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The
Comparative
Humanities
Review



Conversation/Conversion 1.1 (Summer 2007)

Edited by Nicholas K. Kupensky

The *Comparative Humanities Review* is a student-run journal dedicated to the support and distribution of undergraduate scholarship in the humanities. We welcome submissions that are comparative in nature and employ any discipline in the humanities. Contributions should be written when the author is completing his/her undergraduate degree. For more information, contact the Editor-in-Chief by consulting our Facebook Group or visit the website.

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The Comparative Humanities Review

Conversation/Conversion 1.1

Edited by

Nicholas K. Kupensky

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N.K.

Notes on the Contributors

Graham Bippart recently graduated from Bucknell University (Lewisburg, PA) with a B.A. in Philosophy. His interests and favorite research topics include language and Enlightenment philosophies, Shakespeare, and Joyce, but in his last year he concentrated primarily on modernist literature and theory.

Anna Juan an undergraduate student at Bucknell University double majoring in English and Comparative Humanities with a minor in French. She is spending the fall semester of her junior year studying in Bath, England. This paper was the product of a peculiar semester in which Anna studied sexuality in a Comparative Humanities course (History of Sexuality) and an East Asian Studies course (Passions/Perversions in Japanese Film) at Bucknell. This, in turn, introduced the intriguing prospect of studying various theories of sexuality from both Western and Eastern perspectives. In this History of Sexuality essay, Anna undertook the task of examining Diotima's physicality and its effect on her contribution to the testosterone-driven realm of the *Symposium* as the only female.

Nick Kupensky recently graduated from Bucknell University, completing his B.A. with majors in Comparative Humanities (honors), Russian and English. He has studied in Bath, England, and Moscow, Russia, and recently defended his honors thesis entitled "'Our Own Flesh and Blood?': Tolstoy's Problem with Shakespeare in Russia," which argued that the rich matrix of global genealogies present in Tolstoy's fiction authorize his critique of Russian literature's obsession with Shakespeare. Nick has also presented conference papers on colonialism, theories of influence, and translation studies on writers such as Emerson, Freud, Hafiz, Plato, Pushkin, Saadi, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Woolf. His current research includes essays on Samuel Johnson's theories on translation and comprehension, steelworker poetry, and the literature of suicide. After spending a year studying at Moscow International University, Nick will enter Yale's Ph.D. Program in Slavic Languages and Literatures in the Fall of 2008.

Marcus Ladd recently graduated from Bucknell University, completing his B.A. in Anthropology and Classics; he has studied at UC Cork in Ireland as well. His interest is in how stories, especially myths and legends, can reflect not only on a culture's worldview but also their history,

taking a particular interest in the Celtic cultures in their various forms in different times and places. The paper on Arthur is the result of a long-time fascination with the Arthurian legend combined with a paper first conceived during an independent study in Welsh. His other current project is the editing of his translation of a text called the "Liber de Ordine Creaturarum" (Book on the Order of Creations), a Hiberno-Latin text written by an early Irish monk. He'd like to thank Professor Alf Siewers for help with both the research and the editing involved in the development of the paper on the historical Arthur. Marcus will begin the University of Toronto's Master Program in Mediaeval Studies this fall.

Chad Miller recently graduated from Youngstown State University (Youngstown, Ohio) with a B.A in Psychology and Philosophy. His other academic interests include Art History, Film, and Economics. Chad's interest in virtual worlds stems from their ability to offer an opportunity to study human cultural behavior within a unique environment. His work as President of the Student Government Association has sparked an interest in using research to guide policy creation and engender positive change, both at the university and government levels, and he intends to pursue graduate studies in this area. His current research involves Jury Nullification, the tacit power of juries to judge a defendant based on their collective sense of justice rather than the strict letter of the law.

Daylin Oakes is currently a junior at Bucknell University. She plans to double major in Philosophy and Classics. She is also a member of the Humanistic Scholars program. This paper was written for a Comparative Humanities course entitled "Art, Nature, Knowledge" which covered the evolution of western thought from late Medieval period through the nineteenth century. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, among the course's many revolutionary readings, captured Daylin's attention for its combination of humble and head on argumentative style.

Marie Vivienne Pineda is an undergraduate student at the Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University (South Orange, NJ). She is interested in literary works that examine ethnic identities because of her own experience growing up in America as a Filipino immigrant. Marie's wrote her essay, "Unique Experiences Draw Universal Audience", for an English class on poetry.

Toàn Phan is currently a Ph.D. student at the Economics Department of Northwestern University (Evanston, IL) after recently graduating from Bucknell University (Lewisburg, PA) in 2006. He spent most of his under-

graduate career doing research on pure mathematics, with occasional experiments in painting and photography. He had hoped to find a synthesis between the logical ideas of mathematical abstraction and the non-rational feelings of aesthetics, but was interrupted by his other interests in theories of human nature, existential philosophy, egoism, narcissism, and cigarette lighters. Toàn contributed the painting on the cover of this issue, which he titled “Re-Birth of the Artist” (2006).

Gordon Michael Purves is currently in a Ph.D. program at the University of South Carolina (Columbia, SC), where he is studying philosophy of science and the philosophy of quantum theory. He is recent graduate of Bucknell University in philosophy and physics. His primary research interests are in the incorporation ontology into physical theories through rational methodology, with a particular focus on counter-paradigmatic realist interpretations of quantum theory. The paper presented here on Falsificationist Realism is a selection from his undergraduate honors thesis in philosophy, in which he argued that a phenomenological foundationalism has dominated philosophy of science since Descartes, and then provided an ontologically oriented alternative, arguing its superior ability to progress both science and technology. He was also the only member of his graduating class to complete two separate honors theses, the second one being in physics. The physics thesis demonstrated historically the phenomenological foundationalism of quantum theory, and then developed an ontological alternative to the standard interpretation based on his radical philosophy of science, using that philosophy to devise several experimental tests that could differentiate between the two. By doing so, he demonstrated the ability of an ontological scientific methodology to progress science in ways that the common phenomenological methodology cannot, as well as its ability to solve problems that are insoluble within the standard model.

Josh Taylor is a recent graduate of Youngstown State University in Philosophy. His undergraduate work focused on the exploration of virtual worlds and their cultural impact. In addition to writings and presentations on this topic, he has participated in a both board and video game design projects. Perhaps the most interesting of Josh's academic endeavors has been a week spent as a research subject for an anthropology student studying gaming culture (see Chad Miller's article in this collection) and a presentation on a statistical analysis of the Nintendo game Tecmo Super Bowl with mathematician and fellow YSU graduate Dave Gohlke at YSU's Pi Mu Epsilon Regional Conference (February, 2006).

Michelle Toumayants is a 2006 graduate of Penn State University (State College, PA), where she received her B.A. in Comparative Literature and African Studies. During her time at Penn State, she maintained a 4.0 grade point average and was the recipient of honors such as the Bayard Award for Excellence in Comparative Literature, the Evan Pugh Scholar Award, the Africana Research Center Scholar Award. She is also a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Chi Gamma Lambda, the national Comparative Literature Honor Society. While participating in Dr. Aldon Nielsen's course on African American poetry at Penn State University, Michelle undertook the task of researching the link between Melvin B. Tolson's erudite poetry and his affinity toward African proverbs. Because Tolson's extensive collection of African proverbs has been relatively unexplored by scholars, this research proved to be challenging, yet rewarding. This article is hopefully the first of many that will focus the proverbs' roles in Tolson's eclectic and varied work. She plans to continue her studies in Comparative Literature in the fall of 2007.

Nicole Vesa is currently finishing her B.A. Honors Degree in English at Guelph University in Southern Ontario. She has also attended Laurentian University at Georgian College (Barrie, Ontario) where she acquired Deane's List status during the third year of her degree. Nicole has volunteered in both grade one and grade two classrooms and plans to attend teacher's college when she is finished with her degree.

Death of the Scholar? The Transfer of Knowledge in the Undergraduate University: A Preface

*Nicholas K. Kupensky
Bucknell University*

The book is not repeatable in its “identity”: each reading of the book produces a simulacrum of an “original” that is itself the mark of the shifting and unstable subject. . . . Any preface commemorates that difference in identity by inserting itself between two readings—in our case, my reading (given of course that my language and I are shifting and unstable), my rereading, my rearranging of the text—and your reading. . . . The preface, by daring to repeat the book and reconstitute it in another register, merely enacts what is already the case: the book’s repetitions are always other than the book. There is, in fact, no “book” other than these ever-different repetitions: the “book” in other words, is always already a “text,” constituted by the play of identity and difference. (xii)

—Gayatri Spivak, Translator’s Preface to *Of Grammatology*

As I meditated upon the necessity for this collection to begin with a preface, I found myself returning again and again to Gayatri Spivak’s remarks in her Translator’s Preface to Jacques Derrida’s *Of*

Grammatology (1976). Spivak situates her reading and representation of Derrida's text by deconstructing the idea of a preface, using Derrida's son/seed metaphor to set up a son/father = preface/text equation. Spivak explains that during a successful preface "the son or seed (preface or word), caused or engendered by the father (text or meaning) is recovered by the father and thus justified" (xi); yet, she writes:

Within this structural metaphor, Derrida's cry is "dissemination," the seed that neither inseminates nor is recovered by the father, but is scattered abroad. And he makes room for the prefatory gesture in quite another way: The preface is a necessary gesture of homage and parricide, for the book (the father) makes a claim of authority or origin which is both true and false. (Ibid)

Spivak sheds lights on the multiplicity of readings and rereadings that a text generates, and it is in this "play of identity and difference" that our sense of the book as a premeditated, authorized object gives way to the dialogic, shifting identity of the text. It is on this line of reasoning that I wish to make some prefatory remarks to the following essays, for it is necessary to say a few things before the reader encounters this collection of essays written by a group of individuals only embarking on the path into the academy.

The essays included in this collection all were written by students enrolled in undergraduate colleges and universities. We have collected the written assignments of coursework in the humanities, products of supervised or independent research, and revised chapters of theses, each of which was produced by a student negotiating the newness of a text studied for the first time with the desire to possess some "authorized" knowledge about their subject. The Comparative Humanities Review was created to support, promote, and distribute undergraduate scholarship in the humanities, and one of the unique issues that the existence of a publication of undergraduate essays raises is what exactly is undergraduate scholarship?

Indeed, the very notion of a Student-Scholar seems to be a contradiction in terms. One Ivy League graduate school calls the Ph.D. dissertation "a substantial independent piece of research which heralds your transformation from a consumer to a producer of knowledge." If we extend Spivak's and Derrida's structural metaphor, we can easily create a constellation of son/father = preface/text = consumer/producer, the quality distinguishing the last set of terms being the knowledge authorized during the experience of writing a doctoral dissertation. Without the scholarly hardware of our professors, we undergraduates are forced to reconcile our status as children, as "consumers" of knowledge, left wondering

what exactly our essays, presentations, and theses are? What type of readings do we generate, and if our readings are not yet authorized as scholarship, criticism, or knowledge by professional standards, is there a location for undergraduate readings of texts to reside? Perhaps a more honest question, if we take Spivak's contention that "There is, in fact, no 'book' other than these ever-different repetitions," can the undergraduate readings of humanistic texts be treated with a similar seriousness as any other reading? Furthermore, can the act of not publishing in professional, peer-reviewed journals in order to find the space to examine our own voice and our own unique subjectivity as Undergraduates be seen in the same terms as the simultaneous act of homage and parricide? These are a few of the questions that the Comparative Humanities Review hopes to entertain with our debut issue, *Conversation/Conversion*.

In lieu of the exploration, exhibition, and celebration of undergraduate scholarship, we have chosen to play on the common root of "converse" and "convert" entertaining the belief that by supporting undergraduate conversation in the humanities, we are helping undergraduates convert from Student to Scholar, a distinction that one cannot entirely dismiss in the "publish or perish" academy.

Our aim is not to illegitimize the academy nor de-authorize academics per se, but shine light brightly on the problematic moment in which know-nothing Students transition into all-knowing Scholars. That is to say, our undergraduate years combine the humble realization that what we know pales in comparison to seasoned professors – who often have been meditating on a given subject longer than we undergraduates have been alive – with the potential for free-thinking and creativity that exists in its purest form before the institutionalization, professionalization, and commodification of knowledge begins. We are not yet professors, so the articles contained in this issue do not claim to "profess" anything. What we hope to do is share our readings, exhaust our ideas, and explore inklings, approaches, and topics that we might not be able to explore once tenure, review, and promotions become part of our everyday lexicon.

That said, by professional scholarly standards, the following essays are incomplete, under-developed, and subject to the critiques and criticism of experienced intellectuals; yet, this first collection of essays, by bringing together the intellectual contributions of thirteen students in the United States and Canada, allows us to better assess who we are, what we know, and how we have come to know it.

We open this collection with four exceptional pieces of research, beginning with Michelle Toumayants' article "Poetic Proverbs, African Advocacy, and Melvin B. Tolson." Toumayants traces how the African poet Melvin B. Tolson infuses his powerful yet fragmented modernist poetry with the wisdom of African proverbs as a means of reaching the masses.

Marcus Ladd's extensive research into clarifying the existence of a historical King Arthur is a welcome contribution, and his "Recovering the Historical Arthur" is a finely-crafted example of undergraduate research.

Graham Bippart's essay "The Spirit of Prospero: Fiction and Identity in Georges Poulet's *Phenomenology of Reading*" explicates Poulet's theory of reading, illuminating Poulet with aspects of the thought of Beckett, Barthes, Blanchot, Sartre, and Nietzsche. Bippart writes that Poulet approaches "the act of reading to be a confluence of minds," which offers a number of perspectives from which one can read this collection as well.

We have included a condensed version of Gordon Purves' undergraduate honors thesis in which he develops his critique against the phenomenological and ontological trends in modern Western philosophy, developing his own methodology of falsificationist realism.

The undergraduate writers collected in this edition are perhaps the first generation of scholars raised on video games, and consequently we have two very provocative essays emerging from two students of philosophy at Youngstown State University. Josh Taylor brings the philosophy of Robert Nozick to the virtual worlds created by video games in his essay that examines "gamers" as theoretical participants in Nozick's Experience Machine. While Taylor explores the text of the virtual world, fellow classmate Chad Miller uses the language and tools of anthropology to locate the video-gamer within multiple realities, temporal and virtual. In his article "A Short-Term Ethnographic Study of a Popular Massively-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game," Miller studied two students (Josh Taylor and Andi Bok) and the relationship to the game World of Warcraft.

Nicole Vesa in her article "Overthrowing Optimistic Emerson: Edgar Allen Poe's Aim to Horrify" examines how Poe departed from Emerson's aesthetic through his use of horror.

Next, Anna Juan in her article "Mind Over Matter, Matter Over Mind: Phallusophy and Diotima" gives a reading of Plato's *Symposium* that reveals how Diotima, the text's only woman, uses active and passive sexuality to subvert the reign of the phallus.

In her article "Distinct Cultures Create Similar Themes: A Study of Langston Hughes and Cathy Song's Poetry," Marie Vivienne Pineda med-

itates on how Hughes and Song similarly work through questions of identity, rebellion, and being an American in their poetry.

Finally, if there is one anxiety that each of these authors have faced, it is the anxiety of publishing; Daylin Oakes in her article “Darwin as a Humble Revolutionary” examines Charles Darwin’s biography and his own questions about the authority of his discoveries.

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On behalf of the editorial board of the Comparative Humanities Review, it is my sincere hope that our readers come away from this collection with the feeling of pleasure, that your responses will become part of the larger conversation on undergraduate scholarship in the humanities, and that these essays provoke you to send us your thoughts as well. Thank you for reading.

Works Cited

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Poetic Proverbs, African Advocacy, and Melvin B. Tolson

*Michelle Toumayants
Penn State University*

*“Brow tron lo—eta ne a new won oh gike!”
“Seule de tous les continents...l’Afrique n’a pas di’histoire!”
“...maneno matupu”*

Words from Africa and Europe, Asia and the Americas fill the pages of a small volume. An excerpt from Shakespeare, allusions to Cullen, Dryden, and Raleigh, references to Nietzsche and Goethe wend their way through the first eighteen lines of an ode to a burgeoning African nation. *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia*, masterwork of Melvin B. Tolson, opens with a characteristic intellectual intensity that threatens to overwhelm its reader with a cacophony of voices, languages, and literatures. This poem, commissioned by the president of Liberia for the nation’s centennial celebration in 1947, elicits ceaseless comparisons with T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, with its myriad footnotes and use of languages such as Urdu, Egyptian, French, Swahili, and Japanese. Many have observed Tolson’s erudite and seemingly sophistic style, and have questioned his method of attaining his self-professed goal—that of speaking to his fellow

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* Excerpts taken from *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia*, lines 58, 170 and 171, and 496, respectively. Tolson’s translations read “The world is too large—that’s why we do not hear everything;” the French is a quote from Eugène Guernier that is translated “Of all the continents, Africa alone has no history!” and the Swahili replies “empty words.”

