape, assault, and the prison rape trope and applies these definitions to an analysis of Tony Kaye's 1998 film *American History X.* Through my analysis of *American History X*, I will show how the trope preserves heteropatriarchal values that undermine the work of #MeToo and its critiques of toxic masculinity, thus muting conversations among male survivors of sexual violence.

Issues of male sexual assault have been worked out by others in multiple ways, including its portrayal within prison films. With the belief that film operates as a reflection of and influencer of American values, I argue that the prison rape trope reflects and heightens rape culture and harms the efforts being done to end toxic masculinity. While activists call for reform against the normalized and excused sexual violence against women, the same abuse serves as prime plot points for prison movies ("Rape Culture, Victim"). As Elizabeth King and Emily Shugerman note, "Prison rape is often used as a punchline in movies and TV shows—the ubiquitous 'don't drop the soap' joke can be found everywhere from *2 Fast 2 Furious* to *Family Guy*" ("'Prisoners are People First'"). Such films present a unified mentality that rape is an

expected and natural consequence for criminals while simultaneously discouraging men in broader society from reporting abuse due to the fear of appearing weak or feminine. If we claim to be allies for victims of sexual assault, then I contest that our support must not stop at the wired gates of prisons or be based on one's gender. True advocacy calls for the challenging of the implicit biases found in popular media, justice systems, and ideologies with the goal of dismantling the social and institutional barriers that prevent a person from making one's voice heard.

#HowWeDefineIt

Before analyzing the prison rape trope, we need to consider the shifting legal, cultural, and colloquial definitions surrounding this topic. With the renewed focus on ending sexual violence, the American public is becoming more vocal and expansive in its definition of sexual assault and consent. However, while supporters may be in unison in their urge for justice, the legal definitions regarding the handling of sexual assault, rape, and consent still vary too greatly. Legislation and enforcement differ by state and context. For example, legal scholar Ian Urbina argues "in some cases, different definitions can be appropriate" like on college campuses that "defin[e] rape more expansively than criminal laws that carry jail time." Notably, colleges must be more inclusive in their definitions of sexual assault to avoid losing federal funding through a violation of Title IX. Yet such unstable handling of rape allows many cases to go unreported due to incidents not meeting the legal criteria or victims' confusion. Additionally, these varying definitions and practices encourage the belief that rape is less significant in certain scenarios. College campuses may have strict policies of intolerance (though perhaps not matching enforcement) toward any unwanted sexual conduct, while workplaces doubt the intent or severity of a sexual offense. For the purpose of this essay, I will be referencing the #MeToo Movement's and Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network's definitions of sexual assault and rape, which focus on the lack of consent by the victim. While sexual assault encompasses any unwanted sexual behaviors, rape specifically includes "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim" (qtd. by Urbina). Regardless of the surrounding circumstances, these definitions highlight the underlying need for consent and zero tolerance toward any unwanted sexual conduct.

Like "rape" and "sexual assault," "consent" has multiple, sometimes contradictory, legal and colloquial meanings, thus necessitating a baseline understanding of how "consent" will be understood for my arguments. Although the Illinois General Assembly's compiled Criminal Offenses (720 ILCS 5/) Criminal Code of 2012 affirms that one's clothing or lack of resistance does not establish a person's willingness to engage in sexual activities, for instance, popular discourse questions instances when a "no" is mumbled or alcohol is involved (Urbina). Trending informal definitions include either a "No means no" or a "Yes means yes" mentality, while Illinois legislation defines consent as "a freely given agreement" that does not result from "the use of force or threat of force" (Illinois General Assembly 720 ILCS 5/11-1.70[a]). Based on these definitions and cultural understandings, I propose that consent may be granted only on the following grounds: 1) both parties are mentally capable of comprehending the situation, understanding that one is able to "stop the sexual activity at any point," 2) no threat or perceived threat places one party at a disadvantage by another, and 3) both parties give an affirmative indication of their willingness to participate in sexual conduct (Illinois General Assembly; *#MeToo*). To advocate equally on behalf of all people, everyone—from law enforcement to civilians—requires clear and equally applied definitions of consent.

One of the most common arguments given to deny the prevalence of prison rape concerns the extent of consent given, claiming that a blurred line exists between forced, coerced, and consensual sex (Fleisher and Krienert). Mark S. Fleisher and Jessie L. Krienert argue in *The Myth of Prison Rape*: there is a "complex differentiation among acts of sexual violence, sexual consent, and sexual coercion [that] occur[s] as a function of inmate culture's symbolic reinterpretation of sociosexual behavior…Thus, the primary mechanism used to determine an act's meaning focuses on contextualization" (84). One example of contextualization includes "contractual relationships" in which inmates coerce fellow inmates into sex acts, often to ensure protection, repay a debt, or show appreciation for the gifting of commissary items (Kunzel 182). Princeton Professor Regina Kunzel writes:

> In these ongoing and sometimes contractual relationships, the man or jocker obligate[s] himself to provide complete protection for his partner, known as a punk or kid, at the cost of his life if necessary, and often provide[s] commissary items as well. In exchange, he expect[s] obedience, sexual service, and "wifely" domestic labor such as doing the

laundry, making the bunk, cleaning the cell, and making and serving coffee. (182)

Many could argue that the inmate knowingly agrees to engage in sexual service, yet in these cases, the unequal power differential prohibits free consent. By leveraging protection or indebtedness in exchange for sex acts, one initiates a coercive force that many states outlaw. While Fleisher and Krienert note that prisons have distinct cultures that vary from other communities, their work serves as an example for the need to be cautious in outlining how consent may or may not be given.

My definitions of sexual assault, rape, and consent will allow us to establish a standard that foregrounds the victim's experience as we evaluate the impact of film's depiction of male prison rape. Despite Fleisher and Krienert's fluid interpretations of sex acts within prisons, the authors provide insight on how media depictions of violent prison sex affect viewers. In their studies on prison culture, Fleisher and Krienert note that the mere "*fear* of rape and sexual assault shapes prison culture as much as actual incidents" (24). Just as films and jokes about prison rape shape inmates' perceptions, they also shape the public's. Through exposure to "a barrage of pop media visualizations of violent prison rapes," many people who are unfamiliar with the penal system struggle to discern between fiction and reality (56). Fleisher and Krienert use this assessment to "downplay the problem of sexual violence behind bars, asserting that the ubiquity of violent rape in prison is a media-perpetuated myth" (Young). This paper is not invested in comparing incidences of prison rape to public perceptions of its ubiquity; rather, my goal is to illuminate the effects of media portrayals of prison sexual violence on the public's sentiment toward issues of sexual assault and toxic masculinity.

Prison films' employment of the prison rape trope relies on the public's disdain for those who deviate from social norms—including breaking the law—and toxic masculinity's and homophobia's assumption that a man's rape is synonymous with his emasculation. The prison rape trope centers on an individual character whose rehabilitation develops from his sexual assault in prison. Through this relationship, viewers learn to see criminals as less than human. This perspective supports a more accepting view of criminals' sexual assaults with the idea that they deserve such treatment. As Caster explains, "Understanding the rape as Derek's real punishment in the [*American History X*] reflects what prison historians describe as the 'just desserts' model of punishment" (*Prison, Race, and Masculinity* 124). This model flows from a

long history that understood punishment as necessarily retaliatory. Among the public, the (faulty) notion that an inmate deserves any kind of sexual abuse stems from classical criminology's idea of "Let the punishment fit the crime" and the Code of Hammurabi's "an eye for an eye" principle (Siegel 9). These ideologies may have served as guiding thoughts for sentencing, but they also encourage a vengeful view toward convicted criminals. While explicit sexual assault may never appear in a judge's sentencing for a person charged with a crime, many in the public sphere echo feelings of indifference when it occurs. As viewers become conditioned to the image of a criminal as deserving of his sexual assault, their sensitivity to such issues becomes minimized, thus encouraging viewers to watch this violence with little to no empathy toward its reality.

In addition to the public's apathy toward the treatment of incarcerated people, toxic masculinity's prioritization of a man's power suggests a connection between one's sexual assault and lost masculinity. Homophobia, and the bias it brings, instills in men the belief that any weakness may be read as effeminate, thus magnifying the (false) meaning behind one's sexual assault. Helen Eigenberg and Agnes Baro write, "Rape itself is used to convey power—the power to take what one wants including another person's body" (74). According to this view, for a hyper-masculine, "macho" man, sexual assault becomes the worst form of emasculation, showing that he lacked the strength to protect his body. Society shapes men to believe that admitting to being raped is admitting weakness, therefore "justif[ing] their victimization" because "a real man [would] stand up and fight" (Fleisher and Krienert 96-98). Due to these perceptions, many men avoid coming forward about their experiences. Sexual assault is already underreported by all, but the stigma created by toxic masculinity heightens the problem for men. Rather than confronting the reality of sexual violence toward men as a concern, media opts to use these insecurities as punchlines or plot points. *American History X* illustrates this through its handling of protagonist Derek Vinyard's rape as his moral proving ground while denying its emotional significance. *American History X*'s use of the prison rape trope shows the influence and tension of cultural attitudes toward sexual violence despite the legal call for reform.

#PrisonChangedMe: American History X's Climactic, Transformative Rape Scene

As shown in this paper, cinematic depictions of prisons offer concentrated spaces for grappling with ideas about male rape and victimization. These depictions mirror and influence the broader societal views on male sexual assault. Although Fleisher and Krienert dispute the pervasiveness

of sexual assault in prisons, they admit that the "barrage of pop media visualizations of violent prison rapes" continues to instill fear in new inmates (56). Clearly, as seen in inmates' shared anxieties about prison rape, these fictional films blur the lines between imagination and reality. Many prison films offer prescriptive ideas about justice and morality in addition to their descriptive portrayals of prisons' violent environments. Peter Caster expounds on this in *Prison, Race, and Masculinity in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Film*: "Despite their differences of genre and media, these are all representations of crime and punishment shaped by imagination, but invested in operating in historical terms, drawing relationships between fiction and actuality" (2). Caster hits on a relevant point for many shows: regardless of the degree of intended fantasy or realism, film serves as a constructed space for creators to work through ideas about real topics. Within *American History X*, white supremacist, heteronormative ideals frame the "imagination" of its creators and viewers, encouraging a belief in prison rape as a sign of lost masculinity and a man's ultimate punishment.

Released in 1998, director Tony Kaye's film *American History X* employs the trope of imminent and life-changing prison rape to accomplish its moral thrust of teaching about the futility of white supremacy and racism. *American History X* offers a gritty depiction of protagonist Derek Vinyard's experiences—including his father's murder, his introduction to the white supremacist Skinheads gang, and his killing of two black men—that lead up to his conviction, reform, and release from prison. By sharing his ordeal with his younger brother, Danny, Derek hopes to save him from making similar mistakes. The film's narrative and formal structure draw out and reinforce a connection between Derek's immoral acts and punishment for those actions. The movie's mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing combine to pair events, provide narration, and foreshadow key moments. Specifically, the editing compresses the time between injustice and punishment to heighten the causal relationship. For example, while Derek is being arrested for committing murder, he proudly stands in the center of a medium shot that shows a clear image of his rippling muscles and racist tattoos (*American History X* 00:55:26-00:55:57). The film juxtaposes this image against Derek's rape scene, where a similarly spaced shot shows Derek's body as it is being abused by others (01:25:40-01:25:44). Throughout the film, Kaye calls viewers to consider the connection between crime and punishment, thus illustrating the popular belief that one cannot exist without the other and justifying Derek's prison rape.

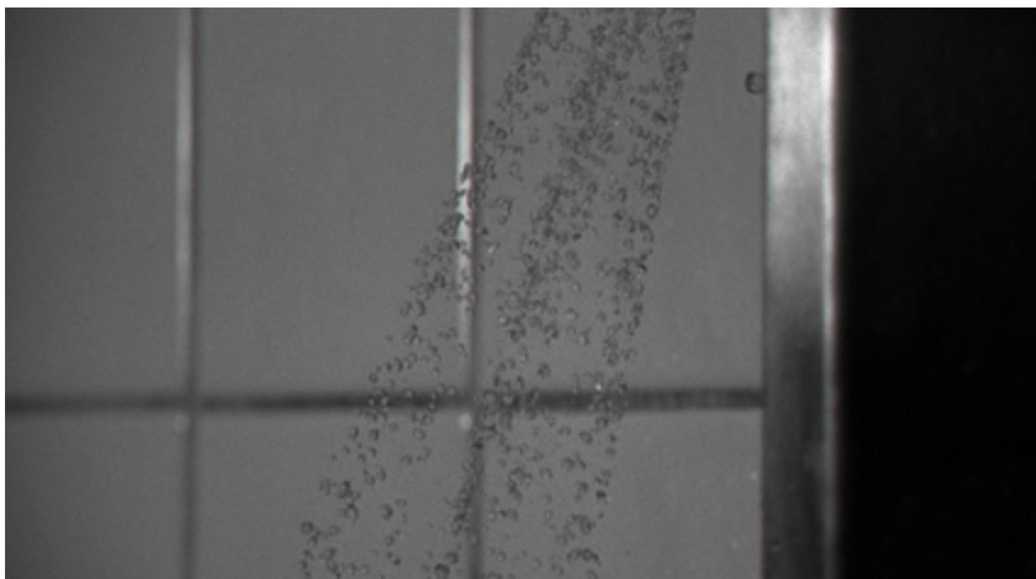
(Figure 1: Protagonist Derek Vinyard's arrest for murder. *American History X* 00:55:25)

Film critics have consistently read Derek's rape scene as a space that violently foregrounds Derek's experience with rape-as-punishment over the dehumanizing crime that places him in prison in the first place. The mise-en-scène in this moment enables it to be "watchable in a way that his crime is not," thus allowing "Derek's victimization by white supremacy [to be] more narratively significant than the victimization of the black man he killed" (Caster, *Prisons, Race, and Masculinity* 124). The film's cinematography intensely captures the murder scene—from Derek's wielding of the hand gun to his infliction of another man's death by curb stomping— yet remains more discreet when others inflict sexual harm on Derek. This decision creates a hierarchy that protects Derek from shame and leaves some of his dignity intact. By focusing on Derek's experience over the murdered black men's, *American History X* shows an unequal valuation of white experiences.

(Readers should be aware that this paragraph analyzes a scene of sexual violence.) Within the extended black and white flashback from Derek's time in prison, the actual rape scene takes place in under two minutes (01:25:06-01:26:48). Many cinematic elements cue viewers in to Derek's fate—"a gradually emptying shower, the disappearance of the lone guard from the scene, and more of the camera's adoring gaze, [and] the slow motion of Derek's naked skin" (Caster, *Prisons, Race, and Masculinity* 124). The editing cuts quickly, forcing viewers to keep

their eyes fixed on the screen while four men hold each of Derek's limbs against the wall and another begins the act of anal penetration. Intercut within the medium long shots that show Derek from behind, close ups of Derek's face portray the amount of pain being experienced as he grimaces and groans while the offender thrusts forcefully and stiffly. Ultimately, the cinematography's goal of holding viewers' attention both seeks to draw viewers in for the movie's climax while also creating a space for sexual interactions to be closely observed.

The abrupt cuts against the discordant music and flowing water create a scene that denotes power over another. While Derek showers and the space slowly empties, the music—long, low, and drawn out with interspersed high notes—builds on top of the steady rhythm of the water coming from the showerhead. The mixing of these diegetic and nondiegetic sounds aims to compel viewers to remain present and in suspense with Derek. The added underscoring in this scene furthers the feeling of powerlessness as Derek lacks the ability to fight back and viewers are intended to become unable to pull their eyes from the screen. Throughout the assault, the music continues to build behind the diegetic sounds of grunting, verbal fighting, and skin on skin jostling. Once the offender finishes, the music likewise comes to an abrupt halt, leaving Derek alone in silence. In this silence, the magnitude and bleakness of Derek's situation echo throughout the frame. Rape's use as a means of asserting power over another traces back to research from the late twentieth century in which researchers agreed that rape was "an expression of dominance and control" (Kunzel 170). In a similar manner that the music is meant to hold viewers' unyielding attention during this scene, Derek's assailants place him in a state of powerlessness that is magnified by the sound effects. Just as the silence at the end of the scene depicts a lack of sound, so Derek's rape represents a lack of control and masculinity.



(Figure 2: Water flowing from the showerhead within the prison. American History X 01:26:14)

In the same way in which culture presents rape narratives for women victims as self-inflicted and avoidable, Derek's rape in *American History X* places the blame on him, making it a justified punishment. While women receive punishment for their assumed promiscuity or for seducing men, men are punished extralegally for a social offense. To fully learn and grow, Derek must experience sexual victimization because his three-year prison sentence is considered insufficient. Rather than approaching Derek's assault with the posture of support or sympathy that beckons a "rape is never your fault" perspective, the movie pushes viewers toward apathy. As seen in *American History X*, Derek's assault was never expected to be a formal punishment for his crimes, yet no one—including the prison guard—made an effort to put an end to it. Ultimately, the rape is in Derek's hands: had he not committed a crime, he never would have been in prison, and in order to finally leave a changed person, he must undergo the ultimate hardship—emasculation by rape.

Derek's sexual assault as an act of power and retaliation operates under the shared understanding that a man should not allow himself to become subject to such abuse. This standard reflects toxic masculinity's connection between aggression and power, forcing a weak and effeminate view of Derek because of his assault. The rape scene—brutal, unfair, and undeserved—serves no other purpose than to propel Derek's plea for help due to his assumed

weakness. *American History X* contributes to toxic masculinity's inherent issues, which argue that a "'*real man*' cannot be raped or would fight to the death before he was raped," which Derek fails to do (Eigenberg and Baro 65). In casting Edward Norton as lead, the character of Derek Vinyard comes to life with rippling muscles, tattoos, and an intensely observant gaze. The film continually constructs Derek as a hypermasculine figure—from its opening sequence of Derek's rough sex with his girlfriend to his victorious basketball game between the Skinheads and black youth (*American History X* 00:02:11-00:03:18 and 00:17:10-00:22:32). This image of Derek as unbeatably strong and cocky builds, leaving his opponents questioning what could possibly happen to destroy his white masculine identity. Derek's rape as punishment depends on this hypermasculinity. In this interaction, both the offenders and the victim acknowledge the significance of the assault: that the involuntary penetration of one man by another shows the victim as a lesser man. Eigenberg and Baro's survey of popular prison films reinforces this through their findings: "There appears to be no other reason for these scenes except to convey this "*real man*" message" (65). Because Derek becomes subjected to such assault and stripped of his masculine power, he finally admits his weakness and need for help.

As a narrative tool, *American History X* perpetuates the convention of rape as the motivating factor for a man to change his ways by situating Derek's assault as the climax of his prison experience and the end of his neo-Nazi beliefs. Once Derek's assault ends and he is left alone, the frame shows close ups of Derek's white supremacist tattoos and pooling blood, ending on a full body shot of him naked and lying helplessly on the shower floor. This scene dissolves into the next, where high school teacher, Mr. Sweeney, walks into the medical ward to visit Derek, who is now stitched up on a bed. Mr. Sweeney's visit with Derek enables him to reconsider his approach to handling pain with the question, "Has anything you've done made your life better?" (*American History X* 01:29:19-01:29:21). The forced recognition of his misplaced blame and anger ultimately prompt Derek's change, but without the climactic rape scene, Derek still would not have been willing to listen to such reasoning. Derek's prison rape positions him in a "hellish place that paradoxically proves transformative, man-making, and redemptive," thus making his experience fundamentally worthwhile (Caster, "I Learned Prison" 112). Derek supports this notion when he replies to Danny's apology; after Danny says he is "sorry that happened to" him, Derek replies, "Nah, I'm not. I'm lucky. I feel lucky 'cause it's wrong, Danny" (*American History X* 01:34:58-01:35:05). Derek's acceptance and gratitude for

his sexual victimization encourages the belief that prison rape is a normal and necessary means for criminals to undergo significant change.

(Figure 3: Derek lying on the shower floor following his assault. *American History X* 01:26:41)

(Figure 4: Derek describing his prison experiences and why he is grateful for them to Danny. *American History X* 01:35:40)

In order to uphold a coherent view of Derek as a masculine figure, the film needs to carefully balance the extent of vulnerability, emotion, and rebounding shown by Derek. This approach differs from #MeToo, which encourages women in their vulnerability and courage to share their experiences. Toxic masculinity fails to allow such space for men like Derek Vinyard as shown in how *American History X* ambiguously handles Derek's confession of his victimization. Through the flashback, viewers understand that Derek confides in Danny about his time in prison to deter him from a life of criminality, yet the film remains unclear about whether Derek shares this with Mr. Sweeney. Immediately after the shot of Derek's assaulted body fades, the next scene with Mr. Sweeney's visit to Derek begins, showing Derek on a hospital bed with a stitched face. Few words are spoken between the two, and the brief scene fades as Derek sobs and wonders how he ended up in his position. The camera returns to a calmer Derek talking to Mr. Sweeney about Danny and the misdirection of his hurt (01:27:40-01:29:21). The film never explicitly notes whether Derek has shared his trauma with Mr. Sweeney, but details like the needed "six stitches" intend to lead the audience to assume that these are from the aggressive anal penetration. Between this and Derek's emotional outpouring with Mr. Sweeney, one can assume that Derek had shared his experience. However, the film's ambiguity on this detail perpetuates the difficulty that men face in coming forward about their victimizations. In a society that values strength and stoicism, Derek's emotional response breaks the norms. Rather than validating Derek's courageous decision to share his experiences, director Kaye simply uses it as a practical means for the plot, and thereby ignores the emotional complexities.

(Figure 5: Derek with Dr. Sweeney in the infirmary. *American History X* 01:27:30)

Media depictions rely on prison rape narratives for a variety of reasons. Some seek an easily elicited laugh through the "Don't drop the soap" one-liner, while other forms incorporate a victim's sexual assault as a means of motivating change. Regardless of their purposes within specific media outlets, the widespread use of sexual violence as a plot point negates the complicated, lived experiences of victims and "contribute[s] to a social structure that has come to accept, perhaps even endorse, that rape is part and parcel of the incarceration experience" (Eigenberg and Baro 87). Through its use of rape as a motivating factor in Derek's changed trajectory, *American History X* simultaneously centers on white heteronormativity and plays with the fear of lost masculinity. Derek's rape—mechanical, emotionless, and retaliatory—is understood as stripping him of the power and strength that many associate with masculinity. Serving as Derek's ultimate punishment, this assault fails to grapple with the emotional trauma that accompanies such experiences in favor of an easy plot point for a gruesomely attractive narrative.

The use of the rape-as-punishment trope in *American History X* not only serves as a "just desserts" view of sexual assault in prison, but it also manipulates whose experiences are being shown. The #MeToo Movement originated from Burke's desire to provide resources to "Black women and girls and other young women of color from low wealth communities"—people whom society often neglects (*#MeToo*). Derek, on the other hand—the privileged, white, and

physically strong lead—becomes the visible representation of a crime that happens to less visible groups of people. However, even though *American History X* portrays such a crime, this act only matters because it happens to the white, male lead, therefore negating the experiences of more vulnerable groups. Derek's characterization depends on a view of him as aggressive and cocky toward women and black men—a character whose apathy toward others results from his learned supremacist ideals. Derek asserts his physical and gendered dominance over his girlfriend in the opening sequences when they engage in rough sex (*American History X* 00:02:11-00:03:18). Although the film positions viewers to assume that she enjoys it, Derek's hardened character begs the question: would he even care otherwise? Because of society's general acceptance of a dominant male within heterosexual relationships, Derek's treatment of his girlfriend goes unquestioned; viewers are not meant to feel uncomfortable until other men subject Derek to the same treatment. Derek's role reversal with male perpetrators aims to disturb viewers based on society's discomfort and prejudice against homosexual acts. Yet in all of this, Derek's experience as a man who has realized his worst fear (rape by another man) becomes foregrounded, so that *American History X*'s use of rape to recuperate a white supremacist hinges on society's homophobia and erasure of others' experiences.

#CrewsInTheNews: Terry Crews and His #MeToo Backlash

While *American History X* provides a focused and fictional space that reflects the homophobic fear of men being viewed as feminine, thereby defining what constitutes a "real man," and how to punish him, many contemporary instances demonstrate the reality of being a male sexual assault survivor in such a culture. In October 2017 while on the set of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, actor Terry Crews tweeted his #MeToo story of being groped by executive Adam Venit while at a party. Thousands of men and women supported Crews's vulnerability and even felt compelled to share their experiences. However, amid the overwhelming encouragement, other notable figures like 50 Cent and D. L. Hughley called Crews's masculinity into question. In an interview, Hughley remarked, "it's hard for me to think that a dude with all those muscles can't tell an agent to not touch [him]" (qtd. by Chiu). Attitudes like Hughley's are exactly what Crews seeks to fight against. In his work to end toxic masculinity and create spaces for men to bravely share their experiences, Crews acknowledges, "I proved that size doesn't matter when it comes to sexual assault" (Crews qtd. by Gander). Crews's example shows the stakes involved when toxic

masculinity collides with #MeToo and how movies like *American History X* subtly bolster such issues.

The backlash against Crews exemplifies toxic masculinity's belief that a man should defend himself against sexual violence at all costs, which is also prevalent in *American History X*. Comedian D. L. Hughley asserts that an appropriate response to Crews's assault would have been to "slap the shit outa him" (qtd. by Chiu). Inherent in Hughley's interview about Crews is his "disbelief that a man as intimidating and large as Crews, a 240-pound former NFL player, had failed to ward off unwanted contact" (Chiu). Hughley's belief reinforces the "notion that a '*real man*'…would fight to the death before he was raped" (Eigenberg and Baro 65). Rather than supporting men like Crews for sharing their experiences, Hughley, celebrities, and viewers place the blame on the victim, in what Crews describes as the "male version of 'What was she wearing?'" (qtd. by Gander). By calling into question the victim's actions (or lack of), the blame unjustly shifts from the perpetrator to the victim. Both women and men experience dismissive questioning and inappropriately placed blame in response to their experiences, but the type of criticism differs depending on gender. While both reactions challenge the victim's character, this occurs along different lines and creates feelings of shame. Derek's motivated change results from the shame he feels after being victimized and the idea of lost masculinity just like Hughley's claims hinge on the belief that one's assault is a sign of personal weakness.

Notably, Crews admits that an initial reaction was to punch the offending Venit, yet he resisted because doing so would only escalate the situation, pose a threat to Crews's future employment, and perpetuate the cycle of toxic masculinity. Within what Crews describes as "the cult of toxic masculinity," macho men are celebrated for their physical strength and aggression (qtd. by Petrucci). However, Crews recognized the double-edged sword of this belief in his understanding that "'240 lbs. Black Man stomps out Hollywood Honcho' would be the headline the next day" (qtd. by Chiu). In addition to not wanting to lose everything for which he had worked, Crews also exemplified his desire to move away from the patterns of toxic masculinity that he had witnessed as a kid. In an interview with Kashmira Gander for *Newsweek*, Crews relays his "earliest memory…of his father repeatedly punching his mother in the face as hard as he could." Crews discussed how he absorbed many of the same toxic masculinity-driven ideas from his father and "look[ed] the other way" among his "card-carrying" NFL teammates (qtd. by Rothman). Crews's change of heart initially started from his fear of going to jail or losing his

career, yet now he seeks "to help others change what it means to be a man" (qtd. by Rothman).

A tension in *American History X* and Crews's experience involves the (dis)allowance for a man to vulnerably tell his story. In sharing his experience, Crews explains how he understood the amount of courage required by fellow survivors of assault to finally speak up—while many women are "dismissed…as gold diggers and attention seekers…I knew that even *I* was quiet about what I had been through" (qtd. by Gander). Derek Vinyard's ambiguous confession to Mr. Sweeney about his assault in *American History X* reflects Crews's acknowledgment that "everyone…depended on my silence, they depended on me being ashamed and feeling I'd be viewed as less than a man" (Crews qtd. by Gander). Through the pressures placed on men to appear emotionally hard, offenders escape accountability. By silencing men through a culture of shame, their stories of abuse remain unheard. Toxic masculinity's creation of a shame culture—a culture that invalidates others' lived experiences—prevents all survivors of sexual abuse from sharing their stories, yet as shown in *American History X* and by Terry Crews, the stakes are heightened for men.

However, the mutual reluctance to share their experiences is where the resemblance ends between *American History X* and Terry Crews. While *American History X* gives a clear offense-punishment dynamic in its use of the rape-for-punishment trope, Crews disrupts that narrative. *American History X*'s rape narrative hinges on the understanding that Derek's rape is a justified punishment, whereas Crews experience is completely unwarranted; Crews's backlash comes from his lack of retaliation or use of force to prevent his assault. *American History X* does not merely serve as a reflection of Crews's experience; the movie reinforces attitudes like Hughley's. The film's representation of ideals for how a "real man" should act creates the conditions for how people respond to Crews. As a hypermasculine figure, viewers are meant to see Derek as someone who would never allow such a sexual offense to happen to him in the first place, yet when it occurs, Derek requires four men to restrain him (*American History X* 01:25:06-01:26:48). Hughley contends that an appropriate response from Crews, who was forced to accept his assault to avoid causing a messy scene, would have been to retaliate violently against his assaulter; however, society's notions of masculinity conflict for men of color like Crews in a way that it does not for Derek. As a white man, Derek's machismo thrives off his toughness and physical superiority. Yet black men receive contradictory calls to display their masculinity through hardness while also being careful to not come across as violent black men. Crews's

conflicting experience with these intersectional identities exhibits a conflict of ideologies that *American History X* reinforces in a harmful way.

A final distinction between *American History X* and Crews includes their differing responses to their sexual assaults. While Derek's experience motivates him to renounce his white supremacist ways and protect his younger brother, Crews's experience mobilized him to advocate on behalf of fellow survivors. In prison, Derek's mother and Mr. Sweeney warn him about the destructive path that his younger brother Danny is on—a path that had been blazed by Derek and spurred on by their shared prejudice and hatred. Closely mentored by the Skinheads's leader, Danny proves to be an influential, rising member of the white supremacist group. The movie creates a parallel between the two brothers, encouraging viewers to partner with Derek in his urgency to change Danny's attitudes and prevent him from experiencing the same assault (Caster, *Prison, Race, and Masculinity* 122). While Derek is inwardly focused on himself and his immediate family, Crews turns his focus outward to grow his empathy for others and seek justice. Since coming forward with his #MeToo experience, Crews has sought to "'dig a tunnel with a spoon'"—that is, Crews hopes that by coming forward as a male survivor, he can encourage others to realize that they, too, can find support in speaking up (qtd. by Gander). Crews's advocacy extends beyond other men of color as he recognizes the distinct barriers and responses to men and women survivors and the influences of toxic masculinity. Moving forward, Crews continues to use his testimony while he presses onward with his goal of creating change that starts "with one guy, two guys, three guys" (qtd. by Gander).

#TL;DR: In Conclusion

As addressed throughout this essay, the trope of prison rape relies on *and* perpetuates an already constructed idea of masculinity. Ongoing ideas about what it means for one to be a "real man" influence the film culture of *American History X*, thereby "shap[ing] our expectations, ideas, and understanding" of the movie (Corrigan and White 14). *American History X* reinforces toxic masculinity's beliefs about how a man should carry himself through protagonist Derek Vinyard's hypermasculine characterization and response to his sexual assault. The movie relies on the public's dehumanizing views of criminals as worthy of such treatment, toxic masculinity's ideals for men, and homophobia's discomfort with homosexual acts. While Derek's experience serves its goal of motivating moral change, the rape relies on toxic masculinity's call for emotional

stoicism and manly power to fully emasculate and shame Derek, who could not maintain such standards.

This same logic plays out in daily life—inside and outside prison walls—as seen in Terry Crews's case. Crews poignantly describes the stigma of being a male survivor of sexual assault and facing the continual disbelief from others that such an act could happen to him. *American History X* and Crews both discuss the "feelings of shame" that surround male sexual assault and the blame that is unjustly placed on the survivors. However, *American History X* relies on the offense-punishment dynamic of Derek's rape and implicitly perpetuates the backlash received by Crews. Celebrities like Hughley criticize Crews for not reacting outwardly following his assault; this judgment stems from the idea that "a real man [would] stand up and fight" at all costs to avoid such an emasculating attack (Fleisher and Krienert 96-98). Yet the intersection of Crews's identity as black man creates a conflict between toxic masculinity's call for him to assert his male dominance through force while also protecting himself from being unfairly labeled as a violent black man. Terry Crews demonstrates that sexual assault is not limited to a particular gender, sex, or body type and that there is still more work to do in advocating for sexual assault survivors and ending toxic masculinity.

Thirteen years following Tarana Burke's founding of the #MeToo Movement, Terry Crews and many others continue to advocate on behalf of sexual assault survivors with the goal of "helping those who need it to find entry points for individual healing and galvanizing a broad base of survivors to disrupt the systems that allow for the global proliferation of sexual violence" (*#MeToo*). #MeToo has not only provided a platform for many to find solidarity among other survivors, it has also helped "reframe and expand the global conversation around sexual violence to speak to the needs of a broader spectrum of survivors" (*#MeToo*). This "global conversation" and "national dialogue" has created space for people to reconsider the definitions, policies, and enforcement of sexual assault, rape, and consent. Additionally, #MeToo has also brought renewed awareness of toxic masculinity's hindrance to creating change. While this moment of the #MeToo Movement is not the end—as more work for more invisible groups of people remains—Burke and many other courageous survivors have forged a space for such conversations and transformation to begin.

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Re:Search

"The Mirror of Your Words:" Desire and Identity in Saariaho's and Maalouf's *L'amour de loin*

Matthew Reeder, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

In 1999, the Finnish-French composer Kaija Saariaho and the Lebanese-French writer Amin Maalouf teamed up to create *L'amour de loin* ("Love from Afar"), premiered in 2000. The work quickly became a sensation, and is still being performed frequently, most notably in December 2016 as the first opera written by a woman to be performed at the Metropolitan Opera since 1903. The plot is based on the life of the medieval troubadour-prince, Jaufré Rudel, famous for his poetry detailing his desire for his "love from afar." His *vida*, or legendary biography, tells that as he sailed to Tripoli to meet the woman he thought was his "love from afar," he fell ill, and, upon reaching Tripoli, died in her arms. While the work has generated a decent amount of academic discussion, that discussion has so far failed to comment on the connection between the processes of identification and desire within *L'amour de loin*. Perhaps no theorist has explored this connection more deeply than the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. In this paper, I trace the connection between desire and identification throughout *L'amour de loin*. Finally, I try to contextualize this work within the overwhelming body of culture exploring the connection between desire and identity, as well as comment on the Lacanian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's exploration of this connection as it relates to the presence of courtly love structures in contemporary popular culture.

KEYWORDS

Kaija Saariaho, Amin Maalouf, Opera, Desire, Identification, Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, Courtly Love

Introduction

On December 1, 2016, the Metropolitan Opera performed its first opera composed by a woman since 1902. This was a momentous occasion in the still heavily male-dominated world of classical music, especially since the Met also hired Susanna Mälkki to conduct, who is only the fourth woman to conduct at the house in its history. Many people view this occasion as a sign of change for classical music and opera, both of which are heavily entrenched in their standard repertories of works predominantly by dead white men. With a libretto by the French-Lebanese writer and music composed by the French-Finnish composer, Kaija Saariaho, L'amour de loin, or "Love from Afar" has become something of a sensation since its premiere at the Salzburg Festival in 2000. It has been performed at many of the world's most prestigious opera houses in Paris, Santa Fe, Helsinki, Darmstadt, Quebec, New York, Brussels, London, Berlin, Tokyo, Linz, Brno and a handful of other cities (Calico 340). This is remarkable, as most newly-composed operas are lucky to get as many as one performance beyond the premiere; the sheer number of performances serves as a testament to the work's value, immediacy, and importance.

In addition to the performance sphere, the work has generated a fair amount of discourse in the academic world, most of it musical-theoretical and musicological. Unfortunately, what is perhaps the most prominent theme of the opera, the connection between the processes of identification and desire, has not yet been adequately discussed, as the bulk of this research has not been concerned with narratology. Furthermore, the literary analysis of opera is somewhat limited when compared to the study of poetry, prose and film. The connection between identity and desire has probably been most profoundly developed in the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Although extremely influential to literary studies, especially cinema studies, Lacan's theory has not taken the same hold in studying music or opera. There is, however, a small yet growing body of work, spearheaded by the Lacanian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek. In this paper, I will first give brief introductions to the opera's plot and the work of Jacques Lacan, and then a more detailed analysis of three crucial moments in the opera. Finally, I will bring a bit of the work of Žižek present, namely, his expansion of Lacan's analysis of courtly love to more broadly contextualize the work and conclude upon the concepts discussed here. Here I attempt to trace the processes of desire and identification within the opera and ultimately demonstrate that desire and identification are not two discrete processes, but tightly interwoven.

Now has come the time to explain the story of the piece. The three main characters are Jaufré Rudel, the troubadour-prince of Blaye, sung by a baritone; the Pilgrim, sung by a mezzo-soprano; and Clémence, the Countess of Tripoli, sung by a soprano. The piece uses male and female choirs, which represent the inhabitants of Tripoli and Blaye, respectively. The opera opens with Jaufré, having grown weary of his life of luxury and womanizing. He imagines his ideal woman as “beautiful without the arrogance of beauty, noble without the arrogance of nobility, and pious, without the arrogance of piety” and begins to sing only of her, yearning for his perfect love (Saariaho and Maalouf 347). His companions deride him, telling him that she does not exist. The Pilgrim arrives and tells Jaufré that such a woman does exist, and that she lives in Tripoli. The Pilgrim sails to Tripoli, where he tells the Countess about Jaufré, his love for her, and that she is the woman in his songs. At first offended and outraged, the Countess softens, flattered when the Pilgrim sings one of Jaufré’s songs to her. Highly nostalgic for her homeland, the Countess soon begins to doubt if she is worthy of the poet’s praise.

Back at Blaye, the Pilgrim tells Jaufré that the Countess adores his songs. Jaufré is at first angry, then resolves to meet her, so that she will hear his songs from his own lips. In Tripoli, the women question Clémence and warn her not to get too emotionally involved with the troubadour. Clémence responds that she is perfectly content with the distance, as she doubts she would love the poet as she loves the man. Jaufré and the Pilgrim set sail for Tripoli, and as they approach the city, Jaufré becomes ill, and his health declines as they reach the harbor. He and Clémence profess their love for one another, and he dies in her arms. Clémence laments the loss of her love, and rails against heaven for having taken him from her. She has a sudden change of heart, decides to join a convent, and lifts up a final prayer to her love from afar, though it is ambiguous whether she is praying to Jaufré or to God (Saariaho and Maalouf 375).

Before we begin analysis, it will be necessary to have some groundwork in Lacanian theory. Perhaps the most important facet of Lacan’s theory is his conception of the self. According to Lacan, the fully conscious, intelligent, coherent, intentioned view of the self put forth by Descartes and expanded upon by later philosophy is an illusion. He credits Freud for undermining this construction with his id-ego-superego model, and suggests that even the ego is itself a fiction (Écrits 801). (It should be noted here that Lacan considered himself a re-interpreter of Freud and considered his work merely a “return to Freud” (431).) For Lacan, starting in infancy, when a child sees an its reflection in a mirror, it misrecognizes that image as

itself, and assumes an ego, an "I." We continue to keep this "specular image" of ourselves throughout life, when in reality, we are what he calls, "the subject of the unconscious" (94, 524). (This identification with an image will be extremely important with Clémence later.) The word "subject" both refers to the grammatical subject of a sentence and to the sense that people who are ruled are "subjects." That he denotes the "subject" with the letter "s" is also significant, as "s" is pronounced "es," which sounds as the German word for "it." Freud used this word to denote the id), aligning the self with the id, or with desire and the unconscious (765). The next concept is that of the "Other." The other (miniscule "o") denotes someone who can be grouped with the subject (and often becomes an object of desire), and the Other (majuscule) represents another subject who cannot be assimilated by identification. Though the Other often takes the form of the Father (or sometimes even society, as it is related to the superego), it really is in the realm of language and the Law. Thus, the subject is thrust into a world built upon language, which does not belong to the subject, but to the Other (814). In addition, the subject is always reduced to representation by signifiers, which is to say that the subject is alway erased by elements of language, which belong to the Other (801). The subject is always bound between its attempt to identify itself and to escape the power of the Other.

Desire, according to Lacan, is constant. From the loss of the real (the world of infancy) due to entrance into the symbolic (language), there is always residue left over which cannot be accommodated by language (The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis 280). This loss and the leftovers lead to a never-ending, never-fulfilled process of desire. The objet a (minuscule "a" referring to the other) is this leftover substance (282). For Lacan, this becomes what a person loves in someone else (268). That is, we attach the cause of our desire, an unattainable object, in other people in love (this will prove quite salient in the opera). Desire is a process of misrecognizing thing after thing (or person) as a missing substance, left over from the process of symbolization. Thus, desire is metonymic—it is a constant process of trying to connect different things (or people) with this loss, and by taking these objects, force them to take on the leftovers from symbolization, thereby taking a part for the whole (Écrits 516). And yet, desire is also caught up in the Other. We seek validation from the Other and crave confirmation of our existence as subjects from the Other, and we want to be recognized by the Other. Yet, we also want to determine our own being. For Lacan, love exists "somewhere in the Other, from which the Other sees me, in the form I like to be seen" (Four Fundamental Concepts 268). That

is, in love, a person asks for not only recognition from the Other, but also loves an idealized version of their own sense of self.