African Americans and encouraging them to unite against racial and class discrimination (Russell 3). Some critics have accused Tolson of sacrificing his goal in favor of garnering acclaim, pointing at *Libretto's* (and his other poems') voluminous footnotes and difficult vocabulary. This, they say, is a man writing for the "literary caviar" (Russell 9). This author would like to counter that argument by pointing at another device Tolson employs in *Libretto*: the African proverb. A comparison of the structure, usage, and purpose of the proverb and Tolson's poetry will show that Tolson is not writing for the elite; rather, this intellectual is ever-mindful of the masses and uses the common proverb as a model for his poetry, and also as a weapon against prejudice.

Libretto for the Republic of Liberia is divided into eight sections, each designated by one of the eight notes of the diatonic scale. Tolson devotes eighty-four lines of the section "Sol" to African proverbs, proverbs from various continental locations, proverbs with varied connotations. Proverbs such as "the white man solves between white sheets his black problem," and "an open door sees both in and out" come in rapid succession, seemingly without purpose (207-209, 197-198). Their presence in the poem seems to be a mere acknowledgment of their existence—nothing more. Tolson, however, had an admitted fascination with African proverbs. At his October 1965 poetry reading at the Library of Congress, he devoted nearly ten minutes to reading and explicating the proverbs found in *Libretto*, which constitutes roughly fifty percent of the time he discussed the poem in its entirety. The mere fact that he devoted a significant amount of time to the proverbs implies the wisdom Tolson found in them and their integral and inseparable role in *Libretto*. The presence of African proverbs in Tolson's poetry and lectures, however, does not provide an adequate basis for an argument regarding an ideological link between these adages and his poetry. Tolson's proposed observance of and respect for the relationship between proverb and poetry requires a more empirical examination of the proverb's properties to illustrate this relationship.

Neal R. Norrick conducted a study on the proverb's structural qualities that will provide the basis for this examination. In his book, *How Proverbs Mean*, Norrick defines the proverb as "self-contained, pithy, traditional expressions with didactic content and fixed, poetic form" (31). Each of these characteristics can be applied to Tolson's poetry as well, as they are either directly or indirectly displayed in verses such as *Libretto*.

The first attribute that Norrick mentions is that the proverb is self-contained. By this, he means that the words used in a proverb cannot be interchanged and that it is an integrated unit (32). For example, the

English proverb “where there’s a will, there’s a way,” could not be remade as “where a determined spirit is present, an individual can surely prevail.” Such a change does not retain the same elements of the original and would fall out of common usage quite quickly. Therefore, proverbs contain “kernels” (“will” and “way” in the previous example) that are immutable and can call forth the proverb with their mention (Norrick 45). Tolson uses the idea of “kernels” throughout the *Libretto*. Each time he makes an allusion to another literary work, he is exercising the principle that mentioning certain words will evoke a recollection or response from the reader. For example, line 261 reads “*Ecce homo!*” which calls forth the biblical account of Jesus’ crucifixion as Pilate declares, “Behold the man!” Tolson used this condensed reference to underscore the theme of human suffering that he follows in “Ti” (Brunner 435). Furthermore, Tolson firmly believed that the words themselves were integral parts of the poem. He appealed to the “3 S’s of Parnassus” as a framework for his word selection, which outlines the importance of sight, sound, and sense (Russell 5). Tolson emphasized the fact that the sound, scansion, and rhythm of the word are of utter importance to the poem’s overall integrity, and claimed at the Library of Congress that “the poet has double crossed you” if poem has words that are interchangeable. Thus, *Libretto* uses the idea of “word kernels” on two levels—they serve as ideological connections and as indispensable linguistic components.

The condensation of the “kernel” interplays with the second part of Norrick’s definition—pithiness. At his Library of Congress reading, as Tolson speaks about some of the African proverbs he uses in *Libretto*, he pauses to comment on the proverb “no fence’s legs are long enough.” Tolson explains that the African is referring to the fact that “foreign” ideas and peoples will encroach, regardless of how high the fence or wall. Both Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg, he says, addressed this same issue in their poems “Mending Wall” and “A Fence,” respectively. However, Tolson praises the proverb for its pithiness, as he says that it is able to encapsulate the essence of those two poems in merely six words. Tolson further comments, “What makes poetry *poetry* is its terrific power of condensation, concentration.” Interestingly, Tolson is indirectly dubbing the proverbs “poetry” and is praising the skill of the anonymous African above those revered figures of American poetry. The proverbs are assigned an elevated role as the pattern of purposeful condensed wisdom, which thereby suggests their seminal function in his pithy aesthetic.

Proverbs’ typical brevity and condensation does not disallow the presence of poetic elements, however. Norrick writes that proverbs can have alliterative, metaphorical, personifying elements (46). Alliteration,

rhyme, and rhythm indeed have importance in African proverbs and Tolson's poetry alike. For example, the Swahili proverb, "*haraka haraka haina baraka*" (the equivalent of "haste makes waste"), employs the poetic devices of both rhythm and rhyme, contributing to the auditory delight brought by the words themselves. Tolson was especially enamored with the sound and rhythm of African proverbs and words in general, as mentioned previously. This interest in the poetic aspect of language is found throughout *Libretto*, particularly in lines such as, "The tawny typhoon striped with black / torpors in grasses tan" and "...between / golden goblet and truckling trull / and the ires / of rivers red and the reflexes of fires" (135-140, 470-473). These poetic elements in both proverb and poem are not merely frivolous additions to be skimmed by the eyes; nay, proverbs are by nature lingual, and Tolson wanted his poems to be read aloud (Russell 5). This poet designed his verse so that people would feel them in their mouths while they "chew and digest" the poem (Farnsworth 167). Thus, the African and Tolson use alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm to delight the senses as the speaker and hearer ruminate on the proverb's implied and usually didactic message.

This discussion of structural elements of the proverb and their existing similarities with Tolson's poetry prompts the question of the significance of these findings. Why should one be intrigued or interested that Tolson's verse finds heavy parallels in the proverb? As previously mentioned, many critics found fault with Tolson's work. One such critic was J. Saunders Redding, who accused Tolson of deliberately confusing his audience to prove his intellectual superiority. Redding wrote a scathing attack on the *Libretto* and Tolson's supposed arrogant eruditeness:

[I have] a fundamental objection to poetry which the author must himself interpret for his readers in an addendum of notes. At best, such notes indicate one of two things, and at worst, both things: that the poet found his talents unequal to the full requirements of the particular necessary communication; or that he was deliberately uncommunicative and obscure—in which case his notes are a patronizing gesture to minds the poet assumes to be less recondite or subtle or appreciative than his own. (qtd. in Farnsworth 166)

Redding is outraged because he views Tolson's lines as "uncommunicative and obscure" instead of coded. If one views the difficulty of *Libretto* as analogous to the difficulty of *proverb*, the connotations which Redding ascribes to Tolson's poetry soon disappear. Proverbs, as mentioned in Norrick's definition are didactic (31). In addition to their traditional, conversational attributes, they are used in many cultures as a means to instruct and teach. "A louse that bites is in the inner shirt" is such a

proverb, for it warns for the suffering person to look to his closest associates as possible agitators (*Libretto* 196-197). Norrick adds that that “proverbs are ‘strongly coded’ or ‘overcoded’” (45). One could say, then, that the proverb necessitates two types of interpretation—literal and implied. The proverb “the lackey licks the guinea’s boot till holes wear in the tongue” (183-184), for example, requires the explanation of “lackey” and “guinea” to the ignorant, or a *literal* translation; then, the one being taught must learn the *implied* meaning of the proverb. This explanation by the speaker serves as an “auditory footnote” to the audience so that the didactic purpose of the proverb is fulfilled. In the same way, Tolson uses both simple mechanisms and more complex and in many cases uses footnotes to elucidate meaning for the reader. The proverb and *Libretto* are difficult not because of haughtiness or ostentation, but rather due to the constructive “dialogue” it promotes between audience and listener.

The proverbs within the *Libretto* function not only as an ideological pattern but also as a practical weapon for Tolson to use against prejudice: they provide the means for Tolson to elevate the estate of the African and African American peoples. As previously mentioned, Tolson devotes eighty-four lines of the “Sol” section of the *Libretto* to a mélange of African proverbs. The lines leading to the deposit of proverbs continue to compound the unconscionable evils of slavery and allow the reader to enter into the slaves’ sufferings. In the opening part of the section, Tolson reveals some of the horrors of the slave trade, specifically the treacherous Middle Passage—“This is the Middle Passage: here / Gehenna hatchways vomit up / The debit pounds of flesh” (149-151). The tension builds as the skulls of the murdered Africans themselves cry out, begging the griot to exact revenge: “*Griots*, the quick owe the quick and the dead. / A man owes man to man!” (168-169). Before the *griot* can respond, Europe, through the words of Eugène Guenier, obdurately denies African history and suffering with the derisive “*Suele de tous les continents...l’Afrique n’a pas d’histoire*” (170-171). Through the guise of the *griot*, the figure who Tolson regales as a “walking encyclopedia” and poet, the response comes to the suffering, the slave trade, the Middle Passage, and the European insult: proverbs. Eighty-four lines of proverbs. Unrelenting, metered, pithy proverbs. To Tolson, these proverbs are the poetry of the Africans—their art, their music, their culture. Because their original musicality was mangled by translation, Tolson restores their artistry and underscores their identity as poems by conforming them to poetic meter. There is history in Africa, and these compact African poems are Tolson’s proof. These proverbs are authorless, they are traditional, and they have history. Their mere existence and their utterance by the poet-warrior *griot* helps bolster

the estate of the African.

Just as the *griot* is a warrior and spokesperson for the common Africans, Tolson believed that poets in general, and he specifically, had a responsibility to act as a prophet or teacher to the masses (Russell 2). In a letter to a former student, he wrote the following:

Now, about the little people. Remember “ideas come from above.” If you went into the street and said to a ditchdigger in Chi, “Who is Shakespeare?” he’d say, “The greatest writer that ever lived.” Now, he wouldn’t know a damned thing about *Hamlet* but he might quote some of THE Bard’s sayings that he picked up from the boys in the ditch. Ideas sift down. (qtd. in Farnsworth 145-146)

Tolson uses this fabricated anecdote to illustrate his attitude toward the so-called “little people.” He was not minimizing their importance, but was rather identifying how ideas typically originate from a single source, and then are adapted by the majority for daily consumption. Thus, it is implied that he expected his poetry to provide ideas that, once sublimated, could arrive at their intended recipients: the repressed classes. To this poet, it is immaterial that the African American knows the Poet himself—what is most important is that they remember the empowering message of his poetry. Therefore, just as parents use proverbs to help their children to learn lessons and understand the effects of their actions more clearly, Tolson was using his poetry to instruct his audience how to view themselves, how to view their history, and how to view their potential as an empowered mass. As the estate of African Americans was quite dismal in the 1940s, Tolson did not necessarily expect that his message would be accepted during his lifetime (Farnsworth 112). Instead, in poems like *Libretto*, he writes for the African diaspora both present and future, working against discrimination and empowering his fellow African Americans through glorifying Africa and its culture.

The *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia* itself celebrates the black experience and gives an ample serving of ideas to be sifted down to the masses. There are kernels of truth to be ingested and a people to be restored. Thus, these proverbs are not random occurrences, nor is Tolson’s aesthetic one of pretension or ostentation. In *Libretto*, one can observe proverb and poet working symbiotically, simultaneously borrowing from and reinforcing each other. After examining the structure, purpose, and usage of the proverb within and without Tolson’s poetry, it is possible to conclude that critics such as Redding cannot sustain their arguments of a snobbish, withdrawn Tolson. He was a man who was passionate about his self-assigned cause.

Evidence here presented suggests that his poetry acts as the com-

mon proverb: coded, yet parochial; philosophical, yet terrestrial. Tolson teaches his audience through a coded means and longs to bolster and encourage through his ideas, words that “trickle down” through social strata and through time. Mariann Russell writes that Tolson regarded his *words* as weapons against black oppression (1). They are also his weapon against colonial and neo-colonial ignorance and racism, these evils that were and are endemic worldwide. Thus, the proverb has a dual function—to provide a pattern for the simultaneously transcendent and immanent quality of Tolson’s poetry, and to act as a catalyst for teaching and empowering the African people while elevating them from post-colonial simians to artists in Western eyes.

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Recovering the Historical Arthur

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And at the feste of Pentecost alle maner of men assayed to pulle at the swerde that wold assay; but none myghte prevaille but Arthur, and pullit it oute afore all the lordes and comyns that were there - wherefore alle the comyns cryed at ones, 'We wille have Arthur unto our kynng. We wille put hym no more in delay, for we all see that it is Goddes wille that he shalle be our kynge - and who that holdeth ageynst it, we wille slee hym.' And therwithall they knelyd at ones, both ryche and poure, and cryed Arthur mercy bycause they had delayed hym so longe. And Arthur foryaf hem, and took the swerd bitwene both his handes and offred it upon the aulter where the Archebisshop was; and so was he made knyghte of the best man that was there.

—Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*¹

Much ink (and blood) has been spilled over the truth of the Arthurian saga, and though debates over the centuries have moved away from Breton streets² and into journals, a conclusive stance has yet to be reached. The traditional view since the Middle Ages favored a historical Arthur, though primarily for political motivations by the English monarchy, and it was not until the nineteenth-century that Arthur came under the eye of modern historians³. For a time, most scholars advocated the existence of the historical Arthur, but the scorn of the deconstructionist revisionism took its toll, and Arthur was discarded from history with all legends as “rank forgery”⁴. The historical deconstruction of the latter half

of the twentieth-century claims that nothing can be drawn from texts beyond the existence of the text itself, so any attempt to find meaning is nothing more than impressing the reader's own meaning where there is none. Indeed, it is true that when we read or observe anything it is unavoidable to view it through our own perspectives and prejudices. But rather than choosing to reject all that we have discovered as meaningless, instead we should acknowledge our biases, so that we might see how our perspective diverges from the author's perspective, thus altering the text, in order to better understand the text, the author, and the culture whence it came.

St. Gildas Sapiens' history of the collapse of Roman Britain was once rejected as fictitious due to its nature as a mythic history and Gildas was labeled a confused and misinformed man⁵. However, recent archaeological evidence has suggested that his writings might be more accurate than we had previously believed⁶, and that he was, in fact, a well-educated man whose writing hints at access to a large body of now-lost sources⁷. Indeed, the traditional views of Post-Roman Britain are being revisited by historian and archaeologist alike, and much of what was thought to be true, such as an illiterate majority, is now being reevaluated⁸. With archaeological and historical reinterpretation restoring new meaning to these once discarded texts, and maintaining a more developed form of cultural awareness – both of our own and of the past – the time has come to revisit these histories⁹ and the nature of Arthur.

Never has any secular character in the West gained such great literary renown as the legendary King Arthur; the tales of him and his court have had a resounding impact on Western literature and culture. In Mediaeval times, a writer had a choice of three major sources of inspiration: the Matter of France, Rome, and Britain. Out of these, only the Matter of Britain – the Matter of Arthur – has endured¹⁰. Something about this man and his companions struck deep in the hearts of the Europeans, so the question arises: where could such a man come from? Surely no real man could have been born through magical trickery, been gifted with an enchanted blade to protect England against man and monster, only to ultimately fall in battle to the offspring of an incestuous coupling with his sister. And yet, by the same token, how could a man, who has so touched the souls of people more than a millennium after his presumed life, be created merely by the imagination? Many scholars and amateur enthusiasts have argued one way or another, and much of the debate has centered on the reliability of the so-called "historical" sources, such as the much-lambasted *Historia Brittonum*. But while I acknowledge the criticisms of the accuracies of these sources, I would argue that, in light of recent archaeo-

logical interpretation, the body of early Mediaeval literature – both historical and fictitious – nevertheless provides solid evidence for the existence of Arthur as a unique historical figure.