Finally, desire is also connected to the subject's position as a subject, as it is often a method by which the subject receives affirmation of their own existence (from the Other) as a subject in the symbolic. Lacan sums this up with the formulation, "man's desire is the desire of the Other" (Écrits 690). As the word "de" in French here indicates both "of" and "for," this sentence intentionally has several possibilities for its meaning. It means first that we desire what the Other desires, which sets us up to look for confirmation of our desire by the Other. Second, this sentence also suggests that our desire is to be desired by the Other. (In both cases, the Other can be replaced with an other). Desire is tied to the recognition of our position as subjects. These formulations will be especially important in the relationship between Clémence and Jaufré.

L'amour de loin

Here I analyze three crucial moments in the opera: the moment Jaufré constructs his "distant love" and learns that she exists; the moment Clémence hears of Jaufré's existence and his songs, and her subsequent response; and finally, the moment Jaufré dies in Clémence's arms, and Clémence's reaction.

First known as a womanizer and drunk, Jaufré becomes dissatisfied with his life. His friends, voiced by the male chorus, and often unseen in productions, deride him for his change of heart. That the chorus is offstage, and not visible, gives the chorus a superegoic function; the voice of the chorus becomes the voice of the superego inserting itself into Jaufré's consciousness. (This construction will become even more evident in the analysis of Clémence.) He decides to devote his life to the desire of a perfect woman.

Jaufré's desire helps define and express his new identity When the chorus or superego accuses him of "no longer wanting a woman in [his] arms", Jaufré replies that he does, but that she is far away, and his "arms will never close themselves around her" (357). It is interesting that the chorus/superego is asking (the force hounding him is essentially his internalized societal expectations). That is, what he believes society expects of him is causing him to question and further flesh out his desire, so he feels that he must create his object of desire for the satisfaction of society. To state it more plainly, he is looking for confirmation of his existence as a subject

by societal affirmation of his desire.

As the chorus asks him to describe such a woman, Jaufré lists several unattainable and contradictory qualities which she must have: “courageous yet timid, tough yet fragile / a princess with the heart of a peasant, peasant with the heart of a princess” (Saariaho and Maalouf 357). These unattainable qualities perhaps exist for a reason: Jaufré really wants the continuation of his desire, not actual companionship, so he constructs an ideal vision of femininity which he can never hope to find in a living human being. Jaufré’s desire is like the drive—its aim is not satisfaction, but recapitulation (Four Fundamental Concepts 179). At this point, he says that the woman “will sing [his] songs in a passionate voice” (Saariaho and Maalouf 357). Jaufré wants the voice of the ideal woman to sing his songs; he wants the voice of the Other to speak through an other, and repeat the words that Jaufré himself had spoken/sung. Those words, extolling femininity and articulating his desire, as part of song/poetry, must be repeated exactly. In directly repeating Jaufré’s words, the Other confirms Jaufré’s desire and his sense of self. Thus, by wishing his object of desire, his ideal image of Woman, to repeat his own words, he is really calling to the Other for approval and love.

In the midst of this discussion, the Pilgrim appears. Jaufré is describing his ideal woman as “beautiful without the arrogance of beauty, noble without the arrogance of nobility, pious without the arrogance of piety” (Saariaho and Maalouf 357). (This phrase will be repeated several times throughout the opera, and will become the yardstick by which Clémence attempts to measure herself.) The chorus of Jaufré’s friends tells him that such a woman cannot and does not exist, yet the Pilgrim tells Jaufré that she does, and he (the Pilgrim) has met her. He describes her using the same phrase as Jaufré, and relates that as she walked to mass, “suddenly there was no one else but her, conversations fell to silence, every gaze was drawn to her like butterflies with powdery wings (Saariaho and Maalouf 358). Before she appears onstage, Clémence is an object of beauty for the male gaze, which the Pilgrim articulates to Jaufré. (The effect Clémence has on people as described by the Pilgrim should remind one of Mulvey’s work on the representation of women in cinema). Jaufré’s desire had no specific object, yet now the Pilgrim gives him one, and one who is an object of desire for many men. Jaufré begs the Pilgrim for more information, yet as the Pilgrim is about to utter Clémence’s name, Jaufré stops him. Clémence’s name is a signifier which represents and yet also erases her, just as any other name-signifier. If he were to know her name, he would lose power over the construction of his love-

object; he would instead misrecognize the signifier as her, and lose parts of her in the process, as a subject cannot be fully symbolized. Instead, Jaufré takes over from the Pilgrim the task of describing Clémence to fit his own desires.

Jaufré decides that Clémence has "hair so black and silky that at night one can no longer see it, one can only hear it like the rustling of leaves" (Saariaho and Maalouf 358). (It should be noted here that Dawn Upshaw, the soprano who created the role of Clémence, has light brown hair, and in the Deutsche Grammophon DVD recording of the opera, her hair is cut short, and does not look "silky." Thus, the image Jaufré has of Clémence is completely a construction, and does not represent the real Clémence.) Jaufré continues to create an ideal woman who can never exist in the world. He says of her hands, "her smooth hands flow like fresh water which I gather in my open palms; I bow down my head above them, just like above a fountain to drink, with my eyes closed" (Saariaho and Maalouf 359). In both of these examples, sight is removed, and the part-objects of the Woman are described through the other senses. As sight is removed, there can be no gaze from the other (or the Other), no point at which there is a gaze being returned to Jaufré. Lacan says what is "profoundly unsatisfying" about the gaze focused on the subject is that "you never look at me from the place from which I see you" (Four Fundamental Concepts 103, emphasis in original). That is, there is another presence sending out a gaze which the subject cannot account for in its own sight. This causes anxiety because this gaze has the power to turn the subject into an object or confirm the subject's position as a subject. The subject has no control over the outcome. This removal of sight gives Jaufré the feeling of being the sole subject and reduces the object of his desire from being another subject into being an object. In addition, it removes the gaze of the Other from the table. Though the gaze need not be exclusively visual, the removal of sight still breaks down the ideal Woman into individual parts to be desired and turns her into an object.

Jaufré continues, describing her lips as "another fresh spring which smiles and whispers comforting words, and which offers itself to a lover dying of thirst" (Saariaho and Maalouf 359). This connection with thirst and its satisfaction makes Jaufré's desire self-centered, as its satisfaction can only be fulfilled by an inhuman source to which Jaufré owes nothing. It should also be noted that the past two examples utilize imagery concerning bodies of water and stress the "flowing" nature of that water. The hair is said to essentially disappear as well. These three descriptions highlight the necessarily slippery nature of the object—when one tries to focus

one's gaze on the hair, it disappears from their grasp, just as water in a stream flows away. Though Jaufré describes the water as pooling in his hands, it is not possible to contain all the water; there is always so much that slips away from his grasp. That leftover part drives his desire but also stops it from being fulfilled, which prolongs his desire. Jaufré's desire is not centered on a person, or even aimed at being fulfilled, but is aimed at its own continuation.

Yet, Jaufré does not realize this; he needs someone to blame for the impossibility of the fulfillment of his desire. He externalizes this process and blames the Pilgrim, accusing the Pilgrim of "[giving him] a taste of the far-off spring, from which never, never, will I ever be able to drink" (Saariaho and Maalouf 359). Only a few minutes earlier, he was content to never know the object of his desire. He laments the separation, yet pledges himself to her, "Never will this far-off woman be mine, but I am hers for always, and I will never know any other woman" (359). Jaufré puts himself in a position of servitude to this woman he has constructed and will never know, and resigns himself to live alone in his desire. Jaufré identifies himself as a man in love, a man desiring, and decides that he belongs to the woman he loves, despite not knowing her. His identity is connected to that object of desire, as he is "hers." And yet, as he will never know her, his desire does not run the risk of being satisfied, so neither does his identity run the risk of being cut short. His identity is that of a subject subjected by desire into being in suppliant desire for an inaccessible object. His identity is his desire.

The other character exhibiting these processes of identification and desire is Clémence. Woefully homesick, Clémence is really looking to the Other for the confirmation of her existence as a subject. Forced to move at five years old from Toulouse to Tripoli so her family could rule, Clémence is lacking the confirmation of her identity from the Other; she says, "I still remember my childhood, but nothing of the world of my childhood remembers me…the land of my birth still breathes in me, but to it I am dead" (Maalouf and Saariaho 360). Her sense of identity is tied to Toulouse such that she needs a validation from the place to confirm her existence, or else she is "dead." Now, living away from her birthplace, she takes the position of an exile (though one in a position of privilege) yet still ties her identity to her birthplace, and not the region which is stated in her title, Countess of Tripoli. The melancholy is an attempt to take control of her identity. Clemence wants confirmation from Toulouse that she is where she belongs, and not Tripoli, from where she receives constant pressure to conform, and has this question of geographical identity forced upon her. Her attempt to be in control of and reclaim

her identity is an act of rebellion against the Other, both the Other in actuality, and as the residents of Tripoli.

The Pilgrim reveals that Jaufré knows of her existence and that he writes his songs about her. At first, Clémence is offended, yet flattered when she hears the Pilgrim sing one of Jaufré's songs. She of course knows that the image of her which Jaufré praises in his songs is merely an image, yet it concerns her, as this image is of a better person than she is:

> If this troubadour had known me well, would he have sung this song with such desire?... 'Beautiful without the arrogance of beauty'… Beautiful? Yet I look around constantly to see if any woman is more beautiful! 'Noble without the arrogance of nobility?' Yet I covet both the Occident and Orient, as if Providence was indebted to me! 'Pious without the arrogance of piety?' Yet I dress up in my finest clothing on the way to mass, and then kneel in church with an empty soul!
>
> Troubadour, I am only beautiful in the mirror of your words. (362)

Clémence realizes that the image she has put forth for society is empty and is merely a façade to hide her insecurities. She realizes that this image is of an impossibly good woman and does not reflect who she is. She presents a self to her society and is very concerned about keeping it up; she worries she is not beautiful or wealthy enough, and dresses herself (and her self) as opulently as possible to demonstrate her power and keep up her image. This image fits how she presents herself in society—beautiful, noble, and pious—but she cannot let society know that she is worried about her status. The defining feature of those three phrases is "without arrogance," which is how she must present herself as a Christian woman, because "without arrogance" suggests timidity and passivity. The disconnect between image and inner self is deeply unsettling to Clémence, however, and she tries to take on that "without arrogance" qualification in her private self. That Maaloouf chooses the word "mirror" here is also interesting—essentially Jaufré is giving her another specular image around which to assume an ego. And yet, to simply try to be that image would merely turn her into an object, or at least a being of lesser subjectivity than Jaufré. So she cannot simply be that vain creature she believes herself to be, yet also cannot be the specular image Jaufré puts forth for her. This game of identity dialectics will occupy her throughout the opera as she continues to juggle her own identity and the image of her which was created by Jaufré.

And yet she still is no longer yearning for confirmation of her existence from Toulouse.

Perhaps the biggest reason for this change is that she has also fallen in love with that idealized image of herself—the ego-ideal, or the best possible version of the self. That is that point "somewhere in the Other, from which the Other sees me, in the form I like to be seen" (Four Fundamental Concepts 268). And this is what Clémence gets through Jaufré's love for her—an idealized image of what she could be, and with which she can identify, though she cannot be it. When she states "Troubadour, I am only beautiful in the mirror of your words" (Saariaho and Maalouf 362), she is recognizing the ego-ideal for her put forth by Jaufré, and can hold onto that ego-ideal as a sort of self-recognition. When she returns in the third act, Clémence is reciting verses by Jaufré she has learned by heart. She even receives her wish expressed earlier; she states, "to know that over there, in my country, a man thinks of me, I suddenly feel close to the land of my childhood" (366). She has received confirmation of her existence, and through an other, not the Other, so she is not recognized as a subject of the system but rather as an individual worthy of love. Her desire is the desire of an other; she is able to love the image of herself made perfect by the love of Jaufré. She has received an image of herself to latch on to, and is then able to build her identity on that image. For Lacan, and for the opera, desire is linked to identity because what we love in love is the ego-ideal; as we desire/love we get an image of ourselves to love. That is the process with which Clemence is involved.

The final scene I analyze here is the interchange between Jaufré and Clémence before Jaufré dies, and Clémence's reaction. When Jaufré finally meets Clémence, he turns his thoughts toward praising God and the act of love, which is different for his character, as before, his object of praise was always Clémence. Now that he has been united with her, his praise and love must be reattached to someone (or something) unattainable. Jaufré is still the desirer of something unattainable. When the other characters lament the lack of time, and curse Love for their misfortune, Jaufré gently reproaches them. This prompts Clémence to say, "I would so much have wished to be a poetess and respond with words as beautiful as yours" (Maalouf and Saariaho 372). Jaufré responds, saying, "You are Beauty and I am nothing but the pond surface from where Beauty reflects itself" (372). Clémence's wish is for an equal poetic footing with Jaufré, and to create beauty in the way he does. Jaufré essentially says that Clémence even created the beauty of his words through her own beauty. Jaufré is not willing to give up the figure of the suppliant in love with the object when Clémence wishes for the opposite. Their identities are too closely tied to their desires for love to work, even if there was/had been time.

Jaufré asks Clémence if she would have loved him "as much as [he] loves her" and if she would say "I love you Jaufré" (Maalouf and Saariaho 372). She replies that she would, and Jaufré exclaims, "O Lord, forgive me, I have a new desire to live!" (372). Jaufré thinks he is able to transform his identity from that of a far-off lover to a "real" lover, and this gives him new life. And yet, the impossibility of their relationship is still present. Before, it was distance which separated them, and now it is time which prohibits their relationship. The Pilgrim merely observes, "if death were not so near, Jaufré…she would not have said 'I love you, Jaufré'" (373). That is, the fantasy would be dashed to the ground, and Jaufré would realize that Clémence does not fit the image of beauty which he has constructed, and Clémence would lose the ego-ideal she was able to find in Jaufré's songs. Jaufré finally gives up his desire (and his identity), asking, "I have all I desire. What else to ask from life?" (373). As his desire ends so does his life.

Clémence, at this point, still has desire, beseeching God to revive him, and exclaiming, "I hope still, O Lord, I hope still" (Saariaho and Maalouf 373). Clémence still desires Jaufré, but now she is less explicitly interested in the vision of herself he provided and desires the man back. When it is certain that Jaufré is dead, she then berates God for having taken Jaufré from her. This God is essentially the Other—the incomprehensible, unknowable, shadowy figure against whom the subject is constantly trying to define itself. The Other has taken her other, and Clémence rebels against everything. The superegoic voice of the chorus calls out to her, "silence, woman, your passion is leading you astray" (374). That the voice should call her "woman" is significant—it highlights her predicament, as she just lost the man who declared her the pinnacle of femininity—but more importantly, it stresses her lack of power to change her circumstance and de-subjectivizes her, erasing her subjectivity by classifying her. She continues her rant against the Other, and then turns it inward. In the place of the ego-ideal is now an object of self-loathing: "He believed he saw in me Clarity, yet I was nothing but the guardian of darkness" (374). Clémence takes responsibility for Jaufré's death, and then berates herself, deciding she is "no longer worthy of love" (374). She then decides to join a convent and finally becomes that image of perfection: she loses the arrogance connected with her beauty, nobility, and piety, and tries to be genuine.

And yet, desire does not leave her. The last five minutes of the opera become an extended monologue for Clémence, in the form of a prayer. Yet the addressee is deliberately left ambiguous—Clémence is addressing both God and Jaufré, as she extends the prayer to her "love

from afar" (Saariaho and Maalouf 375). Now the roles have been reversed. With Jaufré dead, Clémence becomes the one to project her love for a distant figure out into the world, and is no longer the object of desire. Clémence no longer identifies with an idealized image of herself, or with her homeland, but instead as the subject of desire, the position which Jaufré took. Clémence's desire for Jaufré turns into her identification with Jaufré; because she can no longer want Jaufré, she becomes him. This reversal of roles is even present in the music itself—the chord structure of Clémence's final monologue is almost identical to the one accompanying Jaufré when he first constructs the image of Clémence. Their roles and identities are reversed after Jaufré dies, just as their desires are. The identity-desires to which each adhered before are still present, but are interchanged. Thus, desire is still connected with identity.

Conclusions: Distance, Identity, and Courtly Love

It is appropriate to bring in a bit of the work of a later Lacanian theorist, Slavoj Žižek, at this point. (Though much of his work is problematic, here I simply bring his expansion of Lacan's arguments on courtly love for its lucidity.) In his article "Courtly Love, or Woman as Thing", Žižek lays out the ways in which courtly love works in a Lacanian framework. There is always the Knight, hopelessly in love with the cold and inaccessible Lady, who is an "inhuman partner" (Žižek 151). While the Lacanian analysis discusses the figure of the Woman in courtly love this way, Clémence's character does not fit the bill; the inaccessibility is more due to geographical distance than emotional distance. And yet, for Žižek (and Lacan by proxy), the Knight defines himself and his identity as in terms of an impossible desire for this figure of femininity whom he serves (151). Is this not the exact position in which Jaufré puts himself? Clémence, at the end, praying to her inaccessible god/love object also fits this description. And here is the crux of Žižek's argument: the "real" love we talk about happens when courtly love fails, and the object of desire returns our love (164). That is, the lover must become the loved one, and vice versa. Jaufré is the lover, sending out an image of his desire, and Clémence the loved one, receiving the ego-ideal and falling in love with it. They cannot exchange these roles as they are both still alive, so this identity-switch does not take place until after Jaufré dies.

And yet, this is tied to their inability to give up these identities. Jaufré spends the whole opera as the lover, and yet, when he decides to embark for Tripoli to meet Clémence, he immediately becomes ill, and grows worse as he gets closer to Clémence. If for Lacan, anxiety

is proximity to the love object (Four Fundamental Concepts, 41), it then makes sense that Jaufré grows ill on his voyage. As he gets closer to Clémence, the impossibility of fulfilling his desire weakens, or, to put it plainly, the fulfillment his desire becomes possible. And this fulfillment of desire would then end his desire. Here again resurfaces the question of identity: if Jaufré's entire identity is defined by an unfulfillable, impossible desire, how can the desire sustain itself once its fulfillment becomes possible, and is reached? Instead of being able to switch roles with Clémence, Jaufré simply continues to find ways to keep the love impossible: the moment he arrives in Tripoli, he praises God instead of Clémence. He finds a new object to desire "from afar." It doesn't last however, as Clémence extends the love back to him, turning him into the loved object. This brings him back to his identity as the lover yet also threatens this position; it pushes him into being the loved object, which he cannot be at the same time as being the lover. As the distance and the impossibility is erased, so is Jaufré's identity as desirous-of-the-love-from-afar and he must die.

The other main point of Žižek's essay is that the paradigm of courtly love is ever-present in current media, of which L'amour de loin is merely one example. L'amour de loin is hardly the only opera to appear in recent years which could be looked at from the lens of courtly love or desire and identification: George Benjamin's wildly successful Written on Skin and Thomas Adès' Powder Her Face both feature women engaged in the identity dialectic which Clémence finds herself in, and both more directly attack the sexual double standard than L'amour de loin. Not that only modern opera can benefit from this sort of reading, however; take the complex web of desire and identification in Der Rosenkavalier, or Violetta's attempt at subjectivization while being reduced to an object of desire in La Traviata. And yet, with so many examples of desire being tied to identity in media all around, one begins to wonder why we like to view this sort of tale. Perhaps these stories reveal something about the inner workings of ourselves. Whatever the case may be, desire and identity are heavily connected within L'amour de loin, and, perhaps, life itself.

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Re:Search

Cinematic Painting: Time in Liu Xiaodong's *Hotbed No.1* and Three Gorges Dam

Yutong Shi, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

Liu Xiaodong is a Chinese oil painter who is best known for his depiction of ordinary people in their actual lived reality. At the same time, Liu's engagement with film production has been widely recognized by public. However, the exact way that Liu has incorporated the structures of film into his painting has not been thoroughly analyzed. In this essay, I focus on Liu's monumental work Hotbed No.1 from 2005, a multi-panel painting that is part of his series of Three Gorges Dam. Liu addresses the environmental problems that the Three Gorges Dam created by focusing on its human cost, rather than entirely on the degradation of the place itself. I argue that the most striking innovation of Hotbed No.1 lies in its rendition of the passage of time, which creates what I call a "cinematic painting." It is significant because the incorporation of temporality enables Liu to depict the progressive harm and loss experienced by those living in proximity to the Three Gorges Dam. By introducing a durational component into his work, Liu effectively shows the complexities of depicting human suffering. Furthermore, it enables Liu to document the processes of dissolution and disappearance caused by the dam's construction.

KEYWORDS

Liu Xiaodong, Hotbed No.1, Three Gorges, Cinematic Painting

Introduction

Liu Xiaodong 刘小东 (b. 1963) is a figure painter, well known for his realistic oil paintings. Liu focuses on human dimensions situated with social and geopolitical problems both locally and globally. Among all his projects, Liu is best known for his series of paintings that represent the Three Gorges dam and its impact on the people who dwelt in the Three Gorges area along the upper Yangtze River. In this paper, I focus on Liu's Hotbed No.1, a monumental work constructed with five separate panels. In Hotbed No. 1, Liu depicted a group of migrant laborers gathered together on a rooftop to play a game of cards. Liu's depiction of the scene in Hotbed No. 1 is all the more vivid as it was produced on site in Fengjie, a city that was slowly being submerged as the construction of the dam proceeded. The construction of Three Gorges Dam has altered the appearance of the iconic landscape, flooded thousands of archaeological sites, neighboring towns and villages, and caused the displacement of over one million people. Instead of politically protesting the state power or the project itself, Liu approaches this geopolitical problem through humanity, focusing on the harm to people brought by the degradation of the environment.

In addition to painting, Liu is also known for his interest in film. He applied to the Beijing Film Academy after his graduation from the Central Academy of Fine Art (CAFA) in Beijing, but he was rejected. Nonetheless, Liu has been actively engaging with film production to today. Having starred in several films, serving as the art director, and creating paintings based on films, Liu is regarded as an ally of China's Sixth Generation filmmakers—a group of independent filmmakers active mostly after 1989.

In 2005, Liu invited Jia Zhangke 贾樟柯 (b. 1970), one of the leading figures of the Sixth Generation filmmakers, to record the whole process of his Hotbed project. These recordings became the documentary Dong 东 (2006). It includes both Hotbed No.1 about migrant laborers in the Three Gorges area and Hotbed No.2 about bar girls in Bangkok, Thailand. Although Liu's frequent interaction with film is widely recognized by scholars, the discussion is mostly restricted to the shared subject matter and aesthetic styles with Sixth Generation filmmakers' works. However, the substantial influence that film as a different medium has made on Liu's painting has been seldom addressed.

In this paper, I argue that Liu's interest in the interaction between film and painting lies

in his representation of time. According to his diary, Liu explores the portrayal of time, "用什么形式传达这种时间对人的变化，用什么形式表达人生的不确定性": "to use which form to express the effect of time registered on human, to use which form to represent the uncertainty of the life" (Liu 222). Traditionally, the medium of painting does not depict time effectively. But film, from Liu's unique view, is "时间的艺术": "an art of time" (Liu 128). Liu's evident interest in time, especially the passage of time, is very likely responsible for his obsession with film.

Therefore, I consider that Liu engages in a form of "intermediality" between film and painting. Eugene Wang has defined "intermediality" as "how one medium appropriates, recycles, and repurposes other media to create more complex effects and visual experiences" (584). In this essay, I examine how Liu incorporates the elements of film in Hotbed No.1 and realizes this painting as a "cinematic" one. I argue that the most striking innovation of Hotbed No.1 lies in its rendition of the passage of time. Liu appropriates the capacity of representing time from the medium of film and recycles it into the two-dimensional medium of oil on canvas, which overcomes painting's traditionally limited representation of temporality.

Through the introduction of the element of time into Hotbed No.1, Liu creates a significant example of intermedial work - a "cinematic" painting. The incorporation of temporality enables Liu to depict the loss and harm on humans brought by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam. The intermediality of Hotbed No.1 also enhances the embodiment of the dissolution and documentation of disappearance, which creates a history of marginalized migrant labor with a complex effect of showing human suffering.

Liu Xiaodong as an Oil Painter

Liu Xiaodong is most known for his depiction of ordinary people in their actual reality. This approach is opposite to the academic convention of depicting heroic people, which was encouraged in previous decades, such as socialist realism. Liu studied within the system of the Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing (CAFA). He began in its associated middle school in 1980 and graduated from the Third Studio of Oil Painting Department in 1988. He then taught at the middle school of CAFA and came back to teach at CAFA in 1994.

The studio system of the oil painting department aims to decentralize the constraint of the domination of the instruction of Soviet art at art academies and increases the variety of artistic

styles (Andrews 216). Therefore, different studios were founded with different goals and taught different styles. The Third Studio (*Disan huashi* 第三画室) was founded in 1962 by the oil painter Dong Xiwen 董希文 (1914-1973), who is noted for having produced *The Founding Ceremony of the Nation* (Kaiguo dadian 开国大典) (1953), a prominent example of socialist realism and one of the most celebrated works of official Chinese art. The Third Studio is known for its emphasis on fundamental skill to paint realistically and its instruction to "imbue the Western medium of oils with a Chinese aesthetic to produce 'national-style' oil paintings" (Andrews 217). Here, national style refers to ethnic painting 民族绘画 (*minzu huihua)* rather than national painting 国画 (*guohua)*. Poet Ai Qing 艾青 (1910-1996) defines *guohua* as "paintings painted with Chinese brush, Chinese ink, and Chinese pigments on Chinese paper or silk" (Andrews 112). "National-style oil paintings" here emphasizes developing a style of Chinese painting through using Western pigments, oil paint on canvas. The study of early modern style of European art and the understanding of creating oil paintings with a goal of "national style" have greatly influenced Liu's artistic production through his career.

Liu's early work evinces his study of European painters such as Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne. He made many imitations of Paul Cézanne's series of oil paintings *The Card Players*. According to Liu's photographs, his original plan for *Hotbed No.1* was to depict workers playing cards around a table. Since the 1980s, 19th – 20th century modern European art has been further introduced to China with the increasing number of publications of catalogues and exhibitions. Learning from images in catalogues and magazines was the primary way to learn the modern artistic language (Lu 75). Given this kind of training, it is unsurprising that Liu gradually developed a peculiar working process, which involved relying on photographs as his source of reproducing paintings. Although Liu claimed that the practice of painting based on photographs is harmful for a painter's good eye, he has employed this practice frequently, which is still evident in his first two paintings of the *Three Gorges Project*.

Pastorale, Liu Xiaodong, 1989, oil on canvas

In his early career, Liu mainly depicted single or double portraits mostly based on photographs of his family, friends, or people around him. As Li Xianting 栗宪庭 (b. 1949) suggests, most of Liu's portraits show us "people lost in their own thoughts at a public gathering or with hints of sadness in happy expressions" (Xianting).[1] In *Pastorale* (1989), Liu depicts himself and his wife leaning on a wall, surrounded by a very pleasurable ambience with the blue sky and bright sunlight. However, their facial expressions present a tension. The man's face is full of anxiety; although the woman faces the same direction as if they are heading towards the same future, their gazes are actually towards different places. They are situated in the same space sharing a close relationship with each other, however, they are only related to each other physically. Psychologically, they are isolated from each other with their own thoughts and concerns, living their lives individually (Fan, 2).[2] The ambiguity and uncertainty created by abrupt juxtapositions of both subjects and settings facilitate Liu in depicting the complicated

[1] Li Xianting, "The Deconstructive Mindset and Bored Emotions of Post 89 Art: An analysis of Recent Trends in Cynical Realism and Political Pop" (*Art Currents,* 10/1992).
[2] Dian Fan, "Liu Xiaodong, His Generation and Our Generation" in *an Era of Criticism: Late 20th Century Chinese Art Criticism Digest*, Volume 2 (Guangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2003).

psyche of his subjects in an alien and uncomfortable environment.

In addition to the intensity of emotion that it conveys, for Liu Xiaodong, good artwork also depends on the amount of information it shows (Wu 6). Therefore, to help him to deliver more information within the limitation of the medium of oil on canvas, Liu chooses to combine elements from different photographs, incorporating these disparate fragments into one single painted image, and arranging them in an unusual combination (Liu 58). However, these fragments were never situated in the same space or time. The combination of fragments lends a certain oddity and awkwardness to Liu's painting, creating a surrealistic world. Despite being rendered in a realistic style, these fragments are artificial, separated from the real world. By "surrealistic", Liu points out that it is not the surrealism of Salvador Dalí, rather, the real world itself is a surrealistic one without a unified narrative (57).

Battlefield Realism: Images of the New Eighteen Arhats, Liu Xiaodong, 2004, oil on canvas

In 2004, Liu produced *Battlefield Realism: Images of the New Eighteen Arhats* (*Zhandi xiesheng: xin shiba luohan xiang* 战地写生: 新十八罗汉像) by the invitation from Cai Guo-Qiang 蔡国强 (b. 1957) to the exhibition (also curated by Cai) in the Bunker Museum of

Contemporary Arts in Kinmen. Constructed with eighteen separate panels, Liu painted nine soldiers from each side of the Mainland and Taiwan in each panel. However, Liu chose to associate soldiers with the traditional Buddhist wise men *luohan*, the arhat in Chinese Buddhism, which are never represented as violent in traditional Chinese paintings. Such reference to traditional Chinese subject matter has constantly appeared in Liu's works. Liu also emphasizes that the inspiration of the second painting of the Three Gorges series is from a painting of 李公麟 (Li Gonglin) (1049–1106), a Chinese painter in the Northern Song Dynasty. Liu's constant references to a Chinese aesthetic is a mark of his study in the Third Studio and its goal of achieving a "national-style" painting.

Battlefield Realism is the first time that Liu worked with panel structure and painting from life on site. Since then, Liu has worked with this process and has gradually built up a unique system of his artistic production. Liu has traveled to places both in China and abroad, such as Tibet, Sichuan, Thailand, Palestine, and Israel. Wherever he goes, Liu builds a temporal studio painting on site and brings a film crew group with him to record the painting process as well as to record the local society and living situation of the people there. After finishing the project, Liu will have an exhibition to present his paintings, a documentary, research, and his diary.

History of Three Gorges Dam

Liu Xiaodong first went to Three Gorges in 2002; initially, Liu did not undertake the Three Gorges as a topic for his painting.[3] At the time, the Three Gorges Dam was still under construction and left a deep impression on Liu. After coming back from the region of Three Gorges, Liu produced the first monumental panel painting of his Three Gorges series, 三峡大移民 (*Great Migration at the Three Gorges*) (2003). Liu went to Three Gorges in 2003 again, coming back with photographs he took there, and he produced 三峡新移民 (*Newly Displaced Population*) 三峡新移民 (2004). Both of these paintings respond to the huge human cost brought by the Three Gorges Dam: massive migration and the displacement of population.

The Three Gorges Dam is a hydroelectric dam located on the upper reaches of the

[3] In 2002, Liu Xiaodong's wife Yu Hong 喻红 (b. 1966) was holding an exhibition in Wuhan, China and the curator sent them traveling to Three Gorges, which became the first time that Liu has even been to Three Gorges region.

Yangtze River in southwestern China. This project had been planned and discussed since 孙中山 Sun Yat-sen (1866 –1925), the father of modern China, first wrote a petition about the magic power of electricity in 1894, which later became a major concern for every government. [4] The major benefits that the government claimed the Three Gorges Dam would completely solve are the uncontrolled flood problem which has existed since the Han Dynasty in 206 BC; efficiently increasing national output of electricity by 10%; and leading to a better navigation (Dai 147). However, many Chinese engineers and journalists had argued that an equal result can be achieved with a much less environmental risk and human cost by a series of smaller dams in less populated areas (Chetham 220). Chinese engineer and journalist 戴晴 (Dai Qing) (b. 1941) has opposed this uncontrolled project, reporting and conducting independent research on the Three Gorges area. She also collected interviews and essays from people who opposed this project. After decades of debates, the Chinese government eventually approved the construction of this project in 1992. The construction of the Three Gorges Dam began in 1994 and was completed in 2009, but discussion and reflection of this highly controversial project never ends.

The Three Gorges Dam is named after the region of Three Gorges, where a much longer history traces back to the Upper Paleolithic era (ca. 45,000-8000 BC). With its long history, this area also embodies a cultural imagination. Many stories of legends, goddesses and regional tales are inscribed in every rock and mountain there.[5] From the Tang Dynasty (618-907), many famous poets such as 李白 (Li Bai) (701-762) and 杜甫 (Du Fu) (702-772) produced innumerable poems about Three Gorges. Du Fu lived in Fengjie from 766-768. In his miserable exile and in his distress at the state of political affairs, he wrote nearly a quarter of his life's work, or about 400 poems, during his two years in Fengjie (Chetham 26). "*Zaofa Baidi cheng* 早发白帝城" (Setting Out at Dawn from Baidicheng) by Li Bai is one of the most famous depictions of the Three Gorges Region, which records the journey along the Gorges.

At dawn depart Baidi midst many-colored clouds
Across 1,000 li to Jiangling in a single day return
From both banks the sound of gibbons crying without rest

[4] Sun Yat-sen did not succeed to present his petition in 1894, but this should be the very first time that the idea of hydroelectricity appeared in Chinese history. Though, there are different versions about specific date of Sun Yat-sen's proposal. In the book of *Before the Deluge*, it is 1919. According to Dai Qing, it is 1912.
[5] See more about archeological sites in Chapter 2 History and Myth in Chetham. *Before the Deluge.*

The light skiff has already crossed myriad-fold mountains

朝辞白帝彩云间，千里江陵一日还。

两岸猿声啼不住，轻舟已过万重山。

Three Gorges has long existed as a literary myth and an iconic cultural landscape. Among the beautiful scenes along the Yangtze River, Kui Gate (*Kuimen*夔门) is the most recognizable one. Made up of two mountains, it marks the downstream entry to the Gorges. Kuimen has been depicted in numerous poems and travel notes. It is also represented on the back of the ¥10 banknote of the Chinese currency. Thus, it has been one of the most popular tourist spots in China with its beautiful scenery.[6] However, the construction of Three Gorges Dam alters the appearance of the landscape forever. In the period leading up to the construction, the amount of tourism greatly increased since people all over China and the world wanted to see it one last time.

Liu Xiaodong's Engagement with the Three Gorges Dam

The construction of the Three Gorges Dam has brought much degradation on the environment, which consequently brings the harm to the people. The demolition of thirteen towns and cities caused displacement of more than one million residents. Many residents are displaced to faraway provinces that have totally different cultures, weather, and unintelligible dialects.[7]

Many artists have responded to the controversial issues raised by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam in various ways. In 2008, Wu Hung curated an exhibition entitled *Displacement: The Three Gorges Dam and Contemporary Chinese Art*, which was held in the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago. Four artists who work with different media were featured in this exhibition: Ji Yunfei 季云飞 (b. 1963), Zhuang Hui 庄辉 (b. 1963), Chen Qiulin 陈秋林 (b. 1975), and Liu Xiaodong. The paintings of Ji Yunfei, which feature traditional Chinese formats such as the handscroll as well as traditional Chinese ink and pigments, portray the migration of impoverished people who are haunted by ghosts. Zhuang Hui, a conceptual artist and photographer, documents the changes wrought upon the landscape through photographic installations. Chen Qiulin uses performance, video, and installation to emphasize

[6] See more about cultural landscape and literary landscape of Three Gorges in Byrnes, *Fixing Landscape*.
[7] See more about human cost in chapter 10, Chetham, *Before the Deluge*, 188.

her perspective that her native city of Wanzhou was partially submerged under the water due to the construction of the Three Gorges Dam. In *Displacement*, Liu Xiaodong was represented by an oil painting entitled *Hotbed No. 1*. Like Ji Yunfei, Liu focused on the human cost of the dam. But unlike Ji, who populated his paintings with ghosts, Liu emphasized the sheer misery of the workers who labored to demolish thousands of buildings in the cities that would be submerged once the dam was completed. As is his habit, he approached the people at the site, enhancing the sense of their alienation and solitude.

Hotbed No. 1 was preceded by several other paintings about the Three Gorges. Indeed, Liu often works in series, experimenting with various perspectives or figural compositions in each unit of a series. Liu's Three Gorges series involved the creation of three major multi-panel monumental paintings: *Great Migration at the Three Gorges* (Sanxia da yimin 三峡大移民) (2003), *Newly Displaced Population* (Sanxia xin yimin三峡新移民) (2004), and *Hotbed No.1* (Wenchuang zhi yi温床之一) (2005). In addition to these three monumental oil paintings, Liu also produced other small paintings, which are derived from the multi-panel works. The first two multi-panel monumental paintings are both reproduced from photographs and composed with fragments. Only the third large painting, *Hotbed No.1*, which I will examine in detail later, was produced from life (*xiesheng* 写生) on the site of Three Gorges itself.

Sanxia da yimin 三峡大移民 (*Great Migration at the Three Gorges*) is Liu's first monumental painting about Three Gorges. This 200 cm x 800 cm painting is comprised of four panels. Liu reproduced it from photographs he took after coming back from the Three Gorges area in 2003. Liu first saw a group of laborers carrying the long metal rod in 2001 while he was driving on a highway in Beijing. He later asked the laborers who built a house for him in Beijing to reenact this scene with a water tube in his yard. After coming back from the Three Gorges area, he finally decided to transpose this scene with the landscape of Three Gorges area and produced it in his studio based on photographs he took.

Migrant workers in yard of my studio, Liu Xiaodong, photograph

As I have mentioned before, Liu's practice of combining fragments from photographs is also applied in this painting, which results in an abrupt disconnection between figures and landscape. Without the reference of Three Gorges in the title, no direct association of that region can be made from only viewing the painting. The landscape only functions as a backdrop behind the human figures. Instead of responding to the alteration of landscape, Liu primarily focuses on human activities and represents a chaotic scene of a variety of people in this painting. This group of six labors is placed dominantly in the foreground. They are neither situated in the landscape nor interacting with it. Their distinctive costumes, motionless gestures, and emotionless facial expression, all make it as a staged performance.

Great Migration at the Three Gorges, Liu Xiaodong, 2003, oil on canvas

In the second panel on the left, three children are playing on the ground in the bottom next to two pigs, one with a toy gun; beside the dried-up river bed, many temporary work sheds were built, and some people who drive motorbikes are coming toward us. Such depiction responds to issues of migrant laborers, who are not local residents. They come from elsewhere doing the job brought by construction or destruction and displace the people who had lived there for a long time.

三峡新移民 (*Newly Displaced Population*) (2004) is Liu's second monumental painting of the Three Gorges Project, another four panel painting, 300 cm x 1000 cm, depicting four different groups of displaced people along the river. The literal Chinese title of this painting is "Newly Displaced People from Three Gorges." This is the only time that Liu includes the Three Gorges Dam itself in his paintings. However, as a state project, the Three Gorges Dam is not centered in this painting but on the side in the first panel, which is in the middle of construction and fading away in the mist. Liu is never interested in representing this gigantic engineering marvel and his representation of the Three Gorges Dam is diametrically opposed to the glorification of the dam and the nation. What is closely placed next to this national construction is its interference of the landscape: a residential area, occupied by groups of small buildings, is waiting to be flooded. Four different groups of people, potentially forced to be relocated from the residential area, stand on the riverbank, dealing with their new life situation. Furthermore, Liu placed a duck above the Three Gorges Dam in the first panel. In the nationalist narrative, the national construction would only be aligned with heroic people. Such juxtaposition of a duck and the dam undermines the nationalist narrative. More importantly, this duck reappears in the third panel, but is shown violently dead hanging in midair, which demonstrates the environmental cost brought by the dam. Liu's representation of two temporary moments of this duck in one painting exemplifies his experiment on temporality, which is further developed in *Hotbed No.1*.

Newly Displaced Population, Liu Xiaodong, 2004, oil on canvas

Similar to the painting *Great Migration*, *Newly Displaced Population* was also reproduced from photographs in Liu's studio in Beijing. The fragment of the duck comes from a photograph in a magazine. Figures that were depicted in the two paintings are not all locals from the Three Gorges area. Since they are fragments from photographs, the element of three children appears in both paintings, but a different composition in the larger scale with more detailed depiction in *Newly Displaced Population*. According to Liu's photographs, two young men on the first panel on the right are from Baidicheng, and three prostitutes on the same panel were photographed by Liu in an apartment in Beijing, who also appear in Liu's painting *Prostitutes No. 9* in 2001. In this painting, different people from different places were juxtaposed with the landscape of Three Gorges, representing a disjunctive presence (Decrop 101). Liu's use of fragments becomes more explicit in his painting *Hotbed No.1*; without the use of photographs, fragments of time and space still exist by painting from life on site.

Compared to the disjunction between figures and the landscape in *Great Migration*, *Newly Displaced Population* presents an attempt of interaction between humans and the environment. Liu claimed that this painting is inspired by the representation of interaction between humans and water in the painting *Picture of Confluence of Oceans* by Li Gonglin that Liu saw in New York in a private collection. Known from Liu's several drafts of *Newly Displaced Population,* one can tell that Liu's original idea is far different from this final version, which places a fair amount of people in the river to show the great amount of water flooding everywhere. In the end, Liu chooses a V-shaped composition to arrange four groups of people along the river bank in the foreground. People either look toward us or facing the overwhelming

water.