One of the primary reasons that the historical deconstructionists reject Arthur's existence lies in the questionable veracity of sources such as the *Historia Brittonum*, a ninth-century Latin text from Wales that has played a crucial role in the development of the Arthurian persona. One of the most outspoken opponents of Arthur, David Dumville, argues that we cannot rely on the Mediaeval sources for any material of value due to their lack of a sufficient "concept of history":

In general, our ignorance of the political history of the British fifth century is almost total; in my view, it is not legitimate to seek to lighten this darkness by the use of unhistorical sources offered by a writer whose ignorance was complete and whose concept of history did not require him to distinguish between certain types of evidence, as we must do.¹¹

In another article, he goes even further:

I think we can dispose of him [Arthur] quite briefly. He owes his place in our history books to a 'no smoke without fire' school of thought. What evidence is there for his existence?... The totality of the evidence, and it is remarkably slight until a very late date, shows Arthur as a figure of legend... The fact of the matter is that there is no historical evidence about Arthur; we must reject him from our histories and, above all, from the titles of our books.¹²

While caution concerning such sources is to be expected – and essential – I believe that such assertions cross the line both in stating that there is an absolute lack of evidence in support of an historical Arthur and the suggestion of his unimportance in history. Recent studies have found that the theory of a largely illiterate Dark Ages Britain is a shaky claim at best, and there is evidence that writing was not reserved solely for the church and formalities, nor were extensive libraries as uncommon as previously thought, though a majority of the works that would have been in them is now sadly lost¹³. Many of the sources I shall be referring to allude to a greater body of texts on Arthur, which calls into question the theory of a "remarkably slight" amount of evidence concerning the man.

i. Historical Sources

The most logical starting point for our investigation is the work of Gildas, a Welsh monk who wrote *De Excidio Britanniae* ("On the Ruin of Britain") somewhere around 540¹⁴, which would make him a contemporary of Arthur. Though Gildas' primary purpose was a jeremiad-like con-

demnation of the contemporary kings and priests, he begins with a brief historical introduction. In this, he provides a vague account of the fall of Britain to the Saxons, but does mention a successful time of resistance, including a battle at Badon Hill in the year of his birth¹⁵. He also mentions a Roman-British general named Ambrosius Aurelianus, who helped rally the Britons and oppose the invaders: *duce Ambrosio Aureliano viro modesto...vires capessunt, victores provocantes ad proelium*¹⁶ (“led by Ambrosius Aurelianus, a temperate man, the men rallied and challenged the conquerors to battle”). Many scholars have tried to equate Ambrosius with the historical Arthur, citing Gildas as evidence, stating that it seems odd that Gildas would leave out an important character as Arthur¹⁷. However, Gildas rarely mentions names in his historical introduction, favoring titles instead, and so Ambrosius’ lack of any title and description as but a man is striking. While it is debatable whether Arthur was a high or petty king, there is little doubt that, if he existed, he was a ruler of some kind. Furthermore, most sources name Ambrosius as a rival to Vortigern, the tyrant who is said to have brought the Saxons to Britain as mercenaries¹⁸, which would place him at the onset of the Saxon invasion nearly half a century before Badon¹⁹. Also, the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* make Ambrosius a distinctly different character from Arthur, though the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* mentions the two men fighting alongside one another²⁰.

Concerning Badon itself, Gildas describes it as happening after a long conflict with the Saxons, in which neither force gained the upper-hand. No leader is named for the Britons at Badon, so it is often assumed that Gildas implies that Ambrosius was the leader, though this clashes with the later accounts. This is not to say that Gildas names Arthur as the leader at Badon Hill, but rather that he does not give a concrete name at all. What is important that we take from Gildas is that there was a battle at Badon Hill that aligns with the same battle mentioned in the later sources. So, while it is possible that Ambrosius may have been assimilated into the growing Arthur of legend, Gildas’ account provides no firm evidence that Ambrosius was the historical Arthur²¹.

One thing we do know about Arthur is that as he developed into a legendary figure, his nature became very political. Arthur came to be a symbol – both historical and literary – representing the Briton resistance, and so he was bound to become tangled in the culture clash between the Anglo-Saxons and Welsh, as seen in the writings of St. Bede and the pro-Briton response to it, the *Historia Brittonum*. St. Bede, an early eighth-century English monk, wrote a history of the church in England, entitled the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (“History of the Church of the

English”). He made no secret of his distaste for the Britons (especially their church)²², and described the conquest of Britain by the Saxons as a swift and direct affair, in which the Britons failed to put up any serious resistance. Though he does not mention Arthur (or any other resistance, for that matter), Bede’s importance concerning the Arthurian history is in relation to the response to his work, the *Historia Brittonum*, which was written in Gwynedd, Wales, in the early ninth-century, the date of compilation being 829 or 830²³. Just as the anti-Briton *Historia Ecclesiastica* described an utter lack of resistance by the Britons, the *Historia Brittonum* described a most successful resistance led by Arthur:

Tunc belliger Arthur, cum multis Britanniae atque regibus, contra illos pugnabat. Et, licet multi ipso nobiliores essent, ipse tamen duodecies dux belli fuit uictorque bellorum. Primum bellum contra illos in iuxta ostium fluminis quod dicitur Glein; secundum et tertium quartumque ac quintum super aliam amnem quae nominatur brittanice Duglas, quae est in regione Linnuis; sextum bellum super flumen quod uocatur Bassas. Septimum contra illos in iuxta bellum in silua Celidonis quod brittanice cat coit Celidon nominatur. Octauum contra barbaros egit bellum iuxta castellum Guinion, in quo idem Arthur portauit imaginem sanctae Mariae, Dei genitricis semperque uirginis, super humeros suos; et tota illa die Saxones, per uirtutem domini nostra Iesu Christi et sanctae Mariae matris eius, in fugam uersi sunt et magna cede multi ex eis perierunt. Nonum egit bellum in urbe Leogis quae brittanice Cair Lion dicitur. Decimum uero gessit bellum in littore fluminis, quod nos uocamus Traht Treuroit; undecimum in monte qui nominatur Breguoin ubi illos in fugam uertit, quem nos cat Bregion appellamus. Duodecimum contra Saxones durissime Arthur bellum in monte Badonis penetrauit in quo corruerunt impetu illius una die nongenti quadraginta uiri, nullo sibi Brittonum in adiutorium adherente praeter ipsum solum, Domino se confortante. In omnibus autem supradictis bellis protestantur semper eum fuisse uictorem, sicut fuerunt et alii per plures Brittones. Sed nulla fortitudo uel consilium contra Dei uoluntatem: quanto magis uero Saxones prosternebantur in bellis, tanto magis a Germania et ab aliis augebantur Saxonibus sine intermissione; atque reges et duces cum multis militibus ab omnibus pene prouintiis ad se inuitabant. Et hoc egere usque ad tempus quo Ida regnauit — qui filius fuit Eobba; ipse primus rex fuit, in Bernech et in Cair Affrauc, de genere Saxonum.^{24*}

*The text reads: “Then the militant Arthur, with the people and kings of Britain, fought against the Saxons. And though there were many nobler than he, it was he that was twelve times the leader and victor of battle. The first battle he entered into against the Saxons was near the mouth of the river that is called Gleni. The second, third, fourth, and fifth were on another river which is called Duglas by the Britons, in the region of Linius. The sixth battle was on the river called Bassas. The seventh battle against the Saxons that

The controversiality of this work can be seen even in this fragment, which describes Arthur felling 940 enemies in a single battle (though a later work, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* in the early twelfth-century gives the number at 900²⁵). The author of the text²⁶ confesses to have compiled this history from a variety of sources²⁷. Some scholars have accused the author of considerably changing the stories to better suit his tastes, but they also portray him as a man of great "ignorance and stupidity"²⁸, which makes it difficult to believe that "this dolt's uncritical heap"²⁹ is his own fabrication; if he was so dull-witted, the author would have simply lacked the genius and literary skill to create such a story. Rather, we should accept the possibility of other (now lost) sources apart from Gildas and Bede, be they accurate or not. So while it may have little value on its own, in conjunction with other sources, the *Historia Brittonum* can still be of value to us.

In 970, in Dyfed, Wales, a similar source, the *Annales Cambriae* was compiled, described by its author as "a sober historical document using good sources"³⁰. The *Annales Cambriae* is a chronicle of Welsh history in the years 447 A.D. to 954, listing a series of important events and the years they occurred in, including a pair of entries on Arthur:

LXXII Annus. Bellum Badonis, in quo Arthur portavit crucem Domini nostri Jesu Christi tribus diebus et tribus noctibus in humeros suos et Britones victores fuerunt.

XCIII Annus. Gueith Camlann, in qua Arthur et Medraut corruere; et mortalitas in Brittonia et in Hibernia fuit.^{31*}

Arthur engaged in was in the forest of Celidon, which is called Cat Coit Celidon by the Britons. The eighth battle against the foreigners was near the castle Guinion, and there Arthur carried the likeness of holy Mary, the mother of God and eternal virgin, on his shoulders. And that day all the Saxons, by the virtue of our Lord Jesus Christ and his holy mother Mary, were routed and during the retreat many of their number perished. The ninth battle was fought in the city Legion, which is called Cair Lion by the Britons. The tenth battle was on the shore of the river we call Trat Treuroit. The eleventh was on the mountain called Breguoin, which we call Cat Bregion, and there Arthur put the Saxons to flight. In the twelfth battle against the Saxons, Arthur drove harshly to the hill of Badon, and on that day 940 men fell to his onslaught, with none of the Britons staying at his side to aid him but with God alone giving him strength. And in all these battles he was the victor, and the Britons with him. For indeed there is neither strength nor plan that can oppose the will of the Lord. The more Saxons that fell in battle, the more they were increased in numbers from Germania and other Saxons without pause; and they summoned the kings and leaders with many soldiers from nearly every province. And this was continued until the time Ida son of Eoppa was king, and he was of the Saxon race and the first king in Bernicia at Cair Eubrac."

*The text reads: "516 AD. The Battle of Badon, in which Arthur bore the cross of our Lord

As N.J. Higham notes³², there are few entries in the first century of the *Annales Cambriae*, and some of the dates are questionable in relation to other sources. However, the *Annales Cambriae* drew on more than simply the *Historia Brittonum* for its composition, so again we find the implication of more sources on Arthur which gives us two independent sources (from an era when much of the literature is now lost) that explicitly describe the existence of Arthur as a historical figure as well as an additional, possible, pair of allusions to him from a contemporary source.

We turn now to our final historian of Arthur: Geoffrey of Monmouth, a twelfth-century Welsh³³ cleric who was very sympathetic to the old Briton people (contemporarily embodied in the Welsh and Bretons), and the primary intent of his writing was to give them a racial history. He wrote three major works on the Arthurian material: first the *Prophetiae Merlini* (“Prophecies of Merlin”), next his magnum opus the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (“History of the Kings of Britain”), and finally the *Vita Merlini* (“Life of Merlin”). The pair of works on Merlin discuss his life and prophecies that were, allegedly, made by him about the future struggle with the Normans³⁴, but it is the *Historia Regum Britanniae* that we are primarily concerned with. In this, he describes Arthur, Modred, Silva Calidonis³⁵, Merlinus, Thelgesinus, Guennolous, Perederus, and others, as well as new deeds and campaigns, in addition to the standard array. While much seems to be taken from the *Historia Brittonum* and *De Excidio Britanniae*, there is also a large amount of material that we have not seen before. Geoffrey claims that Walter, the Archdeacon of Oxford, gave him a “very old book in the old British tongue”³⁶, and it is from this that he gained a majority of his material. As an educated man in Wales, it is entirely possible (and, indeed, likely) that he would know the old Briton language³⁷, and while much of the *Historia Regum Britanniae* is apocryphal – Geoffrey does not hide the sensationalism of his work – the assertion of the existence of such a book could be considered further evidence to the presence of more sources that we do not know about. E.K. Chambers said that history neither proves nor disproves the existence of Arthur³⁸, which remains the safest claim to make, though additional sources might allow for more.

ii. *Literary Sources*³⁹

Although we have little historical record of sixth-century Britain,

Jesus Christ on his shoulders for three days and three nights, and the Britons were victorious. / 537 AD. The Battle of Camlann, in which Arthur and Medraut fell; and there was death in Britain and Ireland.”

we do have a sizeable amount of material from Middle Welsh literature concerning Arthur. While such things as poetry and fiction may not seem like useful aids for determining the existence of a historical Arthur, when contextualized, they can become valuable resources. Out of the five great poets of the Britons mentioned in the *Historia Brittonum*⁴⁰, the works attributed to two mention Arthur: Aneirin (Neirin) and Taliesin, both sixth-century contemporaries, or near contemporaries, of Arthur. In the case of the former, it is in *Y Gododdin* – a series of elegies to the fallen warriors of Gododdin who fought bravely against the Saxons despite overwhelming odds – that we find an allusion to Arthur. In one of the elegies he mentions that the fallen warrior was a great fighter “though he was no Arthur”⁴¹. While this may not seem to be concrete evidence at first, an early Welsh poet would not have used Arthur for such a comparison if he believed him to be a fictional character (in the modern sense⁴²). Aneirin must have believed him to be a historical figure⁴³. A poem attributed to Taliesin mentions Arthur as the “chief giver of feasts” as well as linking him to the battle at Badon Hill⁴⁴. “Chief giver of feasts” suggests some kind of title of superiority over “giver of feasts”, and it is reasonable to suppose that a “giver of feasts” is another title for king or chieftain, so this passage alludes to Arthur being not just a petty ruler, but rather a king among kings. Most Arthurian scholars place the first mention of Arthur as being a high king in the early twelfth-century Welsh hagiography *Auchedd Cadog* (“Life of St. Cadoc”)⁴⁵, but it is possible that this piece, if indeed by Taliesin himself, could be a much earlier (and, indeed, near contemporary) reference to such a title.

The greatest challenge when dealing with works like those attributed to Aneirin and Taliesin is the matter of dating. We do not have any of the original copies by the poets, but rather copies made in the ninth-century of *Y Gododdin* and in the early fourteenth-century of the works of Taliesin. It is from this time, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that comes a majority of the surviving literary references to Arthur in Welsh material, including the *Black Book of Camarthen*, the *White Book of Rydderch*, and the *Red Book of Hergest*⁴⁶. Like the works of the poets, the three “color” books are all transcripts of earlier material. Though it may seem difficult to accept the value of such sources, linguists have shown that the style of writing is of a much earlier form of language than the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries⁴⁷. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were times of great change in Wales, including a unified Wales for the first time, as well as Edward I’s conquering of Wales in 1282. So these transcripts were probably part of a native effort to hold on to their heritage in the face of the encroaching English. For the Welsh, Arthur’s resistance

against the Saxons was a reflection of their own struggle against the English, so the remembrance of their greatest hero – even after England’s victory and claiming of Arthur as their own – was important. Now that we have established the potential value of such sources – in their references to both Arthur and other works – let us look at what exactly they contain.

The *Black Book of Camarthen* is the oldest of the three “colored” books, with the earliest known version written somewhere around the turn of the thirteenth-century⁴⁸. In it is the “Verses on the Graves of Heroes”, which mentions the “eternal wonder [that] is Arthur’s grave”, alluding to the belief in Arthur living on in Avalon waiting for his return⁴⁹. There is also a short poem that has become known by its opening line, “Pa gur yv y porthaur” (“What man is the gatekeeper?”). This undated poem⁵⁰ features Arthur, as well as Bedwyr and Cei, and is a dialogue between Arthur and a porter, in which Arthur describes the deeds of himself and his companions. It is a strange piece, not only for its vivid recall of deeds, but its connection to the better-known tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen*⁵¹. The earliest copy of *Culhwch ac Olwen* we have was written at the turn of the twelfth-century, a transcription of a tale from the eleventh-century or even earlier⁵², and is later found in *The Mabinogion*, which was compiled from the *Red Book* and *White Book*. It is the first prose story featuring Arthur as a great king, as well as some of his earliest companions:

Chaletuwlch uyg cledyf...a Gwenhyvuar uyg gwreic...Asswynaw y gyuarws ohonaw ar Gei a Bedwyr...Gwalchmei mab Gwyar.⁵³

What is interesting about “Pa gur” and *Culhwch ac Olwen* is that there seems to be some link between them as they both tell of similar exploits at times, and it might seem that one drew from the other, yet there is much more described or alluded to in both works, which suggests that there was more material that both authors drew on of which we are ignorant. So it seems that both authors, as well as their contemporary Geoffrey of Monmouth, were all working independently – at least in part – of one another and with different sources⁵⁴.

The *White Book of Rhydderch* and the *Red Book of Hergest* are not as useful to us in our search for Arthurian references. Apart from the story of *Culhwch ac Olwen*, the references are, for the most part, sparse⁵⁵. However, the *Red Book of Hergest* does contain a pair of prophecies by Merlin: *Cyfoesi Myrddin a Gwenddydd ei Chwaer* (“Dialogue Between Merlin and his Sister Gwenddydd”), and *Gwasgargerdd Fyrddin yn y Bedd* (“The Imprisonment of Merlin in the Grave”), complementing the trio of pieces by Merlin (two prophecies and a non-prophetical piece) in

*The text reads: “Caledfwch my sword...and Gwenhwyfar my wife...He invoked his boon from him on Kei and Bedwyr...and Gwalchmei son of Gwyar.”

the *Black Book of Camarthen*. These coincide at times with Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini* (from roughly the same time), yet also possess more material, again hinting at more missing material⁵⁶. The exact historical connection between Arthur and Merlin is complex and worthy of study and debate on its own, but it is worth mentioning their combined presence in many of the same texts.

The *White Book* and *Red Book* also contain transcriptions of some of the Triads, texts listing groups of threes by some title, most likely to help the cyfarwyddiaid (which can translate as “storytellers” or “lore-masters”, see below) learn and remember the lore of the land. Since the ninth-century, the cyfarwyddiaid had been the primary source of knowledge in Wales, and because they were the keepers of both the stories and the histories⁵⁷, the two often overlapped. In the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (“The Triads of the Island of Britain”), there are a number of allusions to Arthur, often making his presence and role as high king of the land very clear, not only by his part in many of the trios, but also his inclusion as a fourth member to some. They paint Arthur as a powerful ruler, generous to his friends yet a fearsome enemy. There are also links to *Culhwch ac Olwen* as well as the *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, including his betrayal by his own kin at Camlan and the mystery of his death or departure⁵⁸. In addition to all this, Arthur also appears in hagiographies written by the Mediaeval Welsh clergy⁵⁹, playing a variety of (often negative) roles.

iii. Forming the Arthurian Persona

So clearly Arthur held a crucial role in Welsh literature and society as a cultural – and historical – hero, as is seen in the efforts to transcribe earlier texts about him during the rise and fall of the unified, independent Wales, and in the allusions to a larger body of missing works. As Arthur was used more and more to symbolize the native heritage he was undoubtedly romanticized and his tale expanded. But this does not diminish the existence – or importance – of the origin of the legend. A modern comparison could be the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. Though the story of the cherry tree was the invention of an overzealous biographer, no one uses it to dispute the existence of George Washington. We have a variety of sources which describe Arthur in a pseudo-historical sense, but in the context of an oral-tradition culture in which story-tellers and historians were essentially the same. As M.I. Steblin-Kamenskij wrote, “modern man's conceptions of truth...are characterized by duality, division, [and] absence of unity”⁶⁰; we divide what we see in earlier texts into the “historical” and “artistic” truths, that is the direct recounting of what the

author believes to have happened and what the author has created out of the “truth”, though not entirely “true” in the way we perceive it⁶¹, with aesthetics rather than “facts” as the primary aspect of the work.

To a Mediaeval author, to add to and embellish history would not have been regarded as inaccurate, as it would be in more modern times. But the key here is “add to and embellish”, the story-tellers were embellishers, not fabricators. The people of the culture assumed a reality to begin with that all these authors from the author of the *Historia Brittonum* to Geoffrey of Monmouth to the authors of the Triads drew upon. There are no sixth-century encyclopedias that we can use to look up specific dates and facts; the key to unlocking the mystery of Arthur is through the hints and scraps we are given and an awareness of the cultural context. For example, there was a sudden explosion of the use of the name Arthur in royal dynasties in Britain and Ireland around the turn of the seventh-century, followed by a recession⁶². Children are usually named after their ancestors, saints or other religious figures, or possibly popular figures at the time. The occurrence of a single person named Arthur would not be enough to make a case, but the several known occurrences in royalty alone – where the name had not been in use before and uncommon after – is difficult to dismiss as coincidental. Something most likely occurred in the sixth-century to make the name Arthur (previously almost unheard of) suddenly very popular.

As if there was not mystery enough surrounding Arthur, there is a strange lack of knowledge about the character of the man. Even if we accept the embellished histories as true, we still know little more than his name and a few of his deeds. In the earliest sources, he is not Arthur son of Uther Pendragon or father of Llachau and his court is only vaguely alluded to at best; there is nothing and no one to tie him to any place or person, he is simply “Arthur”. As a result, many have tried to connect him to some other better known figure, as noted. The Ambrosius Aurelianus theory (discussed earlier) is perhaps the most convincing, but it still seems insufficient. Likewise with the theory of Lucius Artorius Castus, a Roman-British *praefectus castrorum*, who was sent to stamp out a rebellion in Armorica. His name is convenient, but the fact of the matter is that Artorius lived in the second-century, which matches up to no other source, as well as the fact that the pre-Geoffrey Arthur is never said to have had any continental adventures⁶³. This is the same reason that we can reject the theory concerning the mysterious fifth-century king of the Britons Riothamus – which may have been a title (“supreme king”) rather than a person – who was supposedly betrayed and mortally wounded in Gaul at Bourges in 469-470, and disappears into *Aballone* (Gallic town in

Burgundy, possibly connected to Avalon) ⁶⁴. It is also worth noting that the Latin writers never use the name “Artorius”, but rather “Arturus” or “Arturius”, which suggests that the Britonic name “Arthur” came first, followed by the Latinized version ⁶⁵.

While I will willingly concede the possibility (and likelihood) of many deeds and exploits being added to Arthur’s portfolio, including those of other historical figures, I would still insist that the evidence points to there being yet another figure that is not Artorius, Riothamus, Ambrosius Aurelianus, or any other. If we remove what we think to be impossible from the stylized histories, we are left with very basic sketch of who he was: “In the early sixth-century, there was a Roman-British leader named Arthur who led a successful, and decisive, campaign against the Saxons, culminating in the Battle of Badon Hill, where he soundly defeated them and was able to reestablish Britonic control over Britain. Some years later, he was killed at Camlann by Medraut.” Not much, but it is an assertion that Arthur existed as his own person. If we take what seems believable and agreed upon in multiple sources, we can add a bit more: “In the first half of the sixth-century, a Roman-British *dux bellorum* (war leader) rose to prominence by leading the defense against the Saxons. At the Battle of Badon Hill (c. 517) he led the Britons to a successful victory, defeated the Saxons, and gave Britain back to the Britons. For 18 years he ruled as a lord over the Britons, and was followed by a group of knights (possibly Roman cavalry), his most loyal companions. At the end of this rule, his lieutenant (possibly related to him by blood) betrayed him and the two fought and killed one another at the Battle of Camlann (c. 535). After that, plague broke out and Britain fell into ruin and soon into the hands of the Saxons.” If we were telling this story to an audience, we might want to make it sound better by adding a bit of polish, a few new companions, a wondrous sword, and perhaps even a touch of magic. And thus is legend born of history.

iv. The Significance of Arthur

I opened this paper with a quote about the fictional Arthur. From there we have come full circle: taking the fictional we have attempted to recover the historical, and from there we have once again begun the process of creating fiction. So it is easy to see the process of embellishment that would lead to the later stories. Just as the line between history and fiction was blurred in the Britain of old, so too is the line between the historical and fictional Arthur. So the question that remains is: what is it about this man that is of such great cultural import? Despite the musings of some scholars, the fact remains that there are a variety of sources that

point to Arthur's importance, and many of these sources hint at a larger body of work on the man that has now been lost. But even with these losses, the study of Arthur is no less important. From a cultural perspective, he not only played a role in preserving Roman-Briton culture, but he is also a metonym⁶⁶ for all that a king should be and the nostalgic remembrance of his rule as a Golden Age when everything was better. In the opening of *Yvain, le Chevalier du lion*, Chrétien de Troyes writes:

Arthur le bon roi de Bretagne dont la vaillance nous enseigne à être preux et courtois, tenait une très riche cour en la fête de la Pentecôte. C'était à Carduel, en Galles. Après manger, dedans les salles les chevaliers s'assemblèrent là où les avaient appelés les dames et les demoiselles. Les uns contaient des nouvelles, les autres parlainet de l'amour, de ses angoisses et ses douleurs et des grands biens que reçurent souvent les disciples de son ordre qui était alors riche and doux. Mais presque tout l'ont délaissé et Amour en fut abaissé car ceux qui aimaient voulaient être appelés courtois et preux, hommes généreux, hommes d'honneur. Aujourd'hui Amor est tourné en fable: ceux qui l'ignorent disent qu'ils aiment mais ils mentent. Ils se vantent d'être amoureux mais ce droit-là ils ne l'ont point car ce n'est que fable et mensonge.

Parlons des hommes d'autrefois, cela vaut mieux. Oui, m'est avis qu'homme courtois mort vaut mieux que villain en vie!⁶⁷

Recent historiographers have had an aversion to searching for – or even believing in – meaning in history⁶⁸ due to the events of the twentieth-century⁶⁹, and prefer to avoid all “speculation”. One historiographer, Aviezer Tucker, goes so far as to state that we must disregard any “[problem] that cannot be decided by an examination of historiography, such as the logical structure of explanation and the relation between language and reality”⁷⁰. Recently, scholars have noted the political entanglement that is the Arthurian legend, for many cultures

*The text reads: “Arthur, the good king of Britain whose gallantry teaches us to be fearless and courteous, held a very rich court on the feast of Pentecost at Carduel in Wales. After the meal, the knights assembled in the rooms where they were called by the ladies and damsels. Some spoke of news, others spoke of love and their anguishes and sorrows, and of the great blessings that were often received by the followers of his order which was then rich and fortunate. But nearly all have forsaken it and Love is degraded for those who loved wished to be called courteous and brave, men of generosity, men of honor. Today Love has been turned into a fable: those who are ignorant of it say that they love but they lie. They boast of being amorous but they have no right to, for love is neither a fairy tale nor a lie. It is better to speak of men of another time. Indeed, it is my opinion that a courteous dead man is more worthy than a villain who lives!”

have sought to make him their own⁷¹, and some have deemed the study of a historical Arthur consequently useless. Yet the evolution of the Arthurian persona is illuminating in its own right to all the cultures that Arthur has touched, be he the powerful war leader of the Britons, the generous king of the Welsh, or the chivalric knight of the Norman courts. What each culture has added to the legend tells us about their beliefs and values.

But with respect to the historical man what is important is not whether he killed 940 men in a single battle, whether he was a petty or imperial ruler, or the shape of the table his knights sat at. What is important is that he did exist and continues to exist – recreated through the centuries – as a reminder of a post-Roman history that truly was and that had real impacts. He proved to play such a central role in Western history as the man who guarded the Briton culture – and the Roman through it – against the invaders, thus preserving a culture (which, in turn, preserved him) that might have been entirely lost. It is not Nennius and Geoffrey that are the Matter of Britain, it is Arthur himself who provided the original content through his deeds, however obscure they may be. The deconstructionists brought Arthurian study to a near standstill; but now, with the aid of revisionist archaeology and a better awareness of the nature of history and legend, there is an opportunity to revive interest and awareness about the historicity of Arthur. To quote William Skene, “there is always some substratum of truth on which the wildest legends are based”⁷². Perhaps it is time we cease focusing on what is not there, and instead concentrate on what is.

Notes

- 1 Thomas Mallory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York, 2004), 11.
- 2 The Bretons were known to strongly defend the belief in Arthur's return, even to the point of brawls: cf. R.S. Loomis, “The Oral Diffusion of the Arthurian Legend”, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 53-54.
- 3 N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (NY, 2002), 10.
- 4 David Dumville quoted in a private correspondence by Michael Costen, *The Origins of Somerset* (Manchester, 1992), 78.
- 5 Ken Dark, *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire* (Charleston, SC, 2000), 35.
- 6 Alfred Siewers, “Gildas and Glastonbury: Revisiting the Origins of Glastonbury Abbey”, *Via Crucis*, ed. Thomas Hall (2002), 429-431.
- 7 Ken Dark, *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire* (Charleston, SC,

- 2000), 35-37.
- 8 For more on literacy and cultural continuity in Post-Roman Britain, see below or Ken Dark, *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire* (Charleston, SC, 2000), 37.
 - 9 Christopher A. Snyder, *An Age of Tyrants: Britain and the Britons, A.D. 400-600* (PA State Univ., 1998), 30.
 - 10 *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (Garland Publishing Inc., NY & London, 1991), 315.
 - 11 David N. Dumville, "The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*", *Arthurian Literature* 6 (1986), 13-14.
 - 12 David N. Dumville, *Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend, History*, Nottingham Mediaeval Studies (1977), 187-188.
 - 13 Ken Dark, *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire* (Charleston, SC, 2000), 37.
 - 14 Kenneth Jackson, "The Arthur of History". *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 2.
 - 15 "Gildas", *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacey, (NY & London, 1991), 195.
 - 16 Gildas, *De Excidio Britonum*, 25, ed. Michael Winterbottom, *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and other works* (London and Chinchester, 1978), 98.
 - 17 N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (NY, 2002), 17.
 - 18 cf. *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (731), the *Historia Brittonum* (830), and *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136). Gildas does not mention Vortigern by name, but does refer to a 'proud tyrant' (*superbo tyranno*) in chapter 23 as bringing the Saxons into Briton as mercenaries, which we can assume to be Vortigern.
 - 19 Forty-four years by Gildas' count: cf. Gildas, *De Excidio Britonum*, 26, ed. Michael Winterbottom, *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and other works* (London and Chinchester, 1978), 98.
 - 20 "William of Malmesbury", *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacey, (NY & London, 1991), 514.
 - 21 It should also be noted that there is another possible allusion to Arthur in *De Excidio Britonum*, 32, in which Gildas condemns the tyrant Cuneglasus, whom he describes as having been the charioteer of the bear. The name Arthur is linked to the bear both in Welsh (*urth gwyr*, "bear man") and Latin (*ursus vir*, "bear man"), and he is frequently referred to as a bear in both historical and fictional works.
 - 22 Alfred Siewers, "Gildas and Glastonbury: Revisiting the Origins of Glastonbury Abbey", *Via Crucis*, ed. Thomas Hall (2002), 428.
 - 23 N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (NY, 2002), 6-

- 9.
- 24 David N. Dumville, *The Historia Brittonum. Vol. 3: The Vatican Recension* (Cambridge, 1985), ch. 56.
- 25 “William of Malmesbury”, *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacey, (NY & London, 1991), 514.
- 26 The actual nature of the author/editor Nennius is debatable, whether he was indeed the original author (linking him to the Nennius described in the *Annales Cambriae*) or a later reviser, as Professor Dumville would have it: see Thomas Charles-Edwards, “The Arthur of History”, *The Arthur of the Welsh*, (Cardiff, 1991), 16-17.
- 27 David N. Dumville, “The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*”, *Arthurian Literature* 6 (1986), 3-5.
- 28 R. G. Collingwood and J. N. L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, (Oxford, 1936), 329-330.
- 29 David N. Dumville, “The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*”, *Arthurian Literature* 6 (1986), 5.
- 30 Kenneth Jackson, “The Arthur of History”. *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 4-5.
- 31 *Annales Cambriae*, ed. Rev. John Williams (London, 1965), 4. Equivalent dates on modern calendar taken from *Annales Cambriae*, ed. Rev. John Williams (London, 1965), 4.
- 32 N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (NY, 2002), 198-199.
- 33 There is an arguable case that he was, in fact, of Bretonic origins: see Brynley F. Roberts “Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* and *Brut Y Brenhinedd*”. *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991) 97-98.
- 34 A. O. H. Jarman, “The Welsh Myrddin Poems”. *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 20-21.
- 35 cf. “silva Celidonis” in the *Historia Brittonum*.
- 36 “britannici sermonis librum vetustissimum”, Geoffrey of Monmouth, “*Historia Regum Britanniae*”. *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Acton Griscom (London, 1929), 219.
- 37 N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (NY, 2002), 223-226.
- 38 E. K. Chambers. *Arthur of Britain* (London, 1927).
- 39 Looking to “fiction” for facts is made possible by recent scholarship showing a greater continuity of Roman-Briton culture in western Britain than was previously thought; cf. Ken Dark, *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire* (Charleston, SC, 2000).
- 40 J. A. Giles, *Six Old English Chronicles* (London, 1848), 62.

- 41 N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (NY, 2002), 180.
- 42 Perceptions of the truth and its depiction are not the same now as they were in the Mediaeval Age, cf. M.I. Steblin-Kamenskij. *The Saga Mind*, trans. Kenneth H. Ober (Odense, Denmark, 1973), and below.
- 43 Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, Brynley F. Roberts, and Daniel Huws, Introduction, *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), 2-5.
- 44 Kenneth Jackson, "Arthur in Early Welsh Verse". *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 15-16.
- 45 N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (NY, 2002), 7.
- 46 Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, Brynley F. Roberts, and Daniel Huws, Introduction, *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), 6-8.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 A. O. H. Jarman, "The Welsh Myrddin Poems". *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 20.
- 49 Kenneth Jackson, "Arthur in Early Welsh Verse". *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 13.
- 50 Like the rest of the *Black Book of Camarthen*, it seems to be a copy of an earlier text which could predate the known version of the *Black Book* by centuries; cf notes 41 and 47.
- 51 Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems". *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991) 38-44.
- 52 Idris Llewelyn Foster, "*Culhwch & Olwen and Rhonabwy's Dream*". *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 32.
- 53 *Culhwch and Olwen*, ed. Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff, 1992), 6-7, 13.
- 54 Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems". *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991) 38-44.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 A. O. H. Jarman, "The Welsh Myrddin Poems". *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 23-24.
- 57 Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems". *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), 33-34
- 58 Brynley F. Roberts, "*Culhwch ac Olwen, The Triads, Saints' Lives*". *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff 1991), 80-88.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 M.I. Steblin-Kamenskij. *The Saga Mind*, trans. Kenneth H. Ober (Odense, Denmark, 1973), 21-22.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 There are four, possibly five, documented accounts of the use of the name Arthur amongst the royalty around this time (Rachel Bromwich,

- A. O. H. Jarman, Brynley F. Roberts, and Daniel Huws, Introduction, *The Arthur of the Welsh* [Cardiff, 1991], 5).
- 63 Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, Brynley F. Roberts, and Daniel Huws, Introduction, *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), 6.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 For more on metonyms and history, see Eelco Runia, “Presence”. *History and Theory*, 45 (February 2006, Wesleyan University).
- 67 Chrétien de Troyes, “Yvain, le Chevalier du lion”, *Romans de la Table Ronde*, ed. Jean-Pierre Foucher (France, 1970), 251. Chrétien de Troyes’ romances became Arthurian staples, and were very popular both then and now.
- 68 A parallel may be drawn with the Dadaist movement in art formed during World War I, which fled from reason and rationality in the face of the horrors of war.
- 69 Eelco Runia, “Presence”. *History and Theory*, 45 (February 2006, Wesleyan University), 4.
- 70 Ibid. Concerning the nature of “language and reality”, I would refer skeptics to the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose two primary works (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*) deal extensively – albeit densely – with the “problems” of the connection of language to reality.
- 71 Thomas Charles-Edwards, “The Arthur of History”. *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991) 15-18.
- 72 N.J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (New York, 2002), 11.