In 2004, these two paintings, *Great Migration at the Three Gorges,* and *Newly Displaced Population* (2004), were exhibited in the China Art Archives & Warehouse (CAAW) in Beijing, directed by Ai Weiwei 艾未未 (b. 1957). During that exhibition, under Liu's request, the writer Ah Cheng 阿城 (b. 1949) compiled a book called *Chang Jiang jilu* 长江辑录 (Compiled records about the Yangtze River). In about one hundred thousand words, Ah Cheng includes Sun Yat-sen's ambition, a history of Three Gorges, and articles by some long-time opponents of the project, such as the journalist Dai Qing and hydrologist Huang Wanli 黄万里 (1911-2011). Liu was touched by Ah Cheng's dedication of the compilation of records as a more meaningful intellectual labor, compared to his own production in studio.

Ah Cheng's book helped Liu to understand the complicated cultural and historical significance of the Three Gorges area and the serious social issues that resulted from the construction of the dam. After learning this history, Liu was inspired to go to Three Gorges and match his labor of painting with the labor of constructing the Three Gorges Dam rather than hiding in the studio, imagining the people who witnessed the environmental destruction and who labored there. Liu realized that relying only on photographs to reproduce paintings in the clean studio is not enough. His first two paintings of the Three Gorges are not serious enough; they do not embody the monumental history of the Three Gorges (Liu, 73). Therefore, Liu decided to paint on site.

In 2005, when Liu went to Three Gorges to paint *Hotbed No.1*, he invited Jia Zhangke to make a documentary about his painting process. This became the film *Dong* 东 (2006), named after Liu Xiaodong and the direction East (东). Jia further developed the material he filmed for the documentary into a second film, the well-known *Sanxia haoren* 三峡好人 (Decent People from Three Gorges), ordinarily translated into English as *Still Life* (2006).

Although Liu has explored ways of juxtaposing figures and landscapes in his first two paintings, the relationship between humans and the environment is not clearly represented. In the third painting, *Hotbed No.1*, Liu situates the human in a degraded environment and depicts the dissolution of both human and environment.

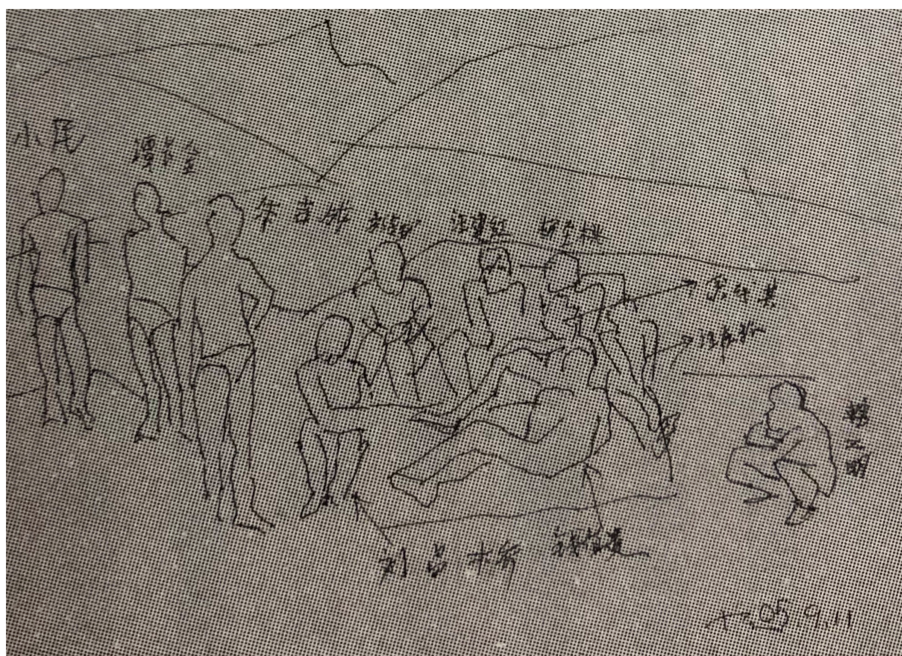
Liu Xiaodong and Hotbed No.1 (Wenchuang zhi yi 温床之一)

In September 2005, Liu Xiaodong went to Fengjie, a city that was slowly being destroyed by the elevation of water by the building of the Three Gorges Dam. Liu produced *Hotbed No.1* in a temporary studio on the rooftop of an abandoned building in Fengjie. *Hotbed No.1* is the third and the last multiple-panel monumental painting of Liu's Three Gorges project. Constructed with five panels, 260 cm x 1000 cm, *Hotbed No.1* continues the same panel construction that was employed in the previous two paintings, *Great Migration at the Three Gorges* (2003) and *Newly Displaced Population* (2004). Unlike the first two paintings in this series, *Hotbed No. 1* was not based on combinations of different photographs. It was painted instead from life and on site. Thus, it truly represents the miserable situation of migrant laborers at the site of the Three Gorges dam.

Liu has typically turned away from grand nationalist narratives to document the lives of ordinary and miserable people. The state government ordered that the entire city be demolished. The demolition project required enormous human resources. Migrant laborers flocked to the site for work. Even though migrant laborers undertook an unimaginable amount of work for this national construction, their contributions have been seldom recognized and their living conditions have been ignored. As Liu said in the interview, the "narrative of heroism made me uncomfortable because in my eyes every individual is important. Everyone possesses only one life and only has this one experience" (Liu 22). During his previous visit to Fengjie, Liu had met and photographed a group of migrant laborers. Prior to painting *Hotbed No.1*, he actively sought them out again. Liu hired eleven of them as models and produced a group portrait of them in *Hotbed No.1*. These laborers have never been a part of official Chinese history nor owned their own stories. Through writing down their names in his diary, depicting them in his painting, and documenting them in the documentary, Liu creates a verbal history of a group of migrant laborers. As what Liu said, "the individual has never stood in the center of Chinese history, only the collective. As a painter, I direct my gaze on the humanity, the individuality, and the subjectivity of every single person in their actual lived reality" (Liu 23).

In Liu's sketches, which preceded his paintings, each laborer is clearly identified. The squatting person in the far-right panel is Han Sanming 韩三明; the man on the right edge of the mattress is Wang Qingsong 汪庆松, the leader of this group, who brought the rest of the people from their hometown to Fengjie to earn a living. Lying across two panels next to him, is Qian

Zhigui 钱值贵. The man who sits in the center of the mattress is Yu Daiqi 余代其. The three men who sit along the back on the sofa from right to left are: Yang Shengtao 杨圣桃, Wang Jianhong 汪建红, and Fang Chuan'an 方传安; the last person left on the mattress is Liu Changqiao 刘昌桥; the young man, standing in a distance from the mattress on the left, is Zhu Jicheng 朱吉成, who is only eighteen years old. In the next panel, there are two standing men; from right to left, they are Tan Changjin 谭长金 and Xiaomin 小民.



From left to right, top to bottom: Xiaoming, Tan Changjin, Zhu Jicheng, Fang Chuanan, Wang Jianhong, Yang Shengtao, Yu Daiqi, Wang Qingsong, Han Sanming, Liu Changqiao, Qian Zhigui. Liu Xiaodong's sketch.

Although this painting was produced on site and Liu did not rely on photographs to combine people from different places and simulate the landscape of Fengjie, he still took many photographs during his production of *Hotbed No.1*. The photograph below tells us that Liu's original plan was to depict laborers playing cards around a table, similar to scenes in Paul Cézanne's series of oil paintings *The Card Players*. In the end, Liu entitles this painting as *Hotbed* and carefully depicts four men sitting or lying on the mattress in an extremely painterly

and loose way, which accentuates the sensuality of their play.

Liu's photograph

The literal Chinese title of this painting is *wenchuang*, which means a warm bed. The living condition of migrant laborers was bad and dangerous. The whole city of Fengjie was under demolition and these migrant laborers who undertook the demolition work could only live in the temporal buildings that had not been demolished. They were not even able to rest and sleep in the mattress after every day's hard work. Liu placed a new mattress on the rooftop and arranged the migrant laborers to play the card game on it. In *Hotbed No.1*, Liu depicts a tilt-up mattress in a reddish and sensual way and creates a focal point in the center. Four men who are either sitting or lying down on the mattress are aligned together in a circle. Three men sit on the sofa behind the mattress watching the card game. Even though they are together, they seem to be disconnected and isolated from each other. Although all the photographs that Liu took show that everyone who participates in this game is laughing and enjoying the moment, Liu depicted them with miserable facial expressions, reflecting their harsh living condition and suffering.

The central placement of the mattress in *Hotbed No.1* continues in *Hotbed No.2* (2006). Another five-panel monumental painting of the same size, *Hotbed No.2* depicts eleven female bar workers in Bangkok, Thailand, wearing bright-colored clothing with a mysterious

background full of tropical fruits. These eleven female bar workers all come from nearby villages to Bangkok to find jobs, thus becoming migrants into the city. Pi Li suggests that the mattress becomes a momentary rest for these migrant laborers and an escape from the disorderly reality (647).

Time in Hotbed No.1

Five large panels comprise *Hotbed No.1*. Because Liu painted each panel separately, the horizontal composition itself is strongly divided into parts. The overall composition is broken-up and viewers will tend to look at it panel by panel. Furthermore, each panel is 260 cm long and 200 cm high. Each panel required a significant amount of time to paint. The divisions within this enormous painting are not simply marked by the five panels; each panel represents a different time and space.

Liu's awareness of this effect and his obsession with time are clearly evidenced in his diary. On 17 September 2005, Liu wrote about the central panel in his diary:

> Today is mostly a sunny day. White clouds wind around transparent blue mountains. There is no fog. Just now I am able to look at the beautiful fine details of the mountains on the opposite bank of the clear river. During the past two days, I have almost finished painting Fang Chuan'an, Wang Jianhong, and Yang Shengtao. Only Fang Chuan'an was painted on a cloudy day. Therefore, I finished painting him in the light of a cloudy sky. The others I painted on sunny days. It was already sunset when it came to paint the landscape in background of this panel. Therefore, the background was depicted as a background at the sunset time. Jeff was right: I painted time into my painting. Today is also a cloudy day, and I painted Liu Changqiao. Painting from life is absolutely true to *transcribe* every single detail. When the *transcription* is finished, the whole painting is not situated in the same space or time. They are all in their own space and time, just like our lives, which is completely among fragments. Among fragments, we unconsciously complete our experience.

> 今天阴晴天，白云缠绕在透明的青蓝色的山间，没有雾，才看清江对岸的山间美丽的细节。这两天，方传安、汪建红、杨圣桃几乎画完，方传安赶上阴天就画成了阴

天的光线，别人是太阳天画的，这幅的背景赶上傍晚没了太阳的时候，也就画成了傍晚，Jeff说得对，把时间画进去了。今天画刘昌桥，也是阴天。写生是绝对地真实地对每一个细节的抄写，等抄写完毕，整幅作品却不是在同一空间、时间里的，他们各在自己的空间、时间里，像我们的生活，完全在片段中，在片段中不知不觉完成我们的体验。[8]

And on September 19th, 2015, Liu wrote about the second panel on the left in his diary:

> Painted Xiaomin [the person on the left], and then painted the landscape behind him - Kuimen. He was in the sunlight at the noon. When it came to the background, it already was the sunset time. It took time three hours to pass from Xiaomin to Kuimen. That is to say, in this panel, time had constantly shuttled back and forth from the figure to figure, from the figure to the landscape, from the noon to the dusk approaching evening, and from a sunny day to a cloudy day.
>
> 画小民，然后画了他身后的风景—夔门。他在中午的阳光下，等画到背景已是傍晚，时间从他走到夔门用了3个小时，也就是说，在这次这张作品里，时间不停地在人物与人物与景物间穿行，从中午到傍晚，从晴天到阴天。

It is clear from both the diary and the painting that the constantly changing light conditions outside was an important factor that enabled Liu to delineate the passage of time. Since this painting was produced outside, unlike an indoor studio painting done with stable light source, the weather and the time of the day both dramatically affect the condition of the sunlight. The passage of time becomes perceptible in the changing colors of light in each panel. Therefore, in each panel, there is a specific hue reflecting the individual day. While the far-right panel has the most neutral color of the background, the rest of the panels employ certain hues. For example, the second panel on the left employs a pink hue, which potentially is resulted from the sunset producing time according to Liu's diary.

To emphasize the change in time and the fact that each panel was created separately, the panels are not continuous. The levels of the wall of the rooftop in each panel are not consistent. Especially in the far-right panel, the wall is dramatically lower than the rest of the panels. At the same time, Sanming in that panel is squatting in a low body position. Subsequently, the wall and

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[8] Jeff Kelly is the consulting curator of Asian Art Museum at San Francisco.

the squatting body position establish the lowest level in the far-right panel of the painting. In the next three panels in the middle, figures that are lying and sitting on the mattress and the sofa are slightly higher than Sanming's squatting position. The up-standing figures on the left are even higher. With the increasing levels of body positions and the descending outline of the mountain on the left, a diagonal composition is created.

Accompanied by the diagonal composition, Liu also applies an increasing painterly and loose brush style moving, from right to left. Like the shifting frames of the composition, the unstable application of paint to canvas adds to the sense of change that imbues this painting. Liu precisely rendered the figure with a contained squatting position and a background of carefully depicted landscape and residential place. Windows of the building, shadow, and reflection of light on the mountain are all clearly shown in the background. The thick impasto leaves visible the traces of the brush as it smeared paint onto the canvas. On the three central panels, Liu's depictions gradually become sketchy. He reduces the amount of paint and loosely depicts the bodies of migrant workers, the mattress, and the landscape. There are some washes and streaks of paints. Incompleteness appears in the second panel on the left: an area of the rooftop and the wall is awkwardly left as vacant. On the final panel, Liu leaves most of the canvas unfinished, in which a juxtaposition of mostly destroyed mountain and destructed houses are placed. The landscape is mostly finished, but the destructed houses are simply outlined with several tiny stick figures, which look like demolition labors.

A Bunch of Pork at River, Liu Xiaodong, 2003, oil on canvas

Along with the changing brush style, Liu also presents a dehumanization through depictions of different forms of human bodies. On the far right, Sanming's body is the most contained and carefully depicted one. The rest of bodies in the middle are much more abstracted, and gradually become less in the form of a human. *A Bunch of Pork at River* (2003) is another painting of Liu's Three Gorges series, in which a piece of meat is hanging in the mid-air near the riverbank. In Liu's interview with Jean Marc Decrop, Liu said that he used this piece of meat to cover up the landscape which should be the construction site of the dam. Furthermore, Liu explained this painting as an allegory "The scene was actually taken from a small stall selling noodles. The cook was cutting slices of pork directly from the hanging piece of meat into the frying pan… I was thinking that the Authority was likewise cutting into the flesh of common people to serve its purposes" (Liu 22). The representation of the human body as meat-like flesh is developed in *Hotbed No.1* as well. The bodies of Tan Changjin and Xiaomin are especially developed in the second panel on the left, with the use of meat-like colors of pink, red and white to portray their chests. The mattress is also depicted as meat, the red edge with white stroke on the right in particular. Furthermore, at the end of this painting in the far-left panel, the form of the human being is being reduced to tiny stick-like figures at work on the cliffs along the river's

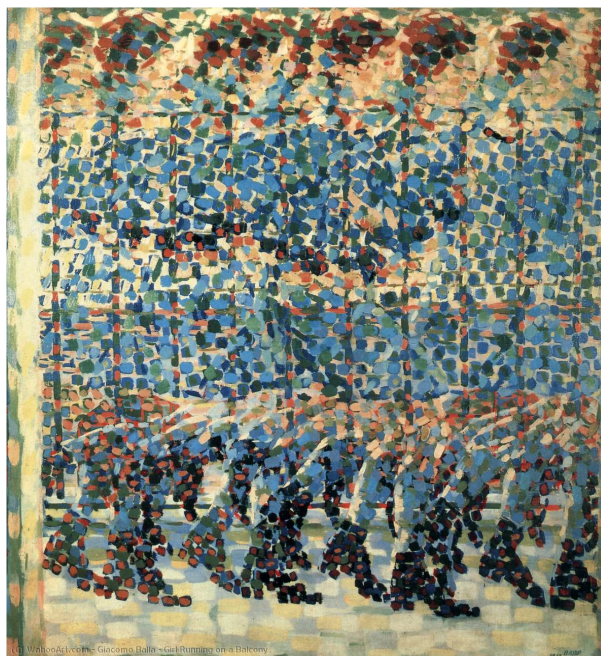
edge on an unfinished canvas.

Therefore, time is not only evident in the changing light and changing perspective of the landscape. More importantly, a changing brush style, a gradual dehumanized depiction of migrant laborers, a diagonal composition, and an incomplete end, all show that the gathering of this group of workers itself is an ephemeral moment and everything is moving toward dissolution.

Liu's interest in panel structure and embodiment of the passage of time shown in *Hotbed No.1* has been further explored by him in his later production. In 2007, Liu produced 青藏铁路 (*Qingzang Tibet Railway*) with similar five-panel structure. In 2015, Liu produced 时间 (*Time*) (2015) with twenty panels. Each panel is finished separately in different dates; figures' gesture, the sky, the expression-- everything in this painting is constantly changing, emphasizing the passage of time.

Hotbed No.1 as a Cinematic Painting

Yu Daiqi's feet, the man who sits on the center of the mattress, is so ambiguous that it's hard to distinguish his leg from the leg of the person Yang Shengtao, who sits on the sofa behind him. Considering that Liu painted them playing cards on site (which is a constantly moving scene), this unclear depiction of legs could also be understood as the movement of the leg, which is similar Italian futurism. *Young Girl Running on Balcony* (1912) is a representative painting of Italian futurism, produced by Giacomo Balla. It captures the girl's repeated form across the canvas, representing her movement through the space of the balcony.



Young Girl Running on Balcony, Giacomo Balla, 1912, oil on canvas

In the horizontal composition that is created by the multi-panel structure, Liu places the migrant workers in the foreground. From right to left, Liu carefully arranged some workers in observer positions to unfold the narrative. Beginning with Sanming resting his elbow on his knees on the far-right panel, Liu positioned him as a thinker and observer. Although he is separate from the gathering that is centered in this painting, his thoughtful gaze focalizes and directs the vision of the scene that is upcoming on the next two central panels. With the unfolding primary scene of workers playing the card game, Liu places another observer, the young man Zhu Jicheng, standing next to the mattress. While Zhu is looking at this ongoing game of sensual male bodies, he is shown with an erect penis. Emphasizing the erection, Liu regards it as the youth and energy of the male body. In the next panel on the left, two men stand even more distant, leaving the major scene. The lost thoughts shown in their faces lead us to the end of dissolution. This use of different stages of participating in the game to unfold a narrative may be understood to be part of the filmic presentation of the figural group.

In addition to the multi-panel structure, the monumental scale is another unusual composition of this painting. Its monumental scale requires the act of scanning for the audience when standing in front of the painting also mimics the cinematic technique of panning as a way

to capture temporality. The background of the landscape is changing, as if it had been panned by a camera. Interestingly, many scholars have also argued that Jia's use of camera work is influenced by both landscape painting and figurative painting.

As mentioned before, Liu has had a close relationship with the Sixth Generation Filmmakers since the 1990s; they went to college around the same time and experienced the same social environment. The Sixth Generation Filmmakers, a group of independent filmmakers, arose around 1989 after the tremendous Tiananmen Square Movement. The Sixth Generation Film is known for subjects of marginalized characters, semi-underground life-style, low budget, and non-professional actors, which is opposed to the national epic style of the Fifth Generation. Some representative Sixth Generation Filmmakers are Zhang Yuan 张元 (b. 1963), Wang Xiaoshuai 王小帅 (b. 1966), and Jia Zhangke. Liu has actively engaged with their film production from the beginning and still today.

In 1992, Liu co-starred with his wife Yu Hong in Wang Xiaoshuai's first film 冬春的日子 (*The Days*) (1993), which was later named as one of the top 100 most important international films of the past century by the BBC. In the same year, Liu also undertook as the art director of Zhang Yuan's film *Beijing Bastards* 北京杂种 (1993). In 1995, Liu produced a painting based on the film with the same title by Zhang Yuan. In 2000, he produced another painting: *Heroes Always Stem From Youth,* based on a scene from Wang Xiaoshuai's film 十七岁的单车 (*Beijing Bicycle*) (2001), etc (Ou 143).

Liu's interaction with film seems even more significant in the case of *Hotbed No.1*. Jia Zhangke has known Liu since Liu's very first solo exhibition in 1990. A German company was about to sponsor Jia to make a documentary of a contemporary artist and Jia chose Liu for his Three Gorges project. However, this plan did not pan out, and Liu decided to go to Fengjie anyway, preparing his production of *Hotbed No.1*. While Liu was already at Fengjie, his friend Dan Bo 淡勃 (b. 1972) called him and in a very short amount of time, he decided to sponsor Jia to make this documentary of Liu.

The collaboration with Jia would have interesting ramifications for the composition of *Hotbed*, as we shall see. While Sanming and Zhu are observing the ongoing card game, Liu is observing and depicting all of them. At the same time, Liu himself is observed and recorded by the film crew group. Furthermore, all the residents nearby are observing both Liu's painting

process and the film crew's group recording process. All of Liu's careful arrangements makes the process of this painting like a performance. Liu's project inspired Jia to further produce an accompanied fiction in the film *Still Life*. The squatting person on the far-right panel, Sanming, plays the actor after his name Han Sanming. In Jia's film *Still Life* (2006), Sanming is a coal-miner from Shanxi province, who has returned to Fengjie and works as a demolition laborer while searching for his wife and daughter.