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The Spirit of Prospero: Fiction and Identity in Georges Poulet's *Phenomenology of Reading*

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Georges Poulet understands the act of reading to be a confluence of minds, or better, an identification of a passive consciousness with that of an active storyteller. This strange unification begins with the transmutation of words on a page into mental objects, of which the reader's mind is the vessel. The act of reading, for Poulet, catalyzes a disappearance of objectivity, a fading of the world of which the reader is objectively a part, and a consequent submersion into complete subjectivity; a subjectivity guided by fiction: "For the book is no longer a material reality. It has become a series of words, of images, of ideas which in their turn begin to exist", and this new existence takes shape within the reader's mind. The "number of significations" which take their place in the mind are still objects, but objects *of* thought for which existence is dependent on the mind which entertains them.

This is the quality of the book which lends itself to greater interest for Poulet than other works of art, such as sculpture, which do not proffer, in their objective rigidity, any means to alleviate the distance between the subjectivity of the observer, and the objectivity of the observed. The literary object warmly gives itself up in order so that the reader may attend to it in the most intimate arena: the mind. But, "in order to exist as mental objects, they [the words of a page, presumably] must relinquish their exis-

tence as real objects” (Poulet 1969, 1321). What objective existence might Poulet be speaking of? It appears as though he is referring to the “contortions of...printer’s ink” (Beckett, 119), as Beckett would have it, which rank amongst the objects of the world in their place on bleached parchment. In a sense, this is indeed what Poulet refers to. He has, of course, explained to us the apparent disappearance of the book during a reading of it: “It is still there”, he assures us, “and at the same time it is there no longer, it is nowhere” (Poulet 1321). But this is unsatisfying: the words of the page cannot have completely given their existence up; no one would claim that kind of power for the human gaze.

Poulet seems then to be speaking of the existence of words as they somehow ‘objectively’ refer; as they exist in some standardized “language of reality”, whose use is that of social utility, not of creation in the sense of fiction. In this sense, Poulet speaks of the “transmutation through language of reality into a fictional equivalent” (Poulet 1322). It would be to go well beyond what Poulet has given us here to say that he is indicating some wholesale change in the references of every word in the language as they are applied to fiction. But he does seem to be indicating that *language itself* loses its objectivity, its ability to be clearly summarized, explained, re-formed. Perhaps there is a more than facile connection to work of the Dionysian, who “smashes [the framework of Apollonian knowledge], jumbles it up and ironically reassembles it” (Nietzsche 883), in an illustration of the artist’s freedom from the ‘neediness’ of reason and his reliance on the sheer powers of intuition.

In fact, this seems to be a wholly proper reference. Nietzsche writes of artistic creation that it is the expression of an intuition which is beyond the capacity of human understanding to explain. Intuition is, according to Nietzsche, the furthest extent of human reconciliation with the ‘objective’ world, which is forever outside our comprehension; irreparably separate and distant from the subjectivity in which we are helplessly entrenched. Poulet, as if supporting Nietzsche’s claim by addressing the reception of art, speaks of reading as a kind of intuition of the author’s consciousness, and more, he speaks of the metamorphoses of the words of a book into the objects of a mind as that quality of reading by virtue of which “the opposition between the subject and its objects has been considerably attenuated” (Poulet 1322). In reading, Poulet feels that the world presented to him in fiction is thus “not radically opposed to the *me* who thinks it”, because the objects presented have made their home in the reader, so to speak, and are not rigidly outside the reader’s subjective grasp. Nietzsche might take aversion to Poulet’s desire for shelter, but the likeness between the Dionysian intuition and Poulet’s language of fiction seem helpful: the lan-

guage of fiction takes the ‘pretense’ of the language of reality, we might say.

Essentially, Poulet’s assertion that mental objects must give up their objectivity is unclear. What objectivity? Which aspect of the book is he addressing, the words on the page? If we are to take it seriously, however, the best sense in which to take it is in the sense of language as a whole, it seems. Language must lose its objective apparel (the Nietzschean ‘pretense’ if we may); that sense that it normally describes the world as it actually is; the sense of clarity with which we use it to describe, propositionally, for example, the occurrences and phenomena around us. In the reading of fiction, language recognizes itself to be wholly subjective. The obscurity of poetry and much prose is a testament to this. Blanchot explains “Only the nonliterary book is presented as a stoutly woven web of determined significations, as an entity made up of real affirmations: before it is read by anyone, the nonliterary book has been read by everyone” (Blanchot 95). The work of fiction has no such “preliminary reading” (Ibid) as the nonliterary work. Poulet’s language seems to suggest this approach to the difference between fiction and the (objective) language of reality.

For in the act of reading fiction, according to Poulet, we apprehend the consciousness of the author. This is afforded the reader through the complete subjectification of the objects of his thought; the attenuation of that “opposition” discussed earlier. The reader is thus enabled an identification with the author, whose thoughts are for the moment the reader’s thoughts: “When I am absorbed in reading, a second self takes over, a self which thinks and feels for me” (Poulet 1324). Whereas in everyday life we are irreparably separated, as subject and object of thought normally are, from our human peers, in reading, the very consciousness, the very subjectivity of another, is made into the object of thought. It is because the thoughts of the author are, for Poulet, actually *being thought* by the reader, that a unification between two subjectivities is granted: “They are the thoughts of another, and yet it is I who am their subject” (Poulet 1322).

Of course this unification is one-sided. The author himself, the human consciousness who may or may not still inhabit the world in which we read, is absent. Poulet’s understanding of reading as a comforting coincidence of the subject and the objects of his thought, unrealizable except in the act of reading, may imply a darker, more solitary existence for the author himself. Indeed Blanchot seems to have anticipated such an approach to reading, so inherently neglectful of the author’s burden, when he says that reading is a “dance with an invisible partner in a separate space, a joyful, wild dance with the ‘tomb’” (Blanchot 98). The author, as

a subject himself, must feel at all times in the act of writing that threatening severance of the subject from its surroundings that Poulet feels daily. One implication is that the author himself does not perceive his very own consciousness, in its essence, as Poulet seems to perceive it in the act of reading. Indeed, Sartre notes that author is always, in writing, attempting to propose a silence with which the author himself “has never been familiar with” (Sartre 1339). Sartre explains this ‘silence’ to be “subjective and anterior to language” (Sartre 1339). Perhaps it is this intent which Poulet apprehends, as for him the final result of reading is truly something ineffable: “When reading a literary work, there is a moment when it seems to me that the subject *present* in this work disengages itself from all that surrounds it, and stands alone” (Poulet 1332). He continues to say that “no structure can any longer define it; it is exposed in its ineffability and its fundamental indeterminacy” (Poulet 1333). The subject which presents itself in the reading of a book transcends the very work itself in the same way, it seems, that Sartre articulates.

This takeover of the reader’s mind by the author’s thoughts contrasts considerably with Sartre’s notion of reading. Poulet says that “I [the reader] play a much more humble role [than that of the author], content to record passively all that is going in me” (Poulet 1325). Whatever remains of the reader’s consciousness during the takeover of his mind by the author’s thoughts, Poulet calls the “consciousness of the critic” (Poulet 1325). Sartre is not content to relegate the act of reading to pure passivity. He does agree that a ‘literary object...exists only when in movement’ (Sartre 1337), and this movement is granted by the contribution of the reader, but for Sartre reading itself is a creative process: “The reading is composed of a host of hypotheses, of dreams followed by awakenings, of hopes and deceptions” (Sartre 1337). This “directed creation” is “as new and original an act as the first invention [writing]” (Sartre 1339).

Poulet is sure, however, that it is the author who plays the active role in reading. Poulet’s insistence on an “I” who reads and an “I” who is present in the work of an author is succinctly refuted in Barthes assertion that a “text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination” (Barthes 1968,1469). This destination is the reader alone. For Barthes reduces the author to a linguistic instance of self-reference, and nothing more: “the author is never more than the instance of writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance of saying *I*: language knows a ‘subject’, not a ‘person’” (Barthes 1467). Poulet’s psychologistic tendency is revealed in Barthes treatment of the ‘Text’, as well. No longer may we see the work of an author as inviting us into an experience of an essential subjectivity, ineffable, and woven into it. A text for Barthes, being a linguistic object, must be

seen as infinitely abundant in its possible readings and interpretations. Language acts not as a transparent surface which the author stands behind, but as an opaque barrier. Just as the spoken word may be misunderstood or misconstrued, so the text can not be seen as anything but a sentence that has outlived its speaker: "if the Text extends itself, it is a result of combinatory systematic...Hence, no vital 'respect' is due to the Text: it can be broken" (Barthes 1971, 1473). And if there is something ineffable which we perceive in a text it is not "the unnamable signified" (Barthes, 1472), but perhaps indicates instead that we have been searching for what is not there: an authoritative signified.

Finally, criticism, for Poulet, is a necessary, and necessarily fallible task. Not unlike a willful return from Enlightenment, or the vocation of a Biblical prophet, only of human consciousness, the critic must relate what cannot be articulated: "the [author's] thought is grasped not at its highest, but at its most obscure, at its cloudiest point, at the point at which it is reduced to being a mere self-awareness scarcely perceived by the being which entertains it" (Poulet 1330). Here, again, we see the likeness of Poulet's thought in this respect to Sartre. The author can only be 'scarcely aware' of the transcendent self which he wishes to offer up to examination. To be sure, the reader himself can only apprehend it, not comprehend it, like the Kantian sublime. Thus literary criticism will always fall short of its goal: to relate the Sartrean 'silence' of a work. All criticism becomes too analytical, too concerned with structure and technique, at the expense of the pre-lingual essence that reading the work itself achieves, or too mimetic, too obscure in its own emotion and passion to be understood theoretically and accurately. We are reminded that language must be wholly 'real' or wholly 'fictional' in its apparel for Poulet, though some critics seem to strike closer balances between the two.

The language of fiction in Poulet's *Phenomenology of Reading* is thus to be understood as a shedding of pretenses. His is a peculiar blend of Romanticism and Humanism, in which the goal of contemplation is no longer a communion between the subject and the divine, but a communion between subjects. In it, we are allowed to shake off the incongruity of our existence in a cold and indifferent world, infinitely distanced from us, and meet with our others in the world of the subject, where, as Blanchot says "nothing has any meaning yet, properly speaking, but to which, even so, everything that has a meaning returns to its origins" (Blanchot 96). Poulet's treatment of language may seem confused, though passionately, but it is surely moving. The language of reality, divested of the clothes of utility, allows us to say "farewell to what is" (Poulet 1322) so that we may share in the otherwise impenetrable world of the tempestuous artist.

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Falsificationist Realism: Oh, What a Tangled Web We Weave, When First We Practice to Perceive

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i. Introductory Inclinations

“Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?”¹ In 1886, as the modern analytic tradition of philosophy was just beginning, the revolutionary philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche began a paper entitled “On the Prejudices of Philosophers” with these words, questioning the entire endeavor of philosophers and scientists. These questions were in response to Nietzsche’s recognition of the failure of the previous centuries’ Enlightenment project. Philosophers such as René Descartes and David Hume had faced the world as their contemporary scientific colleagues had faced the world, and sought to justify the conclusions and processes of scientific observation. They sought to overcome every possible skeptical limitation, and provide a clear path towards truth, or at least reasonable belief. To this end, they applied rigorous skeptical tools to any claim of knowledge, searching for a firm foundation for knowledge. Ultimately, however, their search was in vain, and yielded only uncertainty.

The founders of the analytic tradition faced these same failures and

asked the same question: why should metaphysical truth be the goal of science? Though, unlike Nietzsche, they saw an answer in pure observation and the relations between phenomena. These thinkers excised from science any concern for the underlying nature of the world or the true physical causes of the effects with which they were presented. They recognized the fundamental uncertainty that is inherent within any attempt to explain a natural phenomenon, and instead turned away from a realist's search for truth. In favor of this, they redefined the goal of science more modestly, favoring investigations of phenomena that can be directly observed, and therefore known.

This turn was predicated upon two fundamental beliefs. The first was that a level of certainty and justification could be attained in observational knowledge of phenomena that could not be reached through any search for broad generality or for deep understanding. The analytic founders' second belief was that there could be no systematic approach through which causality can be examined through science. Taking these two principles as necessary (though for many unpleasant) truths, the general framework of the rest of the analytic tradition follows.

I react against both of these methodological principles, and develop an ameliorative philosophy of falsificationist realism that takes as its goal the absolute nature of the world. Furthermore, I demonstrate that falsificationist realism is scientifically superior to those that developed out of the analytic tradition. The metric of this superiority, however, is perhaps non-standard.

I hold that in order to judge between ameliorative philosophies of science, one cannot merely reference how scientists have acted in the past – to do so not only belies the ameliorative project, it is itself unscientific. Rather, I will maintain that the preferable scientific methodology is that which most furthers the singular act that is definitive of science: progress. Philosophers of science have historically defined science in terms of the object of scientific inquiry; however, this is circular, for it is this very object that many philosophers of science are investigating and questioning. Regardless of what one defines as the object of science – be it ontological truth, constant conjunction, phenomenological predictability, underlying order, or any of the other hypotheses on the subject – the one thing that is consistent through them all is a concept of a progression from ignorance to knowledge (or belief or more encompassing theory, etc.). Thus, in arguing in favor of my own falsificationist realism, I will argue that it contains greater possibilities for progression, both in number of avenues and in depth.

ii. Distinctive Definitions

Before delving fully into the development of falsificationist real-

ism, I will make clear the definitions of ontology and phenomenology that I will be using, since they are very particular and different from those which many other philosophers have used. Phenomenology, as I will be defining it, is that field of study that analyzes phenomena in the world, or what is directly observable about the world. This is not to say that it examines actual sensations or observations. Phenomenological properties are properties that are observable, but the nature of this observability is a relationship between the object being observed and the individual doing the observation. Sensations, on the other hand, are defined purely from the perspective – indeed, as the perspective – of the observer.

To take an example from popular media, in the film *The Matrix*, a phenomenological experience would be an experience in the “real world,” whereas a sensation would include both those in the “real world” and those in the “matrix.” Essentially, sensations cannot distinguish between hallucinations and true observations, but phenomenological observations assume the existence of the object under study, without considering the actual nature of that object. Thus, phenomenological properties are those characteristics of the world that make the world observable.

Phenomenology is contrasted with ontology, which is generally defined as the field of study that analyzes the nature of being and existence, and is thus the study of that which is, independent of any observer. Ontological entities are those properties of the world that cause the world to act the way that it does. Ontology includes both broad generalizations as well as detailed instantiations. In essence, ontology is anything that exists in virtue of itself, regardless of whether it can be directly observed or not.

These two concepts relate to each other as a fundamental dichotomy. The phenomenological world consists of what is apparent to an observer. No phenomenon can exist until there is an observer who could observe it – again, this observation is not necessary, but for something to be observable there must be an observer. The ontological world, on the other hand, is completely observer independent. Ontology addresses existence itself and the universe as it actually operates on a fundamental level. It deals with the absolute nature of reality, whereas phenomenology deals with reality as it is presentable to us.

iii. Enlightened Errors

The philosophy of the Enlightenment has been one of the greatest influences of the past century’s philosophy and culture. Perhaps the most important result of this period’s thought was the realization that there is rarely a legitimate justification for any belief. In a sense, this impossibili-

ty marks the failure one of the central goals of the Enlightenment. Thinkers like René Descartes and David Hume searched for ways in which humanity may understand and justify its beliefs. To this end, they developed skeptical tools to gain a new perspective on the trust that had been placed in the foundations that were already in place. The Enlightenment failed, not because these skeptical tools were unsuccessful as a proving ground for the foundationalism that was prevalent at the time, but because every foundation proved unable to survive the tests.

Descartes' and Hume's skeptical philosophies provide strong arguments that knowledge of the underlying nature of the universe is impossible by demonstrating that such knowledge cannot be derived simply from pure observations. In response to this, philosophers in the analytic tradition of the early twentieth century posited two methodological principles: phenomenology and relativism. These two principles are based on the belief that it is impossible to overcome the doubt of the Enlightenment and make progress towards a realist picture of truth.