Traditionally, oil painting on canvas is regarded as more capable of representing one single significant moment rather than temporality embodied in film because the limitation of two dimensionalities of this medium. However, Liu's practice of using panel structure and painting over time at the same site enabled him to capture the passage of time in *Hotbed*. He was hardly limited to the representation of a "decisive moment" (Pi 647). As indicated in Liu's diary, he captured the three-hour time difference between the figure and landscape. More significantly, even though film is usually regarded as better at documenting the temporality, the editing can only apply between shots and scenes rather than presenting different times of day within one shot, like what Liu did in one panel.

Dissolution and Memory

Liu produced the scroll painting *River* in 2006, a horizontal scroll, thirty-feet-long by twelve-inches-high. As a compendium of Liu's own history as an artist like a time stream of his personal memory, *River* includes Liu's previous oil paintings going back to his art school days and rolling forward to the present, including *Hotbed No.1*. Each painting that is included in *River* is basically reproduced from his original work with the simple changes of color and composition. However, for the part of *Hotbed No.1*, one figure is deliberately removed by Liu and only left with a simple outline: Wang Qingsong, who died from being pressed underneath the skeleton of the building being demolished on September 23rd, in the middle of Liu's production of *Hotbed* in Fengjie. In the documentary, Dong records Liu's visit to Wang's family in a nearby village and gives his painting of Wang to his family as a remembrance since Wang did not have any other pictures of himself. Liu's painting of life is not simply a representation, but a documentation of the disappearance.

This disappearance of Wang in *River* commemorates his death and reminds people of the harm that the Three Gorges Dam project has brought to people. Such representations of

disappearing of people and the dissolution of the city is also depicted in the last incomplete panel in the *Hotbed*. The incompleteness and disappearance deliberately created by Liu in his paintings become the existence and documentation of the disappearing and disappeared city and people. When the city, the history, the people, and everything are disappearing, Liu's documentation of dissolution brings their existence into history.

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Re:Search

The Glass Palace: A South Asian memoir of cultural cannibalism

Ashni Gandhi, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

"*The Glass Palace:* A South Asian memoir of cultural cannibalism" is an essay that pays particular attention to British colonial decimation and exploitation of South Asian identity. I first begin by delving into 19th and 20th-century Indian history, taking into account the 300-year hierarchical dichotomy in Britain's relationship with India. I use the larger, expansive historical context to move into an analysis of the *The Glass Palace* (2000) by Amitav Ghosh, an Indian novelist. This renown catalog of familial interactions is a multigenerational novel that has received multiple awards including but not limited to, the Frankfurt eBook Award in 2001, New York Times Notable Books of 2001, and Grand Prize for fiction. The novel reveals the erasure of native Indian and Burmese culture in the course of British colonialism and, demonstrates how as a result, this historical context saw the creation of a hybrid South Asian identity. By deconstructing the family memoir that spans across centuries and nation-states, I examine these individual shifts in one's identity. The representations of memory catalog the ceaseless process of hybridization within the Burmese-Indian family; the process of hybridization takes the form of erasing traditional South Asian cultural values, capitalist motives, and western concepts of liberty and freedom. Through the means of this essay, I contribute to the ongoing study of hybrid identities–arguing the proliferation of westernized hybrid individuals to be a material effect of colonialism.

KEYWORDS

Amitav Ghosh, Colonialism, Hybridity, Cannibalization, Culture, Identity

Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* (2000) is a multigenerational novel that expands outward, across nations, from the nuclear family-unit. In showing the concurrent exploitation, decimation, and alienation of his multidimensional family, Ghosh reproduces an array of Indian memories –depicting South Asians as peoples unified and bound through colonial threads. While India and Britain have an entangled history from the start of 16th-century British expansionism, the action of the historical novel follows from 19th and 20th century India and Burma. After a review of the larger historical context in which the novel is engulfed, I will show the synchronous erasure and remaking of identity as it pertains to 19th to 20th centuries. Ghosh's long historical interpolations tethers the identities of his characters to a common, family experience. Thus, Amitav Ghosh, an Indian born writer, chronicles a family history by depicting its response to the broader displacement of South Asian culture. By first contextualizing *The Glass Palace* and then tracing its individual characters, I confront the accumulation of Indian historical events that produce a dynamic, multicultural Indian identity.

I begin by delving into 19th and 20th-century Indian history, taking into account the broad and overarching hierarchical dichotomy constructed by the West through its relations with the East. Specifically, I analyze India's 300-year colonial experience – an expansive instance of orientalism. In postcolonial studies, this term was popularized by Edward Said's iconic 1975 book of the same name. It refers to the West's inaccurate cultural view of the East, one that typically depicted the Orient as primitive, uncultivated, uncivilized. These western constructions hybridize, a process in which multiculturalism impacts and creates new cultural forms. Homi Bhaba in "Signs Taken for Wonders" looks at the transformative nature of colonial cultural collisions. I use this term as it denotes a convergence between multiple cultures, but also is result of colonial control. By explicating the regulation of Indian life by the British capitalist-colonial regime, *The Glass Palace* reveals the cultural recoding of Indian society, and ultimately, Indian identity. Although Ghosh's novel looks to both Indian and Burmese histories, I principally focus on that of India as an instance of social deconstruction; the British conquest and manipulation of India mirrors that of Burma. Ghosh will concentrate on this Burmese interaction with British forces as it parallels India's early history with Britain.

The intersecting decimation of Indian and Burmese identity is rooted in the colonial binary opposition between the rational European powers and their allegedly irrational Eastern counterparts. Wrought in this binary, postcolonial theory purports to break Western measurement

of the East against what they are not. The “post” in “postcolonial” demarcates a linear historical timeline of a political period following and reflecting on previous waves of imperialism. It refers to a period after occupation, fixating on the repercussions of the dismantling of existing power structures by the “distant imperial power” (Kumar 3). Using a postcolonial lens, I look at the resultant internalized need for Indians to distance themselves from their inferior culture.

Ghosh’s multigenerational novel exemplifies this systematic debasement of Indian culture, denying the binary complete power over explaining India’s cultural deterioration. Ghosh refuses the term “post-colonial,” stating that his disdain for the term stems from it “describ[ing] [subjects] as a negative,” focusing on “being a successor state to a colony” rather than the “reality that [they] do inhabit” (Kumar). His repudiation of the term “post-colonial” paves the way for him to discuss the myriad of identities, in Indian history and in the intimate family he creates. These moments of multicultural interconnection overturn the borders that postcolonial theory inscribes. Recognizing the formulation of post-colonial critique to erase the distinct realities and existing structures of places[1], Ghosh shows hybridity as a refusal of both colonialism to post-colonialism *and* East to West binary relationships.

How, then, does Ghosh’s novel, ridden with colonial interaction with the Indian world, counter the encoded simplified binary of systematically oppressed? This dialogue against postcolonial epistemology, I contend, takes the form of proliferated, hybrid identities. Here, the multitudinous identities and memories that react against imperial Britain are fluid and borderless[2], complicating the certainties produced through colonialism. In the formation of hybridity or the “passage between fixed identifications”[3] Ghosh remarks on the subsequent “cannibalization” of Indian culture. In an interview conducted by Vijay Kumar, Ghosh believes that by “enter[ing] the minds of nineteenth-century Indians” and experiencing “imperialism [as it] breaks the overarching structure of society,” Indian culture is subjugated (Kumar 3). The internal destruction of one’s cultural makeup is what Ghosh deems as the “cannibalization of Indian culture” (Ghosh 467). Cannibalization, or the decision to eat and destroy one’s own

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[1] In Ghosh’s interview with Vijay Kumar, he keeps the “places” intentionally ambiguous, not wanting to restrict colonialism’s impact to nations.

[2] Tariq Jazeel in *Postcolonial Spaces and identities* places emphasis on the hybrid cultural formations but later rethinks hybridity as a language of splitting, partitioning, or further subjugating the individual. Unlike Jazeel, I do not see hybridity as a mere fusion, but a compilation of experience and memory.

[3] Mentioned in Tariq Jazeel’s *Postcolonial Spaces and identities,* but quoted from Homi Bhaba’s 1994 essay, *The Location of Culture.*

culture, is an ongoing process of self-erasure of Indian identity. Ghosh's 2000 novel produces dialogue between the historic-colonial process that catalyzes a consumption of culture, thus producing the transformative, hybrid person. The aforementioned hybrid identity is an irremediable process of colonial dislocation of culture.

First wave of British colonialism

Demarcating the progression of British imposition in waves allows us to see British motives as instigating the cannibalization of Indian culture. Through an intentional recoding of India's social and ethnic diversity, the British-installed hierarchy imposes western values. This measure of Indian value promoted the Indian's self-erasure of their culture.

Before full-fledged waves of British imperialism exploited and decimated the harmonious plurality of Indian culture, the British East India Company cautiously established trading agreements with the Mughal Emperors of the 16th and 17th century. Though not explicitly imperialistic, British interactions with the Mughal Empire were intended to gain profit and advantage in the European market. The old British East India company, a joint-stock company, symbolized 16th-century international trading partnerships. This desire to expand trade eastward coincided with the 16th-century breakdown of British feudal governments, along with the subsequent rise of capitalism. Yet, the British were limited to a few forts in Southern, coastal India. The trading restrictions imposed on the British momentarily upheld a *mutually* beneficial partnership between Asia and Europe. However, British traders, having amassed fortunes from foreign markets, spurred a race to establish a monopoly on Indian goods.

In the years preceding the stringent British control and regulation of subcontinental trade, the 16th-century Mughal Empire was at its peak of economic growth and vitality. Flourishing in the trade of textiles, specifically cotton, the South-Asian subcontinent consolidated and expanded its political and economic powers. The centralized Mughal state experienced immense prosperity through trade with the West and allowed a degree of autonomy to the merchant class (Bose 35). This Muslim Empire bolstered South Asian culture: it recreated and illustrated famous Hindu epics such as the Ramayana, utilized Persian and Urdu languages in court, and drew on Islamic sharia law to preserve order. However, as Mughal control gradually weakened, India reverted to a decentralized regional distribution of powers. Through commercialization, these decentralized, autonomous regional groups continued the economic growth (Bose 41). In essence, the decline

of Mughal power did not lead to a degradation of the economy; rather, the economy was "characterized by general buoyancy and creativity despite some key weaknesses and contradictions" (Bose 42). Here, we see a flourishing subcontinent that regionally built upon the legitimacy of the Mughal hegemonic culture with its diverse practices.

Second-wave Imperialism

Despite the vitality of decentralized India, British seizure of Indian political power in the 18th century marked the start of second-wave British imperialism. The reinstated, powerful British East India company drove a campaign of military expansion, conquering small, individual kingdoms. British seizure of the functioning, decentralized India homogenized the rich cultural, geographical, and religious differences. Opposing India's lenient and individual practice of cultural systems, Britain strictly enforced cultural divides. A part of this consolidation of the subcontinent was through British regulation of the caste system. Taken from ancient Vedic culture, British forces concretized the Vedic's established system of separation, policing the system of class divisions. The stratification of Indian occupation hardened under British power as the British mechanized the system to control Indian relations. Thus, the British unification of India adds emphasis on social organization–a central mechanism of British rule. Britain's pretended altruism to advance and 'civilize' India ruptures the diversity and quality of Indian life: the 1770 great Bengal famine, the depression of Golden-age port cities, the suppression of internal and external trade, and overall "economic stagnation" resulted from the British exploitation of Indian states (Bose 52).

Rather than introducing a Western form of governing typical in colonized states, the British utilized and wielded established cultural and political constructs for colonial domination. The East India Company utilized India's men and internal governing system to advance their political control–"legally arbitrating [their] Empire by India's own laws and customs, rather than any imported from a 'superior' Europe" (Washbrook 483). The structure is "cannibalized" or turned against the Indian, taking the shape of physical dominance. South Asian power and culture were further dismantled by British authorities using Indians to conquer other South Asian counterparts. This system of utilizing more Indians than British in the military "assur[ed] the dominance of the higher-level British administrators" and the stagnant pawn-like state of the colonized (54). Pitting Indians against Indians, the British creates a form of antagonism within

Indian subgroups. This violently destructive British manner of political dominance standardized Indian constructs and marginalized cultural practices.

Finally, British colonial rhetoric that constructs Indians as inferior, simultaneously creates a gap between Indian culture and that of the British. The desire to please and achieve western economic, social, and political success promoted an erasure of Indian culture. The British East India Company's process of inserting itself in the Indian market decimated the natural industries of the subcontinent, and formalized a practiced inequality through the means of eroding the once dominant Indian hegemony. Not only was native culture suppressed and devalued through its own institutions, but also the Indians who fought on behalf of British authority installed British supremacy in each land conquered. The South Asian soldier became a readily disposable pawn who forfeited his own culture to please the British, cannibalizing his own culture in the process[4].

Creating South Asia

Moving from the imperial structure of domination, I turn to the modern-day, twentieth-century composition of the subcontinent. Modern-day India is a result of two waves of British colonial influence that unifies the landmass bound by the Indian Ocean to the south and the Himalayan mountain range to the north. Between those two boundaries, the subcontinent is home to an array of distinct ethnic and cultural groups. The British feat in consolidating India subsequently disregarded natural boundaries to flatten cultural and religious variances. The colonizer's ability to maintain regional order by unifying diverse regions and identities created a supracultural[5] identity from multiple, distinct identities.

Coined five decades ago, after British erasure of the Indian diversity, "South Asia" is the most recent proper name for the subcontinent. This "origin geographical expression" differs from the Indian subcontinent's previous colonial names such as British India and Hindustan (Bose 3). The change in name correlates to India's autonomy; the fall of the British Raj in 1947 marks a shift in India's political autonomy. Similarly, after the military coup in 1989, Burma underwent a change in nomenclature from Burma to Myanmar. Myanmar's name-change parallels the modern coinage of "South Asia" in that it removes overt evidence of colonialism. Language and its

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[4] I will offer a clearer picture of this cannibalization upon a discussion of the military in *The Glass Palace.*
[5] This term is my own, referring to the way in which British authority created a single, transcending culture.

production of the colonial subject manifest most effectively in the power of naming. The names "British India," "Hindustan," and "Burma" created identities driven by the colonial master. Thus, reidentification appears as an attempt to recuperate lost identity. In spite of this refusal of subjection through language, not all South Asians recuperate their culture uniformly. In the case of Myanmar, the symbolic removal of the name "Burma" means reidentification through emphasis on native Burmese culture; the nations comprising the South Asian political alliance consolidate in reaction to British imperial collapse. Despite this shift in nationhood and identification, I use South Asia as a modern term that incorporates the colonial history of Burma but avoids pigeonholing Myanmar in a form of political consolidation. In my analysis of *The Glass Palace* I aim to further show various identifications with colonial histories that encompass South Asia–namely Burma and India. Thus, my use of South Asia denotes Ghosh's ability to transcend borders and nations, forming a common history that situates Burma and India at the nucleus of the colonial enterprise.

Particularly, the term "South Asia" unites countries with a common background: a signifier of supranational unification. The seven nation-states which comprise modern South Asia include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. South Asia, rather than purely serving as a political marker, simultaneously indicates a regional unification between countries with the common colonial denominator (Bose 3). The present-day political consolidation of South Asian histories is recognized as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Not only does this geopolitical union implemented in 1983 unify itself on the world stage, it isolates itself from its South-East Asian counterparts. Myanmar, however, in separating from British control, broke from its historic identity as part of British India and disentangled itself from South Asia and British India alike. Despite Myanmar's modern identification and desire to separate from South Asia, Ghosh chronicles the family's memories and interactions with the ancient Burma. Even as the state of South Asian nationhood shifts throughout the generations, the nation takes a secondary role to family memory.

The Glass Palace and Displacement of the Nation

I look at *The Glass Palace* as representing the continuing material effects of India's colonial past. By interweaving adjacent narratives, *The Glass Palace* chronicles British colonial domination in India. The novel reveals the erasure of native Indian and Burmese culture in the

course of British colonialism and, demonstrates how as a result, this historical context saw the creation of a hybrid South Asian identity. One of the hybrid identities the novel fleshes out is that of Rajkumar, an Indian-Burmese orphan. Rajkumar's narrative is part of Ghosh's historic timeline: The British seizure of Burma on November 14, 1885 and postcolonial realities in 1996 India bookend the novel. Ghosh's emphasis on periods of South Asian history constructs a vision of the past that connects significant moments that highlight the shaping of South Asian diversity.

The displacement of the nation—more specifically, Burma—lies in the transition between first and second wave British imperialism. Mirroring the 18th-century British imperialism in India, the British East India company conquers the centralized Burmese kingdom through militant means. As a consequence, Burmese tradition and plural practice erodes. In this portion, I use *The Glass Palace* by Amitav Ghosh to demarcate histories of fictional characters–all of whom are interconnected by witnessing the systematic decay of their culture. The British conquest of Burmese land catalyzes change in identity; here, I see this change as it pertains to Rajkumar, Saya John, and the Royal Family.

Ghosh's novel focuses on Rajkumar, an eleven-year-old Indian with "teeth as white as his eyes and skin the color of polished hardwood" (Ghosh 1). This solitary boy lurks in the shadows of Burmese society, arriving in Mandalay after the boat on which he worked needed repairs. Displaced from his job as an errand-boy on the sampan and his native Indian homeland, Rajkumar walks inland to find work in the Burmese "golden land" where everyone is said to be well-fed and have jobs. As a displaced Indian, Rajkumar is pushed to the peripheries of Mandalay culture; his Hindustani language and *kaala* or dark appearance ostracize him from the rest of Burmese society. Upon learning about Rajkumar's orphanage, Ma Cho–a half-Indian, half Burmese woman hires him. Rajkumar seeks to work with Ma Cho if only to receive no more than three meals a day and a place to stay, and despite being hired by her, Rajkumar is not fully accepted into Burmese society. His unassimilable Indian identity in a homogenous Burmese society pushes the eleven-year-old Rajkumar to the fringes of the "bamboo-wall shacks" on the city streets of Burma. Thus, Rajkumar represents an identity that is at a geographical crossroads—the point of intersection between both Indian and Burmese cultures.

Saya John, a Christian contractor sexually involved with Ma Cho, is Rajkumar's first exposure to a plural, multifaceted identity– "one that does not belong anywhere, either by the water or on land" (9). Saya speaks broken Hindustani connecting himself to Rajkumar's roots,

but also drawing on a connection that runs deeper than their current location in Mandalay: their commonality in being outsiders. Just like Rajkumar, Saya John is an orphan. He was brought up by "men from everywhere–Portugal, Macao, Goa" in a town called Malacca, then moved to Singapore to work in a hospital. The soldiers in Singapore, Saya John recounts, noticed his ambiguous and intermixed identity and asked, "how is it that you, who look Chinese and carry a Christian name, can speak our language?" (9). Like the Indian soldiers in the hospital, eleven-year-old Rajkumar sees how Saya John is an outsider: "His clothes were those of [a] European and he seemed to know Hindustani, and yet the cast of his face was that of neither a white man nor an Indian" (Ghosh 8). Physically, Saya John does not conform to either the Burmese or Indian society, but rather is a convergence of Eastern and Western characteristics. In addition, his clothes mark his western identity, reflecting a balance between his Indian heritage and his future western-capitalist success.

Not only does he represent an amalgamation of cultures, Saya John's sexual relationship with Ma Cho is interracial. Ma Cho regards Saya John as a man in a position of power, nervously expressing to Rajkumar how he is her "teacher…he knows about many things," speaking in "small, explosive bursts" (8). Though Ma Cho is self-sufficient, single-handedly running her restaurant, she is subordinate in relation to Saya John's worldly experiences. Thus, Saya exerts his worldly knowledge and power over both Rajkumar and Ma Cho, introducing Rajkumar to both foreign and familiar values.

Even so, Saya John's desires are foreign to Rajkumar, a boy who has only experienced hard labor that yields little reward. While working for Ma Cho, Rajkumar sees a self-made, hardworking woman who limits herself to self-enforced domestic servitude "sitting at her fire, frying baya-gywa" for her restaurant (8). In contrast, Saya John ceaselessly capitalizes on the Burmese teak industry, since his flourishing business feeds on British economic interests in that industry–a confluence between regional and global markets. The desire for prosperity and capitalist success drives Saya John. He indulges in material goods and markers of status – buying a ticket on a first-class steamer, owning a large house, and sending his son to America. Though his desires aren't overtly capitalistic– not being seen by Rajkumar as "a man who had a great craving for luxuries"–Saya strives to extend his earnings (58). Furthermore, his success supersedes societal limitations on Eastern economic success. Saya John is a man with close aspirational ties to the colonial master: he integrates overtly British values such as the English

language, Christianity, Western dress, and self-earned success with his Burmese-Indian heritage. Seeing in Saya John someone whose profits yield a life to be proud of, Rajkumar begins to see colonial-capitalist associations as a way of demarginalizing and elevating his social reputation.

Saya John represents the dominance of colonial-capitalist values in his historical context simultaneously questioning the structure of South Asian society under British rule. Treading the border between white and brown, civilized and uncivilized, Saya does not accept his own colonization. His rejection of British power comes to light when Burma is occupied by Indian sepoys standing in as British soldiers. These battle-hardened troops spark a cross-cultural antagonism –South Asia begins to internally crumble as neighbors are pushed to fight one another. The Indian men who fight, Saya John tells Rajkumar, are peasants who for a few "annas a day…allow their masters to use them as they wish[ed], to destroy every trace of resistance to the power of the English" (Ghosh 26). Saya John looks at the world with skeptical clarity, cutting through the opaque motives of those soldiers. The fight these soldiers have stem from a place of innate, pride-less submission, of selfish innocence. Saya John views their quick subordination and betrayal of their nation as a form of cannibalization[6] rooted in innocent evil, an evil more dangerous and potent than that of their English masters.

The British-Indian destabilization of the Burmese power and monarchy early in the novel provides Rajkumar the impetus to move toward capitalistic benefits. He desires the stable life that capitalism provides, performing as someone of the West to gain social and political mobility and status. The working-class Burmese society gives us a polarizing outlook on the manners involved in coping with British power: the Indian soldiers fight with "murder in their hearts" while Rajkumar fights for a place in any society (26). Comparing the two men, Saya John juxtaposes Rajkumar's hunger for knowledge against the other Indians who obliterated their own communities for short-term monetary gain. While Rajkumar strives to participate in innovative, self-earned success, his male Indian counterparts collectively decimate their own blood for profit. Here, Saya John's observations on the youth of India provide context to the consumption of South Asia by their very own citizens.

The very same British-Indian soldiers in which Saya John refers are the same Indians who fight for British control of Burma. This hostile British-Indian takeover quickly defeats

[6] A reference to the first portion of my essay in which I define "cannibalization" as the active decision to eat and destroy one's own culture.

Burmese weaponry and soldiers, placing the smaller Burmese state at a great disadvantage. Unable to keep up the fight, Burmese troops surrender after only a few days. In the process of their warfare, the troops leave the royal family exposed and vulnerable to British rule. The defeat of Burmese troops removed the Burmese king from power. Transferring from old, royal Burmese traditional power to imperial rule, the native overarching structure of Burmese society breaks down. The disintegration of the Burmese culture coincides with the exile of the Burmese royal family. King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat's exile serves as a metaphor for the overarching erasure of royal Burmese culture.

In many ways, King Thebaw was an extension of Burmese cultural values, since he was the symbol of unity. The enforced displacement of the royal family– King Thebaw, Queen Supayalat, the four Princesses and a handful of servants – from Burma to India altered core Burmese traditions. Their passage from Mandalay to Rangoon to Madras and later Ratnagiri increasingly distanced the king and queen from the place in which they called home. The movement across land and sea symbolically represented the intersecting of geographic displacement with political and cultural transformation. This displacement/transformation disconnected the Burmese royal family from their subjects. At first, King Thebaw noted the mutually dependent relationship between his role as king and his subjects: "It wouldn't suit [the Burmese], all this moving about. They were not a portable people, the Burmese" (44). The king refers to himself and his people as one entity, expressing his own desire to be stable and stationary. In conjunction with his removal, the King anticipates the "moving about" of the Burmese people. Opposed to the spatial move involved in King Thebaw's exile, his subjects' move is figurative in that they begin to break with the once dominant Burmese culture. Just like that of the king, the strength of the subject's culture succumbs to and is removed by British power.

Just as King Thebaw predicted, the absence of the royal family has an immediate impact on Mandalay, the Royal Burmese city. Immediately after British invasion, Ghosh depicts the city as "a city of Ghosts" with many of the King's men "staging attacks on occupiers" from the countryside (49). Documented in the novel, the banishment of the King brings immediate chaos and strife when palace soldiers and villagers stage revolts to attempt to reclaim Burmese life. Yet, the passage of time correlates to the urbanization of Mandalay, and when the British renovate the Burmese court as a commercial hub, it seems destined to be the "Chicago of Asia"

(58). The energetic colonial exploitation of resources gives Mandalay a vibrant, bustling human-life while depleting agricultural life for capital benefit. The need for exploitation as a form of advancement takes precedent over tradition. This new, British-led Burmese practice of exploitative agricultural measures with an "energy and efficiency hitherto unheard of" marks a self-consumption, a self-destruction of the Burmese peoples own land and resources (58). The replacement of Burmese traditional values with British capitalistic values gives Burma economic weight, linking Burmese identity with its natural resources. The exploitation of land– in this case, timber–allows Burma to be a profitable British colony. However successful the colony, the Mandalay citizens are severed from their king, their land, and their culture as they knew it.

Queen Supayalat, is the dominant, authoritative Burmese figure – the true proxy of her people. Her palace, her possessions, and her subjects are all manifestations of her sovereignty. While King Thebaw passively accepts defeat, Queen Supayalat fights to preserve her and her husband's values. Her love for King Thebaw and his "ineffectual good nature seemed to inspire a maternal ferocity in her" (33). This "fierceness" and passion paired with "guile and determination" are exemplified in Queen Supayalat "stripping her own mother of her powers…and ridding King Thebaw of his rivals" (33). She dominates and kills to protect her King's position in the palace, and when the British begin their advancement toward Burma, she creates an army. We see Queen Supayalat's maternal ferocity arise when Burmese citizens pillage and enter the palace. She fights the loss of her material possessions and in defeat, remains steady and confident. Her confidence and audacity in chastising her once-inferior subjects conjure the first tangible bond between the Queen and her people. Queen Supayalat's powerlessness moves the townspeople to "entrust her with the burden of their own inarticulate defiance" (30). She fights to protect the previous royal hegemony, screaming and exerting herself as superior. In this chaotic political moment, she refuses her debased position.

Supayalat's fight does not stop after her displacement. In place of practicing sovereignty over her kingdom and state, she exerts power over her home domain. Wielding a hierarchy between her, the servants, and the townspeople, the Queen assumes her monarchical position in Ratnagiri. Despite living in a shabby house, her enforcement of forms of royal sovereignty preserves her core identity. Further, the British Collectors who come and go from Ratnagiri visit the house in fear of the Queen. She preserves the spirit of Mandalay protocol, not acknowledging the British Collectors adamant in their refusal of performing "the shiko"–the act of bowing that

physically places the subject in a lowered position in relation to his sovereign (91). Queen Supayalat's anger amplifies when the British refuse her their respect. In her anger, she greets the stunned collectors into her shabby home with a "proud-thin lipped smile" of defiance (91). Disregarding those officials who deny her respect, Supayalat refuses to submit herself or her culture to inferiority. The manner in which she practices Burmese tradition within the house and allows the house to decay to reflect British negligence is Queen Supayalat's resistance to British imperialism.

The British dethronement of the Burmese royal family transports the family to a downtrodden Indian bungalow called the Outram House. The King and Queen's movement from their regal, isolated Burmese palace to the vacant Indian bungalow debases the family's quality of life. Being placed in a common, shabby house, the royal family is removed from their position of power and authority. Functioning as symbolic of the rise and fall of Burmese royalty, these two abodes represent two distinct moments in Burmese history. While the palace represents the height of Burmese strength and power, the Outram House in India signifies the dismantlement of Burmese superior authority. Yet, however symbolically polar these two households appear, they both attempt to isolate and preserve the culture of their inhabitants; in other words, each household provides a barrier between the royals and the community that engulfs them. Just as the royal palace secludes Burmese royalty from commoners, the Outram House encloses and provides a barrier between the Burmese culture inside and the surrounding Indian village life. When disease forces Ratnagiri society to move up the hill, closer to the Outram House, the Outram House can no longer preserve Burmese identity. A liminal state between Burmese and Indian culture, the house reveals the decay of Burmese hegemonic power. Illuminating the debased status of the once-esteemed Burmese family, the royalty becomes the nucleus of a low-class Indian shantytown.

If the Burmese culture inside the Outram House is slowly intermixing with that of Ratnagiri society, then the four Burmese Princesses of the house become products of the emerging dynamic culture. The cultural memory of their familial strength, of usurpation, and royal power fades with the progression of time away from Burma. This dissipation of Burmese culture manifests in the Princesses' change in clothes from royal Burmese "aingyis and htameins" to Indian saris. Unlike their expensive Burmese items, the Indian saris worn were "not expensive or sumptuous but the simple green and red cottons of the district" (67). Dressing like

Ratnagiri citizens is the Princesses' own manner of expressing their circumstance. A shift in sartorial choices most commonly is an expression of material circumstance, and in this case, the replacement of ornate royal garb with simple clothes represents the debasement of the Princesses' social and individual identity. The simple cottons of the masses reach the isolated Outram House, and the Princesses begin to resemble "Ratnagiri school girls" (67). Adorned in the same material as the masses, the Princesses emulate their Ratnagiri environment, distancing themselves from their Burmese culture.

Though slowly assimilating into Ratnagiri culture, under the domain of the "stern" and "unmoving" Queen Supayalat, the Princesses remain artifacts of royal Burmese culture. The function of the Princesses is twofold; they serve as Burmese tokens of the past *and* are subjects of the Queen's tyrannical household rule. The Queen oversees the Princesses' marriages, not seeing fit the intermarriage between the "true-born Konbaung Princess" and the remaining eligible Burmese bachelors. Securing her husband's position as King, she "decimated her dynasty by massacring all of Thebaw's potential rivals" (98). The massacre of her own royal blood deters the limited bachelors from marrying into the Queen's family. For the Queen, any marriage regardless of their lineage would defile the Princesses' pure, royal bloodline. In doing so, the Queen prevents the British Collectors from choosing husbands for her daughters, an assertion of her last remaining sovereign power. In her steadfast decision to maintain Burmese hegemony within the household, she mandates her daughters to place family first. As we will see with the Second Princess, the act of abandoning the Burmese family and culture results in the Queen disowning her.

While the First Princess does not marry a commoner, she succumbs to her libidinal desires and becomes pregnant with the coachman, Mohan-bhai's child. The First Princess's pregnancy severs her from both traditional expectations of Burmese marriage and the British desire to contain Burmese royal-blood. According to the British "teachers," the Princess's pregnancy with a "half-caste bastard" brings with it the "smell of miscegenation[7]". Finally, this prospect of mixing races "alarms" and "awakens" the British to "the enormity of what they have done to this family" (149). Unlike the British "teachers," the Queen accepts the change in

[7] Ghosh uses the controversial term "miscegenation" to represent the mixing of caste and blood in this particular instance. The American context has very distinct implications–signaling a historic ethnic and racial intermixing between white and non-white peoples.

tradition, pardoning her daughter and accepting the child. This acceptance of change accompanies her disdain for the hypocrisy of British rule. The Queen states to the British Collector how the Kings of Burma are seen as “subjects of the barbarity” from the British who “rules by laws,” but neglects to grant King Thebaw a trial by the law (130). The Queen propagandizes her daughter’s pregnancy by publicly handling the affairs and reveals injustice in British legal procedures. The pregnancy is a manifestation of the “rule of the law” in which the Burmese royalty are subject to British subversion of their own set of laws (Ghosh, Amitav & Chakrabarty, Dipesh).

Wielding her power through the family’s mixture of race and class, the Queen forces British legal procedure. Whereas before the child each member woke “to the same sounds, the same voices, the same sights, the same faces,” faced with the humiliation of the royal deterioration, the British build a new palace fit for Burmese royalty (101). In countering the British values of maintaining “neatly separated races” in South Asia, the child frees the family from the Outram House (149). As the impure child liberates the Burmese royalty from their imprisonment in the Outram House, one could conclude that twenty years of British neglect had accumulated to produce the “half-caste bastard-child” that saves the royal family (101).

Whereas the First Princess in her pregnancy defies tradition, yet dutifully stays with her family, the Second Princess altogether abandons the palace. The Second Princess’s decision to elope with a Burmese commoner and to hide herself away in the Residency marks the beginning of the end of her royal life. Separating herself from her royal stature, the Second Princess becomes an entity distinct from the family unit. The King, in his final days, sends the Second Princess a note pleading with her to come home. His impending death seemingly responds to the Princess’s absence, but the Queen “let it be known that the Second Princess would never again be permitted to enter her presence” (177). Here, the Queen authoritatively banishes the Princess from sight though the King does not want such a banishment. Because the Princess puts love and marriage over her familial bond, the Queen revokes the Princess’s right to be part of that family. Further, once the daughter strays from Burmese beliefs of “good” and “decent” behavior, the Queen cleanses her of the family (183). The Princess’s elopement is her choice to abandon her Burmese identity. Thus, the correlation between the Second Princess’s removal conjoined with the passing of the last Burmese King symbolizes the continuing erasure of Burmese identity.

The First and Second Princesses both defy their family by moving to India. As the Queen

makes the journey back to Burma in 1919 shortly after the death of the King, the First Princess is confronted with the dilemma to perform her duties as a wife or to fulfill her duties as the eldest royal daughter. She chooses to defy her family and abandon Burma to live in India. With her small family, the eldest Princess settles on the outskirts of Ratnagiri. Similarly, the Second Princess and her husband live in Calcutta before moving to a "hill-station" (183). Both daughters seek solace in the "outskirts" or "hill" country of Indian society, a position of isolation. The two younger sisters follow the Queen and form a life under the shadow of the former Queen in her former Burmese royal territory. Due to their submission to the reign of their mother and their inability to understand and experience pure royal Burmese culture, the Third and Fourth Princesses are erased from the narrative. The emphasis is on the defiant siblings who represent a partitioning of identity and of the family.

This section has aimed to unfold the steady erosion of Burmese culture as it relates to the displacement of Burmese rule. The individuals of the royal family, and those altered by the fall of the royal family relate to their immersion in Indian life in distinct ways, either following the rule of the Queen or relinquishing their titles. This storyline serves as a platform for the mapping of systematic changes in Burmese identity, leading to the creation of an Indian-Burmese cross-culture.

Intermediate, Multicultural Identity

I now turn from explicating a group of characters who each react distinctly to the shift in their society to focusing on Dolly, the royal servant-girl. Contrasting the enforced exile of the Princesses and Royal Family, Dolly– "a timid, undemonstrative child" and the youngest of the Queen's trusted attendants–willingly follows the Royal Family into exile. Serving as a royal servant, she submits herself to the Queen and the antiquated Burmese royal identity, perpetuating palace customs outside of Burma. In this portion, I look at Dolly's identity as a stabilizing factor in preserving traditional Burmese customs.

Dolly's story begins at the height of Burmese monarchy in the Mandalay Palace. As a ten-year-old girl with no memory of her parents or any Burmese village, she is the youngest of the royal maids and has the most success in calming the cholic Second Princess. Taking care of the Second Princess makes Dolly an invaluable asset to the Queen. Despite her duty, Dolly is a child herself. She looks to the Queen as a maternal figure with her "ferocity" and "willful

determination," even throughout the British military seizure of Mandalay (36). Upon being taken into British captivity, the pregnant Queen remarks that she cannot rest, "point(ing) to Dolly's red eyes and tear-streaked face" (22). In this instant of political distress, the Queen relieves her own maids from duty, asking other palace servants to take charge. As she relinquishes her own comfort for that of her maids in a moment of crumbling Burmese hegemonic stability, we see the extent to which the Queen relies on and cares for her servants.

Even more important, Dolly's role in the household appreciates when the royal family becomes distant from Mandalay. Her rule over the other household servants assimilates them into the Burmese culture, her teaching of protocol perpetuates traditional Mandalay rules, and her enforcement of these rules allows the Queen to be treated as a Burmese Queen. Before moving to Ratnagiri's Outram House, the royal family stays in Madras where the Queen dismisses seven disobedient Burmese servants. Replacing them with local Indian servants, Dolly asks for the old Mandalay rules "the shikoes, the crawling…to be observed" (48). She remarks how "clumsy and inept [the local servants] were," and she "could never understand why they found it so hard to move about on their hands and knees [in the shiko]" (47). Dolly is unable to sympathize with the foreigners and their struggle to adopt a new culture; her identity is confined to the observance of palace traditions and power and so her job provides the Burmese royalty with a displaced Burmese sanctuary in India.

Her life in exile at The Outram House for approximately nineteen years provides Dolly with a connection to her childhood life in the Royal Glass Palace. Dolly confides in Uma, the British Collector's wife, about the reason she has decided to stay: '"And where would I go?... This is the only place I know. This is home"' (102). In living her life as a subdued servant, she is unable to envision a world where she has a future distinct from the Royal Family. Spending time with Uma and reflecting on the Mandalay Glass Palace, a place Dolly truly considers home, creates for Dolly an air of nostalgia for the old days in Burma. Dolly's nostalgia for the golden-age of Burmese traditional customs binds her to the remains of the old palace. When she constructs the pre-colonial hierarchy of Burmese royalty, she identifies with the antique royal Burmese customs—the only culture she knows. Dolly is slow to adjust to the new realities in Burma, and when she makes the passage back to Burma she grows "increasingly withdrawn" (156). Her apprehension stems from Rangoon being a foreign city, one where she will need to form a new community in which she belongs.

Dolly and Rajkumar: A "miscegenated[8]" race

Transitioning from individual characters who embody the Burmese past in distinct ways, the family tree begins to interconnect and expand. The two parallel strands of the story, Indian Rajkumar's life in Burma *and* the Burmese royalty's exile in India, collide. This entanglement occurs when twenty years after Burmese exile, Indian Rajkumar seeks to reunite with Dolly. Their initial encounter and childhood bond links them to a single memory of pre-British past. Reunited through past events, they produce a generation of multicultural Burmese-Indians that interact with the British imperial-world of the early 20th-century.

Dolly marries Rajkumar, a man from her Burmese childhood, and abandons Ratnagiri with the members of the royal family she has served and followed for many years. Through two juxtaposed moments, British destruction of the Burmese social structure introduces ten-year-old Dolly to Rajkumar. In the course of the two moments, Rajkumar seeks out Dolly: The commoners ransacking the royal palace and the royal procession away from the royal palace connect the two children to a specific memory of Burmese decay. In the first moment, Rajkumar follows Ma Cho into the Royal Glass Palace with the intent to pillage and ransack the previously untouchable palace, and observes the sea of people dismantling the royal jewels. Before entering the woman's quarters, he is cognizant of the men and women hard at work "digging patterned gemstones," "cutting wood," and "prying ivory inlays" (29). Then, his attention diverts from surveying the actions of the multitudinous people and items to the single servant girl: Rajkumar's eyes "fell on a girl" who was "by far the most beautiful creature he had ever beheld" (30). His motive shifts with his attention: upon seeing the valuable ivory jewelry box "lying forgotten in a corner," he runs to grab it and gives it away to "the slender little girl" (31). Instead of recuperating items from the palace, he returns the gold jewelry box to the Queen's servants. Rajkumar forgets about his intention of pillaging the palace and its material possessions because of his infatuation with Dolly.

The second symbolic instance of Burmese hegemonic dissipation is the enforced removal of the Royal Burmese family from their palace. During the procession to herd the royal family to exile, Rajkumar offers Dolly a package of sweets, "pressing a banana leaf packet into her hand" (39). The second exchange of items and goods between two children, strangers to each other,

[8] Ghosh's term. Refer to footnote 11.

binds Dolly and Rajkumar together. Rajkumar "raced back into the shadows," "keeping pace, watching the soldier who was marching beside her" (39). In focusing all of his attention on Dolly's actions, movements, and location, Rajkumar overlooks the significance of this procession. Unexpectedly coming across Ma Cho weeping, Rajkumar finally looks at Ma Cho's crying as a sign: "He had been so intent on keeping pace with Dolly that he had paid little attention to the people around him…looking at either side, he could see that every face was streaked with tears" (40). This interchange between two children with distinct circumstances–Dolly forcibly leaving Mandalay and Rajkumar staying in Mandalay–interconnects them to a specific place in time. In both instances where old Burmese power structures are overturned, the childhood worlds of Dolly and Rajkumar merge together. Rajkumar, too enraptured by his exiled-other, fails to notice a moment of the people's grieving for old Burmese culture. For Dolly and Rajkumar, linked together as they are, the ransacking of the palace and the royal parade away from their home represent the fall of a society that once had offered both orphans refuge.