I will argue that this conclusion ignores an important alternative that was first hinted at in the philosophy of Karl Popper, though was developed within a phenomenological relativist framework. If we avoid any positive assertions of knowledge in favor of a general progression in the direction of some picture of truth, we are able to overcome many of the limitations that would seem to necessitate relativism. I will set up just such a methodology through this paper.

iv. A Falsificationist Framework

I will be taking Karl Popper's falsificationist theory of verisimilitude as a framework for how one may overcome many of the problems that arose out of Enlightenment skepticism. He began by focusing on falsification, rather than proof. By systematically proving that various theories are false, Popper maintains that one may then gradually increase the *verisimilitude*, or truth-likeness of a theory. The underlying premise of the theory of verisimilitude is that by consistently ruling out potential theories, one is forced continually to rethink the theories that exist. With each reformulation or replacement of a theory, the new theory must be able to account for all of the phenomena under the umbrella of the old theory. However, it must also account for the newly observed phenomena, the phenomena that falsified the old theory. I will return to this requirement later on, and will ultimately be forced to revise it heavily, but for the time being this method is sufficient to provide a gradual asymptotic progression towards the ideal of a theory that could account for any conceivable observation – the theory with the greatest possible verisimilitude.

Another important principle arises from Popper's theory of verisimilitude upon which I will rely. Since new theories and new understandings are the tools of scientific progression, they ought to be held with the highest regard – though this is rarely the case in actual scientific practice, for reasons that I will address later. Under this mentality, a theory can never be held as “true,” and it can never be assumed to be truer than another theory merely by virtue of the fact that it has persisted for a greater duration. A theory can be held as being closer to the truth than another theory only by virtue of having greater explanatory power, by accounting for phenomena that have falsified a competing theory.

v. Re-Formulating Falsificationism

Having outlined some of Popper's important points, it is necessary to return briefly to a discussion of the distinction between ontology and phenomenology. It is clear upon consideration that neither ontology nor phenomenology can suffice without the other.² Thus, unless there is a fourth possibility over and against ontological primacy and phenomenological primacy, some amount of ontico-phenomenological³ unity is now the only remaining option. It is yet to be determined, however, what the nature of the interactions between these two halves is, and in what proportions each is to be taken. Much of this explanation will have to wait until later sections, but a general outline can be presented here of the reliance of ontology on phenomenology through falsificationism and the dependence of phenomenology on ontology for generality.

Ontico-phenomenological unity is not a complete union, where the two halves become one single entity. Rather, ontico-phenomenological unity is a mutually dependent relationship between two distinct halves in such a way that they cannot be separated without the destruction of both. The nature and virtue of the connection between ontology and phenomenology can most easily be found in a new form of falsificationism.

Generalizing from and expanding upon the basic model of falsificationism, the ontological aspect of any theory must be constructed prior to any real tests of that theory. This is not to say that one must construct the ontology prior to any experience of the world – the problems with this view are clear, and will be addressed later. One must, however, create an ontology that can explain whatever phenomena are being described and predicted by the theory. The distinction between explanation and prediction is a subtle one, and many philosophers have equated the two. The difference becomes most clear through the example of a program such as quantum theory in which predictions are based on a mathematical model that does not have a corresponding picture of reality – indeed, most quan-

tum theorists believe that such a picture is impossible. Nevertheless, it is the ability of a theory to provide a clear understanding of the world such that a particular phenomenon occurs that I am defining as explanation, rather than its ability to precisely provide beforehand exactly what a result will be. I will be postulating a scientific method that progresses science in the direction of increased explanation in this sense, towards greater ontological understanding.

The nature of scientific progression in general is such that a new theory will usually be formulated only when it is needed, that is, when all previously held theories have failed substantial phenomenological tests. In this situation, the formulation of the ontology that would explain a recalcitrant observation – that is, an observation that is inexplicable within any of the earlier ontological structures – comes only after that observation. However, this formulation is a new theory that is merely explaining all prior observations. The new phenomenal aspects of the theory – and thus the means of further phenomenological progression beyond the earlier falsifying experiment – would be new predictions that had not been made or new extensions of the theory into realms that had been forbidden to its forbearer, both of which would be derived from an analysis of the new ontological structure.

It is important to recognize that this has not always been the historical progression upon theoretical falsification. The most notorious example of a theoretical development progressing in a purely phenomenological manner is the formulation of the standard interpretation of quantum theory. In this situation, various ontological structures were systematically falsified, and a methodical rejection of ontological structures in general grew in their place. In this situation, the phenomenological mathematical model was repeatedly all that was left after a falsification, and that mathematical model – with the associated doctrine that no such ontological structure exists – became the actual theory. In spite of this, I have argued elsewhere that this progression was not necessary, and that it has proved to be a hindrance to the science.⁴

The source of the phenomenological aspect of a theory comes from a full logical analysis of its ontological principles. One must analyze the theory in its original form fully, and find as many logical consequences as one can. These logical consequences will ultimately tell a researcher what the theory says more completely than the initial formulation of the theory, because they will expand the theory to address much more than it did previously. An honest examination of this expansion will reveal that it is not a rigid deduction of phenomena, as in the hypothetico-deductive method. Rather, through a process that will be described throughout the rest of this

work, both ontological and phenomenological consequences and possibilities are discovered. Furthermore, this analytic method includes the discovery of different possible assumptions, yielding a justification of multiple different results to a given falsificationist test of a theory.

To investigate this more closely, consider the purely ontological theory that the universe is constructed of nothing but cheese. Ignoring that this is so obviously ridiculous – the ridiculous nature of this theory is a product of it having failed every conceivable phenomenological test – I will analyze the ramifications of this. Ontologically, a universe that is nothing but cheese leads to the conclusion that the universe is fundamentally a dairy product, and thus must either be full of preservatives, maturing nicely, or spoiling – depending on your preference of cheeses. There are other ontological consequences of this theory, but these will suffice. The phenomenological consequences are even more obvious – if the world is made of cheese, then I ought to be able to look at anything, smell anything, taste anything, and find that it is cheese. The consequences of the original ontological ramifications could be described thus: that the world must have been made by a giant cow and a cosmic farmer, and if the universe is not full of preservatives, then the apocalypse is nigh.

A more historical and well-grounded example of this methodology follows the ether theory at the end of the nineteenth century. This theory posited that there is an underlying structure that permeates the universe called the ether that is the medium through which light propagates as a wave. In 1887, Albert Michelson and Edward Morley published results of an experiment that would have evidenced the ether. Many scientists to that point had thought that the ether is purely epiphenomenal, and that it is phenomenologically indistinguishable from any other theory that accounts for the wave-nature of light. Michelson and Morley, however, found a problem with this when it is combined with James Clerk Maxwell's recent discovery that light always travels the same speed. Since the Earth is traveling through the ether, and light always travels at a fixed rate relative to the ether, then light must travel a greater distance to go between two points when it travels in the direction of the Earth's motion than it does when it travels perpendicular to it. Michelson and Morley devised an experiment that would have demonstrated this effect, and when they did not perceive it, disproved the ether.

By finding the phenomenological ramifications of the network of ontological consequences, one is able to develop a set of experiments that can test the accuracy of the ontological theory as a whole. Furthermore, as I will more fully explain later, analyzing different assumptions that could predict either conclusion in a particular experiment, one has means of

continual scientific progression, regardless of what experimental results are observed. A further result of this process is that different theoretical structures – individual explanatory mechanisms within a given theory – cannot be entirely independent, though they may be distinct. I will develop this point further during my analyses of the philosophies of Willard van Orman Quine and Roy Bhaskar, and then reconnect this with this view of ontological falsificationism.

vi. Quintessential Quinian Quandaries

In 1951, the logician Willard van Orman Quine published a groundbreaking article entitled “Two Dogmas of Empiricism.” This paper brought to its knees one of the most prevalent philosophies of science to that point: logical empiricism. Quine’s presentation of the dogmas of empiricism was only the very beginning of his philosophy, however – it was the justification of the need for the creation of a new philosophy to replace the reductionism and analytic-synthetic distinction of empiricism. Rather than reducing any statement about the world to individual synthetic sense experiences, he said that “the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science” and that “statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually, but as a corporate body.”⁵ One must face reality with the whole of one’s beliefs, rather than indivisible atomic statements of phenomenological content, because beliefs are not separable into individual statements about sense data. Evaluation of any given statement about the world necessitates evaluation of certain other statements, because they are logically interconnected.

This is not the whole picture that Quine wants to paint, however, because it is evident that not all statements are created equal, empirically speaking. Even without the analytic-synthetic distinction, it is evident that there are differences between the statements, “Apples fall from trees,” “Gravity exists as the warping of spacetime” and, “If apples are massive objects, they will fall from trees, and apples are massive objects, therefore they fall from trees.” In answer to this, Quine paints a picture of a tapestry or web “which impinges on experience only along the edges”⁶, with a gradient flowing away from the edge to the center of the web, where we have the most sure laws of logic and mathematics – those ideas that had previously been thought of as *a priori* analytic statements.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of Quine’s web is that there is no greater certainty in the center than there is at the fringe. All that can be claimed is that the more centralized a statement is, the more that it is relied upon. Everything that is closer to the fringe than a particular statement is in some way dependent upon that statement, and an instantiation

of it. Thus, the logical, physical and observational laws that so strongly linked atomic statements to experiences are just more centralized parts of the same web of belief – no more certain, merely having more epistemological dependents.

Another result of the interlocking holistic nature of this web is that “any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system”⁷. To illustrate this, consider the example of a magic show where a magician “levitates” his assistant in front of spectators. Now, it is almost certain that every person in the audience has as a relatively prominent part of their webs of belief some sort of concept of gravity. It is also evident that this concept of gravity supervenes upon the statement “Gaudily clad assistants fall when not supported by something solid.” A further part of the audience’s webs of belief will certainly be a statement along the lines of “In ideal conditions, my senses can be trusted to report relatively accurately the nature of the world,” a statement which in Quine’s taxonomy will be close to the center of their webs. Finally, the majority will likely have some statement to the effect of “Magic does not exist,” or at least “This magician will not perform magic.”

Now, into the perceptual experience of a crowd with these aspects of their webs of belief comes the magician. Everyone in the crowd sees the magician – with the requisite pomp and flair, certainly – levitate his gaudily clad assistant, and then proceed to pass a ring over her body to “prove” that nothing more than his will is supporting her. Now, apart from being amazed, impressed and entertained, the audience is faced with a problem – the levitation of a gaudily clad assistant does not fit in their webs of belief, so something must change. However, there are a number of changes that can take place within the same web that allows for the levitation of gaudily clad assistants. The vast majority of the crowd will likely provide an addendum to the statement, “In ideal conditions, my senses can be trusted to relatively accurately report the nature of the world,” that asserts that, “Being in the presence of a magician is anything but ideal conditions.”

However, this is not the only possible response. The crowd could also decide that their concept of gravity was in need of revision, perhaps changing it from “There is a force called gravity that always causes unsupported objects near massive bodies to fall,” to something along the lines of “There is a force called gravity that always causes unsupported objects that are not gaudily clad individuals near massive bodies to fall.” The crowd could then cope with the statement about the falling of gaudily clad assistants when they are not supported, because it is no longer supervened by

this newly revised concept of gravity.

With the flexibility of possible changes to the web following a recalcitrant experience comes the reanalysis of the position of what were previously held as the absolute a priori analytic laws of logic. No statement in Quine's web of belief is immune to revision, not even the laws of logic. Rather, the laws of logic are what make the links throughout the web, and are therefore pieces of the web that are particularly close to the center. The laws of logic therefore are tied to particularly large portions of the web, but they are not in any way impervious to the possibility of revision. Indeed, many of the points of logic that have held since the time of Aristotle came under scrutiny at the turn of the last century, with the work of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell among others leading to the revision of some of the centrally located beliefs, although these revisions were subtle enough that their ramifications were not widely noticed.

vii. Tracing Truth

It is clear from this conclusion that, though his philosophy includes a full account of ontology, Quine is maintaining some of the phenomenological principles of the Enlightenment, in the same way as the rest of the analytic tradition. He still maintains a generally phenomenological perspective, in that the web of belief rests upon its phenomenological fringe, and foundationally relies upon that fringe to sustain a link to reality – while simultaneously arguing against the maintenance of foundations. While this may seem to be the link between ontology and phenomenology that I have been searching for, it is still lacking. Not only is it dependent upon a phenomenological world view, but it is also fully relativist, in the same way that Popper's falsificationism is relativist.

Quine was fully aware of this, claiming “that we cannot require theories to be fully interpreted, except in a relative sense, if anything is to count as a theory.”⁸ His philosophy requires that any webs that are identical along the fringe be considered in essence identical, in the sense that there are no grounds or reason to choose between them. Just as with the early analytics and Popper, by building his foundation upon phenomena, relativism necessarily follows.

My reason for rejecting the philosophies of both Quine and Popper is not necessarily inherent in their philosophy. They both become trapped by relativist phenomenology because they do the same as Descartes and Hume: they justify their accounts of knowledge with a foundation of phenomenology. It is this foundationalism that has required them to assume ontological relativity and phenomenological primacy. The solution to all of these problems is to take the philosophy of these thinkers and to reject

the foundationalism.

Though his picture incorporates a complete ontology, Quine concluded that there are no criteria to govern that ontology except for phenomena, and no requirement that the ontology be fully analyzed. There is an almost limitless number of ways that any series of experiences can be interpreted, and therefore any belief can be maintained, so long as certain others are sacrificed. This is the heart of Quine's phenomenological foundationalism – all that can concern a Quinian scientist is the phenomenological consequences of that belief. Thus, there is no requirement that the principles within a Quinian web fit together into a single worldview, so long as they do not provide predictions that contradict each other.

It would seem, then, that any science that attempts to progress without relativizing ontology must begin with a consideration of the nature of truth and maintain criteria for validity that includes full internal coherence. A philosopher of science attempting to develop such a science must first inquire into what true knowledge would look like, were it to be grasped. To this end, ignoring that science will probably never be a completed discipline, I ask what the silhouette of that picture would be, if it were to be seen.

The universe exists, and it exists in a coherent, universal, and constant way. These are the necessary guiding assumptions in science. The universe cannot contradict itself, and thus the underlying mechanisms that govern it cannot necessitate that the universe have two different natures. Furthermore, these mechanisms must be uniform in space and constant through time. Without assuming this, there is no reason to engage in scientific study, because what is discovered in one instance could never be applied to another instance. If the laws of nature exist, but are in flux, either in time or space, then scientific study is left studying nothing. Two laws of nature cannot ever contradict each other, so all of the laws of nature must be understandable in a single theory, if they are to be understandable at all⁹.

These principles may be taken as a sort of foundation, but not in any way like the foundations of the Enlightenment and analytic traditions. These are fully ontological principles - they are principles of existence, principles that fully deal with the nature of being in general. However, what is more important about these principles is that they are principles in a Quinian web, and so are subject to revision and change, though they are also central, and therefore serve pragmatically as the basis of the rest of the web. Quine supported his ontological web along the fringe with phenomenology; these principles provide a second pillar of support for a Quinian web by providing ontological principles in the center that govern

the formation of the rest of the web.

These principles provide a second pillar for Quine's web, working with the pillar of phenomenology. By doing this, these principles also provide a second application of Popper's falsificationism, for truth is no longer merely correspondence, but also coherence. From this, the true possibilities of ontological falsification come into play. A theory can be rejected, not only because it does not correspond to the way that the world is observed to work, but also if it fails to be fully ontological and fails to provide a complete explanation for all relevant observed phenomena. A theory can be proven false by contradicting itself or failing to account for phenomena that fall within the realm of the theory's applicability. It can further be falsified ontologically by providing a different picture of the universe than another theoretical structure with which it is attempting to merge, even if these two pictures provide entirely coherent predictions. Also, there is greater room for the development of phenomenological falsification with the inclusion of an ontology. This is because the ontological network of a theory includes various logical principles, and thus includes a concept of logical consequence, allowing for greater ontological and phenomenological expansion of the theory. This is not to say that a theory includes principles that are necessary for their own sake, but principles that provide for the necessity of other aspects of the theory, given the theory as a whole. By making these connections, it is possible to find a theory that is more fully a universal explanation that can spread to predictions outside of the bare phenomenology that the initial theory is capable of encompassing. I will return to this principle of theoretical expansion after drawing on the work of Roy Bhaskar.

viii. Basics of Bhaskar

In the final quarter of the twentieth century, the philosopher Roy Bhaskar argued that the analytic philosophers before him had inadequately explained the actual process of scientific inquiry. He was not concerned as I am with developing an ameliorative philosophy, but took "it to be the function of philosophy to analyze concepts which are 'already given' but 'as confused.'"¹⁰ Bhaskar's goal was to describe how science *does* work, rather than how it *could* work.

Nevertheless, Bhaskar's work makes great strides towards developing a conception of truth and knowledge as the goal of science that is well suited to provide what is needed as a central pillar for my revisions of Quine's philosophy. The growth of his ontological philosophy also casts light upon Quinian web-creation within my model. Furthermore, out of Bhaskar's philosophical structure a clear account of ontological falsifica-

tionist scientific progression can be developed, the backbone of falsificationist realism. I will also use his ideas to formulate a method of describing the universe such that this progression is one towards greater ontological truth, rather than the greater phenomenological correspondence of Popper's philosophy.

Bhaskar argued against the logical empiricism and phenomenology of the analytic tradition. He attacked pure phenomenalism, but not by demonstrating that it is an inefficient philosophy of science, as I do. Rather, with Kant, he argued that pure phenomenalism is impossible, because some degree of interpretation is unavoidable. We can never face phenomena without positing an account of their reality, so any interpretation must involve ontology. This is a radical assertion of the theory-ladenness of observation: one cannot have a pure observation, which can then be incorporated into a theoretical structure. It is impossible to categorize experiences as such into an objective scientific law. Rather, in the very act of observing, one interprets those observations through a veil of one's prior experiences and beliefs to construct a picture of the world.

Closely tied to this assertion is Bhaskar's principle of "the non-spontaneous production of knowledge, viz. the production of knowledge from and by means of knowledge."¹¹ In the same way that the theory-ladenness of observation denies the possibility of truly fresh observational eyes, this principle of epistemological relativism denies the possibility that one could develop an interpretation of those observations without the inspiration and limitations of prior theoretical structures. Rather, new theories always arise out of the perspectives of priorly held beliefs, and creativity in science comes out of new perspectives being applied to a particular set of phenomena.

Bhaskar's final critique of phenomenalism is the common denial that "there is an ontological distinction between scientific laws and patterns of events."¹² Constant conjunction describes phenomenological events, and a law that maintains a specific constant conjunction between events can provide phenomenological predictions. The problem with this picture of causal laws is that it is of extremely limited applicability. Laboratories create what Bhaskar calls a closed system and what phenomenological science calls the isolation of a variable in order to investigate causal laws. The situations used in these analyses very rarely occur in nature. If causal laws are defined as constant conjunction, and these conjunctions only occur within the closed systems of laboratories, then they are applicable only within these close systems. In open systems, not only do the "causal" events in a law defined by a constant conjunction rarely occur, but when they do, the "effect" events will only rarely follow. In most

situations, both the “cause” and the “effect” will be dwarfed by the other effects inherent to the open system.

Bhaskar overcomes this failing of phenomenological theories by rejecting the validity of constant conjunction as a definition of a scientific law. Rather, “the objects of knowledge [are] the structures and mechanisms that generate phenomena.”¹³ The closure of a system amounts to the cordoning off of all except one of these generative mechanisms, not the isolation of a phenomenological conjunction of events. The causal laws that develop out of this isolation are not based on any constant conjunction, but provide information about how that generative mechanism always acts. This causal realist approach to the investigation of generative mechanisms allows what is learned from closed systems to be applied when there are other generative mechanisms acting against the one that has been studied. It is the interaction of a plethora of these actualized generative mechanisms that produces open systems. However, by systematically studying and isolating the nature of each generative mechanism that is present in a given open system, one is able to gradually perfect one’s ability to understand any particular open system.

ix. A Hermeneutic Handmaiden

One of Roy Bhaskar’s central theses is that knowledge can never come into being *ex nihilo*. “Knowledge depends upon knowledge-like antecedents.”¹⁴ This principle is an extension of Immanuel Kant’s argument that it is impossible to observe the world without interpreting it. To this is added that these interpretations of the world do not come from the world or from purely creative reasoning. The sources of interpretations are the theories that have already been formulated, structures of belief that have already been developed. Thus, radically new theoretical structures are merely the application of pre-existing principles to situations on which they had not previously been brought to bear.

A notable example of this dependence upon prior theoretical constructions from the history of science surrounds James Clerk Maxwell’s development of field theory to explain electromagnetism.¹⁵ The ingenuity of field theory was not a burst of pure insight, but the result of his theological understanding of the trinity in Christian doctrine, and the application of that understanding to the problem of electromagnetic action at a distance.

Bhaskar takes innumerable examples such as this and concludes that “whenever we speak of things or of events etc. in science we must always speak of them and know them under particular descriptions, descriptions which will always be to a greater or lesser extent theoretical-

ly determined, which are not neutral reflections of a given world.”¹⁶ Such neutral reflections are in principle an impossible philosophical undertaking, for the world is always observed through a lens of theory. Thus, there is in any scientific activity a sort of epistemological relativism, an individual dependence on the history and prior beliefs of the scientist that is inseparable from the product of his or her work.

This epistemological relativism, however, is not the metaphysical or methodological rejection of fixed ontological structures in favor of relativist phenomenology in Quine. Rather, it is an assertion that the beliefs on the phenomenological fringe of a Quinian web are not only logically dependent upon those points closer to the center, but were developed out of their influence and inspiration. Whenever a scientific inquiry faces an explanatory hole in its operational Quinian web, that hole is always rimmed by certain phenomenological and theoretical structures that determine how it could be filled. We cannot directly perceive reality at the fringe of our webs of belief; rather, any perception is inescapably colored by a necessary apperception through all of the beliefs that have predated that perception. The creation of any new belief must occur through these veils, and the creative element of any solution is the ability to view an ontological gap through a veil different from those previously used. Thus, Maxwell’s creativity was in perceiving the effects of electricity and magnetism through the veil of his Christianity.

In spite of the apparent limitations imposed on objectivity by epistemological relativity, Bhaskar maintains that this apperception is not only inescapable, but is invaluable for the maintenance of a realist conception of science. This is because interpretation is meaningless unless it is realist interpretation in the same way that belief is meaningless unless it is belief in the truth of the object of belief. Without the attribution of real content to interpretations, as to beliefs, the interpretation becomes meaningless and unfounded. Since scientists must interpret their observations, Bhaskar argues that it is inconceivable that those scientists posit interpretations that are anything other than possible ontological truths. A scientist who minimalizes the breadth or depth of his or her interpretations minimalizes the possibility of the truth of those interpretations within a realist framework. This is to what Bhaskar is referring when he asserts that “epistemological relativism ... is the handmaiden of ontological realism and must be accepted.”¹⁷

The inescapability of epistemological relativism requires that any interpretive framework arise out of the priorly held beliefs and experiences of the scientist positing that framework. These interpretations of phenomena cannot be minimalized in order to maintain a generally positivist per-

spective, for their very existence is an insoluble problem for positivist philosophers. Interpretations of reality thus cannot be merely operational assumptions to be used and discarded at will without subjecting them to the scientific gaze and without any consideration of their relevance apart from their ability to predict phenomena. In place of relativist phenomenology, I will develop a scientific methodology that governs and systematizes an ontological consideration that is founded on realism and the teleological goal of which is complete and true interpretation in the same way that empirical completeness was the teleological goal for Popper.

x. A Manifest Manifold

If we accept our inability to avoid the effects of our prior experience and beliefs, then we must also accept that the differences between the prior experiences and beliefs of the scientists studying a given phenomenon will result in a manifold of interpretations of that phenomenon. The result is the possibility of drastically differing theoretical structures arising from and explaining the same phenomena. This ontological degeneracy need not be complete – two theories may merely explain some of the same phenomena, but have different foci – but it is unavoidable.

This conclusion, however, neglects the possibility that ontological interpretations may also have scientific virtue. It is not necessarily a straightforward matter to determine which of a number of degenerate interpretations and theories one ought to maintain. I have argued that the goal of science is a true – or at least truer – understanding and explanation of reality, rather than a complete description of the phenomena of nature, as positivism maintained. In light of this, the choice of a single theory out of a manifold is an issue of great importance. There are three substantial considerations that must be given to any treatment of a theoretical manifold: the fallacy of ontological interchangeability, a realist unification of the ontological manifold and falsificationism, and theoretical pluralism and falsification.

xi. Inherent Interchangeability

Two ontologically distinct theories can only ever be equivalent phenomenologically – that is, the extent of similarity that can ever be claimed of two theories is a similarity of predictions for those experiments that have already been performed. However, unlike within the positivist methodology, these two theories may not be thought of as interchangeable, if the goal of science is ontological truth. A similarity of phenomenological predictions does not equate two theories, even if the phenomenological overlap is complete. Such an assumption is merely viewing ontol-

ogy as the tool of science, rather than its goal.

Since phenomenologically indistinct theories are not interchangeable, a choice of one over the other can never be considered final – unless they are only partially indistinct and experiments have been performed which have explicitly falsified one theory or the other. Lacking a definite falsification of one theory or the other, it is difficult to see how any preference paid to one theory over another may be founded on more than utility or aesthetics. One theory may either provide greater ease of applicability than another theory, or the picture painted by it may be more elegant in its completeness. Both of these criteria, however, are matters of personal preference, and it is difficult to see how one could systematically decide between two such theories.

xii. First Formulations of Falsificationist Realism

The second consideration is the direct result of the impossibility of complete confirmation of a given theory: the underdetermination of theory by observation. As has been clearly demonstrated by numerous skeptical thinkers, it is never possible to attain certain knowledge of the truth of the existence or agency of a generative mechanism or theoretical structure. It is thus inescapable that any given postulate may be false, and the positivist fear arises of making unfounded and dogmatic assumptions. An unexamined prudence would lead to the conclusion that, if it is impossible to ever decide that one or another theory is true, one must accept every conceivable theory. A closer analysis, however, demonstrates that it does not follow from this that each theory must be regarded as equally legitimate or that we may postulate freely. Rather, I will confine this ontological manifold to a realist and falsificationist framework, and systematize scientific hypothesizing so that both ontological and phenomenological science may progress.

Embracing the principles of the ontological manifold and realism together overcomes the dangers that arise from holding either individually. When taken outside of the strict boundaries of realism, the ontological manifold invites an epiphenomenal designation of ontology, the belief that ontological differences can have no direct bearing on perceived reality because they are not causally efficacious. Epiphenomena can never be proven or disproved, because by definition their existence has no effect on observed reality. If a manifold of ontological theories exists without any practical or objective means of moving beyond their degeneracy, then it would seem that at the least ontology ought not to fall under the gaze of science, and could perhaps be seen as beyond any investigation at all.

On the other hand, realism without the ontological manifold faces

the dangers that positivism attempted to avoid by inviting the assumption of unfounded dogmas. Such a position does not accept the possibility of degenerate ontological structures, the possibility that another reality with a drastically different underlying structure could provide all of the observations that have thus far been made within a given realm of inquiry. Without this acceptance, a realist scientist is left assuming that the interpretation that has been posited is the only one possible, and a dogmatic adherence to a paradigm is the result.

It is not necessary that ontological progress cease at this point, but the establishment of a paradigm greatly limits the possibility of falsificationist scientific progress primarily to periods of scientific revolution, as described by the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn. Under Kuhn's philosophy, science cycles between periods of "normal science" and periods of scientific revolution. Periods of normal science are those times when a particular field of science is united under a single paradigm. These are the times when few experiments are known to contradict the paradigm, and the bulk of scientific undertakings investigate the finer details of the theory, discovering the information whose existence is predicted by the theory, but whose content cannot be.

Periods of normal science will, as Kuhn describes and history confirms, continue until a body of experimental evidence develops that explicitly calls the paradigm into question. When this happens, normal science cannot progress, for there is no framework within which the existence of unspecified information can be accurately predicted. As a result, the field falls into a chaotic state, during which numerous possible theories will arise and fall in a short period of time, each attempting to explain a different set of phenomena that the old paradigm explained. This state of scientific revolution will continue until a single theory rises to prominence and can explain most of the phenomena that the old paradigm explained, as well as the phenomena that cast the scientific community into revolution.

By this philosophy of science, the periods of greatest – or at least most dramatic – scientific progress are those of revolution. Indeed, I will maintain that the only time when ontological progress can occur is during a revolution, because during periods of normal science, individual theories are upheld because a theoretical manifold is viewed as either superfluous or unscientific. Paradigms lock a single theory into place, and science progresses by examining the phenomenological particulars that are predicted by the paradigm and by falsifying various minor fluctuations of the form of the paradigm.

Kuhn saw no problem with this picture of progression within a par-

adigm, because like Quine and Popper, he was operating within a phenomenological perspective of science. During periods of normal science the details of the paradigm are examined and phenomenological knowledge of the world grows steadily. However, as a result of the paradigm, there can be no strong competition between different theories, and the ontological manifold as I have described it is ignored in favor of an unjustified paradigm. By confining this competition to substantial paradigm shifts that result from unexpected inexplicable observations, progress in the sense defined by Popper is limited to these accidents.

xiii. Crucialities and Controversies

A cursory glance at the bureaucracy and economy of the modern scientific community will demonstrate that free experimentation could – and probably should – never occur. The first type of “important” experiment is in the progression of Kuhnian normal science, those that provide knowledge that the theory says is exists, but which the theory cannot predict exactly. A straightforward example of this is the decoding of the human genome: the modern theory of genetics predicts that the base-pair sequence has an effect on the individual, but the raw theory cannot predict which strings of base-pairs will result in which particular attribute.

The other type of experiment that will receive funding is the type upon which I will focus: those experiments which bring into sharp contrast the predictive differences between two theories, what Sir Francis Bacon and Popper called crucial experiments. For this type of experiment to be considered, however, there must be a manifold of competing and contrary theories, a situation that Kuhn limits to periods of revolution.

I will provide no argument against these criteria for determining what experiments are performed. There must be some guidelines for determining areas of focus for scientific inquiry, both in order to provide a means of focus for scientific inquiry as well as to determine the bounds of scientific inquiry. The criteria of normal scientific inquiry and crucial experiments provide just this focus. However, I will nevertheless maintain that confining crucial experiments to periods when there is no established paradigm will unnecessarily hinder scientific progression.

If some form of falsificationism is assumed, then science progresses most through crucial experiments, that is, the performing of experiments that must falsify one theory or another. Granted, there are rare exceptions when an experiment in the former group, Kuhnian normal science, provides results that are entirely unexpected, as mentioned earlier. Such falsifications are very rare, however, and in their nature accidental. Theories are rarely falsified when they are not expected to be falsified: to

rely upon falsification arising out of the former type of experiment is to rely upon the luck of the experimenter, rather than the ability of the scientific method, to progress science.

The reason that accidents of normal science are the only other means of falsification is the intrinsic impossibility of determining which aspects, predictive or ontological, of a given theory are controversial, in the sense of being open to question. The only conceivable criterion for establishing that a given theoretical structure is controversial and in need of deeper examination is in comparison to another theoretical structure – though it is important to note that this alternative theoretical structure is often merely common sense or what a researcher is willing to accept.

The only way to overcome the shortcomings that arise out of limiting falsification to the accidents of normal science is within the context of a body of ontologically distinct theories. Such a community would not only encourage the development of parallel explanatory structures, but would encourage their development towards mutual contradiction. Scientists working within this ontological manifold would determine which experiments may prove fruitful within a falsificationist framework by inquiring into the meanings and ramifications of each of the theories and specifically searching out these points of contradiction.¹⁸

The systematic development of parallel explanatory structures that I am outlining would also expedite scientific progression after the falsification occurs, in addition to increasing the number of falsifications available. Reliance upon the chance falsification of a lone paradigm through the accident of normal science results in a chaotic crisis state, in which normal scientific progression cannot proceed until a new paradigm rises in place of the old. Within falsificationism, science does not progress with the falsification of the only extant theory, but with the rise of a theory to replace it or with the limitation of the number of possible explanatory models.

Popper's philosophy of falsificationism requires a progression towards verisimilitude. However, verisimilitude is a measure of a theoretical structure, not a measure of the general state of science. A science cannot be thought to be "truth-like" if every theory has been falsified, and can only be said to be moving towards "truth-likeness" if new theories develop out of the vacuum left by the prior falsification. Science can only progress when another theory arises in place of the falsified paradigm, but if there is no pool of parallel systems of explanation in place at the time of falsification, and that predicted the falsification, the new theory must be constructed after the falsification, from nothing.

This criticism of the limitations of Kuhnian science is slightly weak-

ened by the arguments below against the possibility of complete falsification. Nevertheless, it still applies in the case of incomplete falsification, and is still overcome by the system that I am presenting in this work. The virtue of conjoining the ontological manifold with realism arises from this picture of Kuhn. By maintaining a tension between these two rival scientific practices, falsificationist realism and the ontological manifold can feed each other. Opposing theories and parallel explanatory structures are a requirement for scientific progress. A maximization of both the number and opposition of those theories results in the greatest possibility of scientific progression, so long as realist falsification is the predominant scientific method.

A plethora of competing explanations arise from embracing the ontological manifold and attempting to expand upon it as much as possible. By focusing theoretical developments on the ontological differences between parallel theories, one can discover the points where possible contradictions between them would arise, and further analysis could yield phenomenological distinctions between the two theories. Progression within this framework is not limited to the discovery of inherent phenomenological differences. In addition to this, these theories may be deliberately modified or augmented so that they contradict each other, while simultaneously maintaining a correspondence to those phenomena that have already been observed. Forcing these contradictions eliminates more possible theoretical structures and realist pictures of the world, which would result in greater verisimilitude for the remaining theories.