In 1905, almost twenty years after the complete and total occupation of Burma, Rajkumar travels from Burma to Ratnagiri to pursue Dolly. He offers Dolly a concrete memory of the old Burmese culture and traces her back to their first encounter. After meeting Rajkumar in Ratnagiri, Dolly couldn't sleep and "kept thinking of home---Mandalay, the palace, the walls of glass" (140). The memory of encountering Rajkumar evokes for her a collection of distinct memories and a loyalty to their shared experience. However, at first, she denies herself and Rajkumar the nostalgic recuperation of the past: "Things might have been different for us in another time, another place. But it's too late now. This is my home" (142). This dialogue marks a moment when the past seems irreversible. Though Rajkumar offers Dolly an alternative way back to Burma as his wife, she has matured in Ratnagiri, and confronted with a marker of the past, Dolly realizes that the place that links them no longer exists. She reveals the irreversibility of a lost Burmese culture but nonetheless accepts Rajkumar's proposal and the current Burmese society.

The marriage between Rajkumar and Dolly connects her to an unrecognizable Burmese society. Rajkumar is the representation of the past-monarchical and present-capitalistic Burma. This boy, lifted by political chaos, rises to represent both the old and new society. Caught between following her past memories of Burma and Rajkumar, or exile in her disintegrating culture in India, Dolly chooses her past place over her present identity, and thus she starts her life

with Rajkumar. She marks a clear transition from her life in India to Burma in taking one last look at the Outram House, not "allow[ing] herself to be robbed of this last glimpse of the lane" (148). This last glimpse is the final moment of Dolly's servitude. She severs bonds with the Burmese Royal practices which she had helped for many years to preserve. This spatial passage to Burma is a reclaiming of her past home; when she follows her childhood memory, moving back to a familiar space that now feels foreign.

Dolly and Rajkumar–a Burmese woman and Indian man– create an interracial population of Burmese-Indians; their internal cultural hybridity surfaces on a biological level. Neel and Dinu, Dolly and Rajkumar's children, represent a generation temporally distanced from the former Burmese tradition. Despite Neel and Dinu being nurtured by the same parents in a presently hybrid Indian-Burmese society that values British technologies, amongst themselves their hybridity is distinct: While Neel involves himself with his father's capitalist ventures and innovations, Dinu recaptures the past through his camera.

Neel and Dinu are each given two baby names–one Indian and one Burmese. The practice of giving two names overtly displays ties to the family's Indian and Burmese identity. An astrologer confirms for the couple that the process of giving each child two names "was custom among Indians in Burma" (168). Here, Burmese and Indian values intersect, creating customs derived from the hybridity between two South Asian cultures. After deliberating, Dolly, Rajkumar, and the astrologer decide that the boy's "Burmese name would be Sein Win; his Indian Neeladhri–Neel for short" (168). Four years later, the process repeats itself with Dolly's second pregnancy. Like Neel, the baby boy was given a Burmese and Indian name–Tun Pe and Dinanath– Dinu for short. In the instances of naming their children, Dolly and Rajkumar (and the astrologer) practice their power to consolidate their own familial culture and pass it down to the next generation. Also, in deciding on two names for their children, one representing each culture they are part of, Dolly and Rajkumar forge a multicultural identity for their children. Although they are formally given ties to both cultures and live in Burma, their family calls Neel and Dinu by their respective Indian names. Both boys are formally connected to two cultures and identities, yet they are principally defined by their Indian culture.

Despite being a cohesive representation of their parent's multiculturality, the brothers diverge from one another in terms of their physicality. Neel most resembles Rajkumar, being "big and robust, more Indian than Burmese in build and coloring," while "Dinu, on the other

hand, has his mother's delicate features as well as her ivory complexion and fine-boned slimness of build" (174). Their difference in physical appearance mirrors their differences in personality. Neel is always "filled with energy, boisterousness, and loud-voiced goodwill," and is the object of Rajkumar's fatherly attention (174). Dinu's personality most resembles his mother's soft resilience while he combats his way through "bouts of sickness and ill health" (174). Thus, while Neel resembles his father in that he is visibly stronger and more Indian, Dinu takes after his resilient and soft Burmese mother. I argue that this difference in physicality between Indian and Burmese peoples represents distinct interactions and views of the world. The quiet Dinu works to reconcile his Burmese past through art, while Neel follows in his father's capitalist footsteps.

Though the family is a balance between two distinct personality traits–Rajkumar and Neel's boisterous, robust Indian traits countering the calm resilience of Dinu and Dolly–the bond between Dinu and Dolly creates a divide within the family. This relationship between mother and younger child deepens with Dinu's battling polio. When Dolly instinctively changes the family's sleeping arrangements to sleep with Dinu in her own bed, the voice of the recently deceased King Thebaw enters her dreams: "She understood exactly what he was trying to communicate," urging her to take Dinu to the hospital (175). King Thebaw's phantom-voice saves Dinu from polio. In Dinu's survival, King Thebaw's voice creates a bond between Dolly's past Burmese life serving the royal family and her present family. In protecting Dinu, Dolly becomes absorbed by Dinu's convalescence. Not only does King Thebaw's voice change Dolly's interaction with the present, but the voices in the hospital give her notes of warning: "listening to voices inaudible during the day: the murmurs of anxious relatives; distant screams of pain; women keening in bereavement…spoke to her" (181). Through the voices, Dolly and Dinu live a shared traumatic experience. Their invisible bond divides them from Neel and Rajkumar.

The differences in personality between Neel and Dinu separate the way in which they embrace their own multiculturalism. I first look at Dinu's perspective, one that becomes "more withdrawn" and "years older in maturity" after he regains the ability to walk (178). Dinu distances himself from his nuclear family, preferring solitude over interacting with others. Not only is he "unresponsive and cold" with his father and brother, Uma Dey, Dolly's friend and confidant, in meeting Dinu for the first-time states that he "seem[s] sullen, dour, and such observations he occasionally had to offer were usually tart to the point of sourness" (178, 197). In this passage, we see a Dinu who estranges himself from his family and is unable to interact

with others. He is incapable of verbal expression, speaking in “sharp, staccato bursts,” “swallowing half his words and shooting the rest” (196). Here, language is depicted as a violent form, creating misunderstandings between Dinu and his family. In turn, photography brings Dinu out from the shadows: “Only when Dinu had a camera in his hands he seem[s] to relax a little” (196). Dinu looks at the world through his viewfinder, capturing and ingraining moments onto a piece of film. This innovative, modern form of artistry candidly recreates and preserves real scenes. Photography is a technology that cements Dinu’s ties to past memories.

In his adulthood, Dinu advances to a Rolleiflex twin lens reflex camera from the Brownie camera from Ro & Co. Being able to take images in motion, he appreciates the new cameras for their production of images that capture the most minute details. In this moment, Dinu hones his quiet, introspective character, embracing his self-imposed isolation and seeking solace in his nonconforming personality. He states that even amongst his scarcity of friends he “derives so much pleasure from photography…there was no place more solitary than a darkroom” (241). For Dinu, the process of producing images encompasses his outlook on life. The artistic form of framing and shooting the camera, the processing of photos in the dark room, and executing a picture between the camera as a tool for “you and your imagined desire” gives photos the capacity to speak (438). In his preservation of the past and construction of the future, Dinu draws on modern innovations; this manifests in his lectures given in his photography shop called “The Glass Palace” after World War II. The modern art form of photography provides a newfound method of interpreting politics. In every lecture, Dinu talks about the “new and revolutionary art forms [that] may awaken a people…or challenge old ideals with constructive prophecies of change” (439). Here, Dinu challenges existing ideals and manners of thinking, informing a diverse view of the world. He actively works to inform and create an intellectual society that disrupts the old ideals and “habits of obedience” through the secret language photography provides (438).

Unlike Dinu who takes an oppositional approach to life, Neel follows in his father’s conformist capitalist footsteps. His purpose in life is to work with his father in the timber industry and join the family business. Despite his adamance, Rajkumar initially turns down Neel’s request to learn the family trade in timber, believing “the timber business wasn’t for everyone…especially a city-bred boy like Neel” (234). This rejection sends Neel to the film industry, giving him the drive to double his earnings and prove his father wrong. After gaining

sufficient profit in the film industry and establishing himself as capable of business, Neel aids Rajkumar in his effort to relieve the family from the debt they had accumulated between World War I and World War II: "Neel and Rajkumar were often away, arranging for the disposal of the family's properties or buying new stocks of teak…The Packard (teak compound) was one of the few disposable possessions that Rajkumar had retained, but it was now driven mainly by Neel" (296). Enjoying work by keeping the family teak business afloat, Neel is driven to become as successful as his father. Rajkumar and Neel possess a "special bond, a particular closeness;" Neel has a child-like trust for his father that "looks into Rajkumar's [eyes] without reservation, without judgement, without criticism" (353). During World War II, Rajkumar profits off the war, liquidizing his teak industry to maximize his profits. The production of a capitalist economy in India uses the Western imperial method to create a better future for Rajkumar and Neel's family. The values and systems of the imperial British power now manifest themselves in the ideology of Rajkumar and Neel.

Rajkumar investing all of his money into the war-time teak industry sparked a "lightening in the atmosphere of the house," giving Neel, Rajkumar, Dolly, and Neel's wife–Manju–hope for a prosperous future (354). The prospect of becoming more and more prosperous and keeping the family afloat is Rajkumar's last feat of capitalist glory. Looking at the "yard with its huge, neat stacks of timber," Rajkumar can't resist "the spectacle of watching elephants at work" but simultaneously feels nervous watching Neel do hard labor alongside them-- Neel being inexperienced with the equipment and with elephants. As he travels back from a bank after some work there, Rajkumar hears bombs being dropped in Rangoon, aiming for the city's mills, warehouses, tanks and railway lines (397). These bombs claim all of Rajkumar's assets–his teak, money, elephants, and even his son, Neel. Instead of being able to use the war for a familial victory, Neel becomes a casualty of the capitalistic venture. Neel's desire to recreate the past success results in his own demise.

Overall, Neel and Dinu expand on Dolly and Rajkumar's multicultural family identity, but each react to their own diversity in distinct ways. Neel works to advance his father's past capitalist success, and subsequently fails due to his inexperience doing menial, physical labor. Dinu, on the other hand, captures cultural and ideological differences between Britain modernity and Indian tradition through photography. His appreciation for a continuity between past and present perspectives drive the communities in his photography shop, "The Glass Palace."

Befitting the critical and political work he does on behalf of art and its political voice, Dinu's photos are omnipresent in the narrative—even in his absence. As Dinu vanishes into the darkness, leaving behind only the collection of family portraits captured, the memories he has created remain intact. These pictures are placed in the center of the family shrine. Thus, these photos actively relive the memories of their beholders. I will now turn to the meaning of this multigenerational novel and the significance of Ghosh's images.

Political Discourse and *The Glass Palace*

As I have argued, Dinu uses his cultural memory and photographs to emphasize the "cannibalistic" effect of politics on "all of life, all of existence" (467). He consolidates the complex framework of *The Glass Palace*, providing insight on the relationship between his culture and "the politics [that] has invaded everything, spared nothing…religion, art, family…" (467). Thus, Dinu's inability to escape politics serves as a transition from discussing the hybridity of culture in India to the political strife that eats away or cannibalizes the core of society. While Dinu comments on society through modes of art, he doesn't fight for a nationalistic India or Burma. Arjun, Hardy, and Uma, in contrast, commit themselves to a political fight, countering British colonial superiority. Arjun and Hardy serve in the British infantry and Uma Dey serves as the British Collector's wife—all three characters working within British power. After serving under British power, these three characters offer distinct visions of a nationalist India.

Arjun and Hardy physically sign themselves to represent the British Indian army. They do so enthusiastically, feeling privileged to move up the ranks from the Military Academy to the 1st Jat Light Infantry. In enlisting themselves in a society that valorizes the "collection of symbols–colors, flags," they take their acceptance as a measure of their elevated social standing (227). In corresponding to Manju, his twin sister, Arjun states, "you have to remember that the regiment is going to be my home for the next fifteen to twenty years" (227). Attaching his identity to his position as a soldier, Arjun creates a new life for himself. In emphasizing his "regiment" being his "home," he removes himself from the constraints of Indian society. In addition, he basks in the ability to participate actively in a new community that functions through British military ranks and honor system.

The desire to be accepted into this strong, "royal" community compels Arjun to conform

to the values of those around him. Coming back home for Neel and Manju's wedding, the family sees the extent of Arjun's conformity and relationship with "the chaps" (242). While each man represents a distinct region of India, they are unified through their need to prepare for combat. The stories and histories they share strengthen their ties to one another, but they are paradoxically "so exaggerated that they seemed to be inventing versions of themselves for collective consumption" (242). Here, community-bonding becomes superficial, a brotherhood that forged through "symbols," "collective lore," and "metaphors that sometimes extended beyond kinship" (242). The men Arjun and Hardy become are "dictated by others… [more specifically] manuals of procedure," since they slowly become pawns in British-Indian agenda (241). Yet, Arjun feels a connection to the small, insignificant tasks assigned to him, a form of false control. Each shared experience, each revulsion, each mouthful of food tests the strength of their unity. Conjoining their self-worth to their proficiency in assimilation to British values, these "brothers" or "chaps" abandon their past-culture to be accepted into the British brotherhood.

After a few whiskies, Arjun believes the unit to be "the first Indians who're not weighed down by the past" (243). Despite the evident inequalities that divide the British and Indian officers, his belief in his mission and the British power is stable. Hardy, a Sikh, from a "family that's been in the army for generations," experiences a racial tension in his position as commissioned officer (244). Only allowed English food, Hardy needed a daily dose of "dal-roti" to get him through the day. It is this act of eating "dal-roti" and maintaining his connection to his culture that turns his people against him: "his home is in the village next to ours. How can you expect us to treat this boy as an officer? Why, he cannot even stomach the food that officers eat" (245). The Indian officers turn against the boy who rises above their rank, rejecting the idea of being ruled by an Indian. Having a British officer as one's superior is "seen as a source of pride and prestige," and a fellow Indian is seen as a lesser value (245). This is a smaller instance of a larger, more potent issue of internalized inferiority. Arjun is cognizant of the institutionalized divisions between Indian and British soldiers, yet he is held by the sense of community the army creates. The ideals of "freedom and equality…something that is dangled on front of their noses to keep them going" is the British mechanism of delegating authority (247). The stability of British power lies in those who are blindly faithful, ensuring innate British superiority. The most debilitating effects of British colonialism lay in Indian and Burmese internalization of British superiority.

Despite the community forged through battle and hardship, when forced to leave India, both Hardy and Arjun question their role defending the British Empire. Being Indian-British soldiers in Singapore, they begin to see their identity as a reflection of India's world-stage reputation. While they once believed themselves to be "part of the privileged, the elite," their experiences in Singapore reveal that they were "impoverished by the circumstances of their country" (302). Hardy and Arjun's identities become deeply intertwined with India, inverting the construction of power they had once believed to have. This unveiling of their own reality, of their own powerlessness, changes the nature of their once-respectable relationship with the British. The revelation of their own personal welfare merges with experienced racism. In their decision to enter the pool with British expatriates, "Within a few minutes they found themselves alone" (299). Their elevated social status in India has no impact on their overt ethnic demarcation. Being Indian is being of the lower class, of being dominated. The extent of their debased, oppressed experiences under British rule becomes apparent when they remove themselves from India.

Finally, the internalized racism toward the Indian soldier creates a dynamic where the meaning of colonial life destroys the soldier's character. Hardy begins to see his "job" working as a soldier as internally conflicting and psychologically suicidal. Upon being called a mercenary, a fool whose "hands belong to someone else's head," Hardy states, "You're risking everything to defend a way of life that pushes you to the sidelines. It's almost as you're fighting against yourself" (351). Remarking on the feeling of destroying one's own culture and life to be used as a tool, a weapon for colonization and destruction, the soldiers begin look past the "grimy curtain of snobbery" (302). In this moment of acknowledging their own foolishness; the soldiers begin to see how they have cannibalized or contributed to their own poverty. Giving up Indian food, villages, and families to join the British, each soldier moves up the false ranks of superiority. Just as they realize their goal of equality with British is unattainable, out of reach, they revolt. Their move to another country unveils the primitivity in being used as an instrument. Faced with a decision to revolt, Arjun dies a hero in his last moments resisting British dominance.

At the end of their lives, these two soldiers fight their way to be free of the colonial institutions that use them as tools. Unlike Arjun who dies in battle, Hardy survives and becomes a public figure in the Indian government. With a national identity hardened by war, Hardy

envisions Indian restoration of prestige and dominance. His defiance of colonial power stems from his recuperation of tradition. This mirrors Uma Dey's political articulation and colonial resistance. Uma Dey, like Hardy, works within the colonial infrastructure of dominance. Serving as the British Collector's wife, she is in a subsidiary position of authority, ruling over King Thebaw and the royal family in Ratnagiri. In tracing through Uma Dey's formation of identity, and severing from her British-influenced husband, Uma liberates herself from the cycle of internalized subordination. She uses her power and concept of liberty gained in America to influence and liberate India.

I begin with Uma Dey's character when she introduces herself to King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat. Queen Supayalat, though harsh in her demeanor and judgements, praises Uma for the nature of her "self-possession" and ability to "intervene" to save the relationship between the Collector and the royal family (93). Uma has a liveliness and freshness of character that allow her to be the true intermediary between the Royal Family and the British power. Unlike her husband–the district administrator–who is tasked to deal with British affairs with the Burmese family, Uma tries to understand Burmese culture. Befriending Dolly produces this cultural interchange between Uma's Indian upbringing and Dolly's decaying life behind palace doors. Resulting from these conversations, Dolly questions Uma's loyalty to the Queen, stating, '"Don't you sometimes wonder how many people have been killed in Queen Victoria's name? It must be millions wouldn't you say?"' (97). For Uma, British destruction compares to that of the Burmese royal family. Dolly, in pitting these two powers against each other, unveils the double standard invoked between the British and Burmese. She further places the Burmese Queen and her "awfulness" against British brutality, prompting Uma to question her preexisting beliefs. Uma, in working within the British system of power over the exiled family, comes to see the injustice in condemning the family to life in Ratnagiri. Further, bridging the gap between two nations and states, Uma serves as an intermediary between the British and Burmese. She is bound to British loyalty through her marriage *but* also her sympathy for Dolly. With her loyalties in conflict with the First Princess's pregnancy, Uma unveils her loyalty to Burma. She keeps the First Princess's pregnancy from her husband, defying his power through wielding her own opinion and political voice. She neglects her position as the bearer of British imperial strength, power, and image; her loyalty to the welfare of the family takes president over her role as administrator's wife.

This act of defiance brings Uma out from under her submissive role as subject to both British and husband's rule. The First Princess's pregnancy awakens a response to the "enormity of what has been done to this family" with the "smell of miscegenation" overturning their strict enforcement of keeping races "tidily separate" (149). Uma, in keeping her knowledge of the First Princess's pregnancy to herself, undercuts British values. In turn, she loses her comfortable, western life in Ratnagiri, terminating the tenure of both her and her husband's life under the British. The British Collector, faced with charges, kills himself at sea. Uma's widowhood grants her complete freedom, allowing her to leave India for the west. This movement from India to Europe gratifies her with a freedom that she never had believed possible. She questions "why women could not think of travelling like this in India, revelling in this sense of being at liberty," but in the process of thinking about women, she thinks about freedom as a whole (163). She sees the British world as paradoxically granting "freedom by imposing subjugation" (163).

Uma then moves to America where she finds complete and utter freedom away from British oppression and etiquette that had once dictated her life. She perceives this link between the country that she once served and the subjection of her Indian country. Her life in New York gives her a political voice when she joins the League, a network of Indians who work to undercut British power in India. She explains to Dolly upon meeting after twenty years that the Indian homeland "was being set on an unbudgeable path that would thrust it inexorably in the direction of future catastrophe" (192). Here, Uma examines the destructive impact of British rule and exploitation on the country's future. Her vision of India and aspirations for a better future impact those around her, and she becomes a political activist alongside Mahatma Gandhi. Her revelations extend far past her own identity and experiences; she actively unveils the stark contrast between the British justification of "setting those people free from their bad kings and evil customs" and the act of conquering the South Asian identity. Under the guise of saving their Indian counterparts, these Indians working under British authorities were confident in aiding the British Imperial power (193). The creation of the tertiary network of Indians who perpetuate the colonial mindset of eastern inferiority is the stem of what Ghosh calls the cannibalization of culture. Uma dedicates her life to eliminating this stem of British imperialism rooted in India, pushing everything else but politics out of her life.

Conclusion

The lives of these four families are intertwined through the history which they each experience. Each generation wields their identity through its own vision of India's future. While we see a capitalism that helps further familial prosperity through Rajkumar and Neel, Dolly and Dinu represent the recapturing of past events and an appreciation for the present. Contrasting the members of the family whose memories build upon being collateralized by British forces, figures such as Arjun, Hardy, and Uma worked under British authority. Only in unveiling the guise of British power do these four characters begin to break down the network of systematized oppression. British political control hybridizes, destroys, and subjects South Asian culture. Through memories of each individual, Amitav Ghosh illuminates a dynamic, yet actively cannibalistic and self-destructive, Burmese-Indian identity.

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