A philosophy of science that values this process of theoretical progression would most utilize scientific creativity to devise as large a body of alternative interpretations as possible. This allows those theories which would fail to fully account for observed reality to be summarily falsified. Thus, alternative theories are discovered explicitly so that a body of theories may be eliminated, and whether the falsified theories were well established or newly discovered is irrelevant. This may appear counterintuitive – the body of theories is continually increased for the sole purpose of decreasing it – but this is only because verisimilitude is not necessarily intuitively transparent. So long as the theories that form these contradictions account for all priorly observed phenomena, these contradictions could falsify the established theory, regardless of how far fetched they may seem intuitively. Furthermore, the more unique a given modification is, the greater the push towards verisimilitude that could arise out of it, because a greater body of theories will likely be falsified.

xiv. Pursuing Plethoric Pluralism

The final result of the ontological manifold arises out of the elimi-

nation of complete falsification and the role of epistemological relativism in the valuation of the ontological manifold that I have posited. The inescapability of epistemological relativism necessitates an ontological manifold, which in turn brings into focus the possibility of both partial and total ontological degeneracy. I have argued that the conjunction of this ontological manifold with a strict realism yields a valuing of partial ontological degeneracy's utility for the progression of science. This is because partially degenerate theories predict some of the same phenomena, but also some different phenomena, and thus experiments may be able to be performed that falsify one or the other. As a result, two potentially dangerous scientific perspectives - the ontological manifold and realism - are brought together to promote scientific progress. This entire falsificationist methodology, however, hinges upon the maintenance of the breadth of the plurality of epistemological relativism, the ability of different individuals to approach any scientific quandary with different sets of experiences and beliefs.

It may seem to be a pseudo-problem to consider situations where epistemological relativity ceases to yield a plethora of interpretive frameworks. No two people can ever have the same experiences, and there have never been two people with identical beliefs. While this is superficially true, it denies the relevance of similarity of beliefs to the broadening of the ontological manifold. Furthermore, such a perspective ignores the fact that science has historically gone through regular periods of relative stasis, during which very few original explanatory structures have arisen. If one maintains that scientific progress is to be maximized through the falsificationist methodology that I have been outlining, then such periods of relative scientific inactivity must be minimized by augmenting the ontological manifold as much as is possible.

I have addressed how we may maximize progress and minimize lulls in scientific progress in general through encouragement of, and engagement with, a plethora of parallel explanatory structures within a rigorous realism. I have not yet addressed, however, the causes of these lulls, and thus I have not discussed the particulars of how to avoid them. It is true that scientific lulls may be alleviated slightly through a valuing of epistemological relativism and the resulting ontological manifold. However, the lack of this practice is rarely the efficient cause of the lulls. In most situations the cause of the lull is the same as the primary symptom: the uniformity of belief structures.

Under most circumstances, periods of stasis are the result of falsificationism succeeding while the ontological manifold fails. If every theory is falsified, save one, then that theory will be the only one that is taught.

What results is a strongly entrenched paradigm that is not pushed at its edges. Its prominence will not only prevent other theories from rising to compete with it, but will also cause the theory to become ingrained as intuition and eventually will develop into a taken-for-granted “scientific fact.” When scientists begin unanimously to accept any principle as given and to take all of the contemporary alternatives as completely falsified, then those alternatives cease to be taught or considered, unless one of the falsified theories becomes a standard approximation.

Occasionally, when a theory is unanimously recognized as having been falsified, it is still retained as an approximation of the theory that replaces it. This occurs when the falsified theory is simpler to apply than the more widely held theory, and still provides “close enough” results. Probably the most common example of this phenomenon is the continued teaching and use of Newtonian mechanics, though most of its most fundamental principles have been demonstrated to be false under extreme circumstances. Once a set of theories has been falsified, the only utility that they can offer is as simple approximations. In such circumstances, the theory that will be retained will be the most simply applicable, rather than the closest to truth, and all alternatives will fade into history.

Regardless of whether the standardization of approximations or complete falsification is the cause, when falsified theories cease to be considered, any possible influence they may have on epistemological relativity is lost. During scientific lulls, contrary theories have been either gradually or systematically falsified, and then forgotten. As more falsified theories fade from memory, the sources of epistemological relativity must be increasingly radically afield in order to break into the paradigmatic hegemony. Maxwell’s introduction of the ideas of Christian theology into the study of electromagnetism – at a time when text books were being published asserting that everything that is to be known about the physical world is known – is a good example of what can be necessary to overcome a strong scientific lull.

Regardless of whether a theory can be completely falsified, a scientist who has studied it may still bring its influences to bear on any new problem and utilize it as a basis within epistemological relativism. This is because it is not the truth of a theory that is the source of its value for epistemological relativism; nor is it even belief in that theory. Rather, what most promotes epistemological relativism in the development of the ontological manifold is the number and range of the theories and beliefs that are ready to hand. By retaining falsified theories, epistemological relativism may continue to promote the development of the ontological manifold, allowing it to be in constant tension with falsificationist realism. So

long as there is a tension between the ontological manifold and falsificationism, scientific lulls cannot occur, for there will always be new points of potential falsification to bring to bear against any theory that would become an established paradigm. To put it differently, any theory, regardless of its truth or falsity, can prove to be the inspiration for a theory that is itself true or that may aid in the falsification of another theory.

xv. Enabling Extra Explanation

In response to this claim emerges the question of how one could judge that a theory is true, or at least more true than another theory. This is the same question that has arisen before of how one is to choose between two competing theories when there is not any strong phenomenological reason to choose one over another. The standard solution in the analytic tradition, as originally posited by Popper, has been to prefer the theory that is able to explain or describe the phenomena that another theory can, as well as some that it cannot¹⁹. I will maintain that the most transparent interpretation of this criterion, however, contradicts the ontological realist perspective that has thus far been developed throughout this paper.

Roy Bhaskar articulates this explanatory breadth criterion, stating that “theory T_a is preferable to theory T_b ... if theory T_a can explain under its descriptions almost all the phenomena ... that T_b can explain ... plus some significant phenomena that T_b cannot explain.”²⁰ He asserts that this is the principle measure of scientific progress, and that thinking in this way is necessary if one is to maintain a concept of progress. Further analysis of this criterion in light of the developments to this point, however, demonstrates that it can only be thought of as necessary with a very particular interpretation, and not with Popper’s original meaning.

In its original meaning, the explanatory breadth criterion for scientific progress makes a metaphysical assumption that Bhaskar had previously rejected. It asserts that the “better” of two competing theories is the one that can take more into account, the one that can explain and predict more aspects of the physical world. While this may seem to be a valid measure, and is indeed one that is widely held throughout the scientific community, it is assuming that the world is atomistic in the sense that it can be reduced to a single theoretical structure. For the explanatory breadth criterion to apply, the goal of science must be a *single* mechanism that governs *all* phenomena. It ignores the possibility that there are a *multitude* of interacting mechanisms at work in any given situation, and that the existence of each is independent of any of the others.

Bhaskar adheres to this second possibility very strongly and rejects all forms of atomism, asserting that “the higher order level [of a hierarchy

of theoretical descriptions] is ... irreducible to ... the principles and descriptions of the lower order level.”²¹ He denies that a more broadly scoped science, for instance thermodynamics or sociology, can be generally reduced to a more fine-grained science, such as quantum theory or psychology.

Bhaskar is not claiming that metaphysical reduction is necessarily false, but that it is fundamentally uncertain, and therefore epistemologically unjustified. For a reduction to be valid, he requires that it leave “the reality of ... higher-order entities intact, at least in as much as they [are] causal agents capable of acting back on the materials out of which they are formed.”²² In other words, so long as the adequacy of any given reduction remains in question, the higher order fields of science must remain as efficacious causal powers. This principle, however, further maintains that if it were possible to successfully and completely reduce a given theory to a more overarching and atomistic theory, then such a reduction would be completely legitimate – though not necessarily correct.

Thus, the historical account of the explanatory breadth criterion clearly flies in the face of Bhaskar’s rejection of reductionism. Many philosophers and scientists since the early days of the Enlightenment have regarded reductionism as a necessary and obvious assumption for science. This assumption, however, is only necessary based on the further assumption of theoretical monism, or the belief that all of science can be explained by a single mechanistic theory. Theoretical monists value theories in terms of their entirety, as Quine does, but do so because they believe that every aspect of the theory is tied to a single underlying principle.

Theoretical monism is contrasted with the theoretical pluralism of this paper, which asserts that individual aspects of a theory are examined in order to distinguish between those structures that are truly inseparable and those that are merely accidentally conjoined within the theory. The purpose of this process is to discover individual generative mechanisms and to differentiate between the effects of distinct generative mechanisms. Approaching science in this way, I recognize that there is no reason to suppose that there is a complete unity to nature, but that there may well be multiple independent generative mechanisms. This is not to say that natural unity is impossible or that coherence is an inessential aspect of nature. For science to exist, contradictions cannot exist within the natural world. Rather, theoretical pluralism stresses that the form of this coherence need not lie in the ability of science to reduce all phenomena to a single principle. I agree with Bhaskar that it is reasonable and useful to suppose, instead, that there may be multiple active agents in the world that provide different influences. “The concept of a field of potential

seems closest to meeting these requirements. However it seems to me that there is no reason in principle why there should not be strata of fields (of perhaps radically different kinds), forever unknown to us."²³

The central thesis of theoretical pluralism asserts that the properties that are present in one category of entities, objects or events need not be present in another. Take as a historical example from physics the series of discoveries culminating in the theory that the properties of light are fundamentally dissimilar from those of either the corpuscular view of matter or the stochastic view of fluids that were prominent at the time. One of the great breakthroughs of Einstein's theory of the photon was that it, unlike all of the theories of light that had come before, contended that light was neither fluid nor corpuscles. He asserted that light was something drastically different, and that the laws and principles of corpuscles and fluids do not apply to light, but that light has its own properties that are unique to it.

By dissolving the necessity of the unity of theoretical structures, one does not necessarily dissolve the unity of nature, and does not necessarily dissolve all possible interpretations of the explanatory breadth criterion. Within this pluralist framework, the breadth of a theory's explanatory power does not lie in the number of phenomena that can be explained by it. Rather, the explanatory breadth of a theory is defined as the success with which that theory can maintain inter-theoretical coherence, the ability of a given theory or theoretical structure to conjoin with other theoretical structures to provide a more complete explanatory picture.

Different theoretical structures, when conjoined, do affect each other; the criterion for the conjunction of different theories cannot be limited to a lack of phenomenological contradiction. Rather, theoretical conjunction must be the formation of a new Quinian web, of which both theories are interconnected parts. Theoretical pluralism agrees with Quine's claim that "any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system."²⁴ Any individual statement can, indeed, be held come what may, but webs of belief and theoretical conjunctions cannot be. It may be impossible to falsify any single theoretical structure, but it is certainly possible to falsify a conjunction of theoretical structures.

Theoretical pluralism seeks out different possible webs of belief that maintain the realist pillar in the center that I described earlier and account for most of the same phenomena at the fringe, but which have explanations in between that differ to varying degrees. It is when a scientist analyzing a set of theories discovers the possibility for a single theoretical structure or predictive mode to be included in two otherwise

substantially different webs that he or she is able to determine the necessity of that structure or mode. If a theoretical structure can fit equally well into two different webs, then it cannot be said to be necessarily tied to either. In all likelihood, such a theoretical analysis would discover that the majority of the theoretical structures in any particular web are not bound to that web, but are independent generative mechanisms.

Nature does not contradict itself; therefore, even if the theoretical structures that we develop to describe and explain nature are independent of each other, if they are conjoined they cannot contradict each other. Two theories that provide differing predictions for a given phenomenon clearly cannot both be true. In the same way, two theoretical structures which do not overlap cannot both be true if they provide two opposing pictures of the fundamental nature of reality. The unity of nature is depicted theoretically in a single coherent picture formed of a plethora of theoretical structures and generative mechanisms which do not necessitate each other, but which complement each other. For two theoretical structures to be accepted together they must be able to coexist both phenomenologically and ontologically. Two theoretical structures cannot be accepted into the same Quinian web if they provide different predictions to even a single phenomenon or if any aspect of the picture of reality that the one paints contradicts that of the other.

The explanatory breadth criterion is met if one set of theoretical structures can be unified to explain a greater number of phenomena than can another set. To rework Bhaskar's account of the explanatory breadth criterion, theory T_a is preferable to theory T_b if a web of belief can be developed around T_a that can account for (most of) the phenomena that every web of belief that has been constructed around T_b can explain. Furthermore, for T_a to be preferred, that web of belief must also be able to explain some phenomenon that none of the webs into which T_b has entered can explain.

The sense of "prefer" here is the same as it was for Popper. "From a rational point of view, we should not 'rely' on any theory, for no theory has been shown to be true, or can be shown to be true" but we can "prefer as a basis for action."²⁵ This is not a preference that leads to either a rejection of T_b or the acceptance of T_a as a fundamentally more true theory, this preference is one of utility and application. Within this system, the only reason to have a strong preference for one theory over another is when one is leaving the realm of pure science in order to practice applied science or engineering. This is because it makes no sense to have any strong theoretical preference – so long as there have been no

falsifying evidence – within a purely scientific enterprise when there is always a real possibility that any or all of the theoretical structures are false. However, within the realm of applied science, the goal is not to investigate these particular sets of theories, but to use one of them in order to investigate another matter. In this situation, it is not the truth of these theories that is important, but their ability to aid in the discovery of truth in different realms of inquiry.

xvi. Finalizing Falsificationist Realism

Theoretical pluralism casts falsificationism in a very different light, because falsifying an entire theoretical network becomes a nearly impossible task. Rather, it is the interaction between competing and overlapping theoretical structures that provides the grounds for falsification. In the vast majority of scientific inquiries, only individual theoretical structures or individual theoretical conjunctions can be falsified, rather than whole theoretical networks. This is not always the case, for there is always the possibility for a fully reductionist science, but such a science is far from necessary. This picture of falsificationism, falsificationist realism, allows for a “pick and choose” system of theory construction, where different theoretical structures are chosen from a multiplicity of possibilities and pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle.

Furthermore, falsificationist realism allows for the flourishing of new theoretical structures, which would provide the groundwork for a more widespread and varied pool of knowledge from which epistemological relativism can develop new theories. This is a system under which new individual theoretical structures can easily arise, and which could then lend their influence upon the further development of new theoretical structures. It also allows for greater utility to be found for falsified theories through a liberal and conscientious use of epistemological relativism. Beyond providing inspiration for new theories, falsified theories can be reanalyzed and deconstructed into their composite theoretical structures, possibly revealing that not all of these structures were in fact falsified. Thus, these un-falsified structures may be reintroduced into the greater body of theoretical structures, expanding theoretical pluralism, again furthering the possibility of falsificationist progression.

This pluralist interpretation of Bhaskar’s version of the explanatory breadth criterion is required when the criterion is conjoined with his rejection of the claim that reductionism is an epistemological or metaphysical necessity. This modified criterion also employs his theory of epistemological relativism to provide a tool for scientific progression and a means of overcoming the dangers of the ontological manifold and real-

ism. By valuing these two principles as opposing sides of a necessary scientific tension, they are able to be utilized and their limitations may be minimized.

xvii. Conclusive Conjectures of Caution

The goal of science under falsificationist realism is more than merely accurate predictions or reproducible results, but an inquiry into the nature of truth itself. This is because scientists cannot avoid the interpretation of their observations and shunning a search for true interpretations makes those interpretations unfounded and unanalyzed. This is not to say that it is necessary that we be able to dictate that which is true; rather, the goal here has been to formulate a center point of a Quinian web of belief. In accomplishing this, however, I recognize that this cannot be done from a god's eye view. Even in this analysis, I am working within my web of belief through epistemological relativism. Falsificationist realism is an attempt to utilize the inescapability of epistemological relativism to posit a system through which this relativism may operate as an agent of scientific progress.

Notes

- 1 Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 9.
- 2 I argued for this in more detail in the full version of this paper, my undergraduate honors thesis in philosophy, which is currently held at Bucknell University's Ellen Clark Bertrand Library.
- 3 I am using the terminology, ontico-phenomenological unity instead of onto-phenomenological unity because, in combining ontology and phenomenology, ontology comes to focus on the being of entities, which is called ontic, rather than being in general.
- 4 Purves, G. M., "In Search of Reality: A Comparative Study of the Bohmian and Orthodox Interpretations of Quantum Theory," 2006. This is my undergraduate honors thesis for physics, and is currently being held in Bucknell University's Ellen Clark Bertrand Library.
- 5 Quine, Willard van Orman, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", 2003, 285-6.
- 6 Ibid, 286.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Quine, Willard van Orman, "Ontological Relativity," 2003, 315.
- 9 I am tacitly ignoring here and elsewhere in this work the possibility that the universe is able to contradict itself, that it is inconstant, and that science is nothing more than a confused stumbling. If that were to prove to be the case, then either it could be made clear through sci-

ence, at which point there would be a rational justification for rejecting scientific inquiry, or it would not be made clear through science, which would make the universe phenomenologically identical to one that is fully coherent. In either case, this critique is no justification for abandoning either science or philosophy of science, for either scientific progress can be achieved or knowledge that it cannot can be achieved scientifically.

10 Bhaskar, Roy, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 1997, 24.

11 Ibid, 24.

12 Ibid, 12.

13 Ibid, 17.

14 Ibid, 22.

15 This was posited by the theologian T. F. Torrance in the preface to his edition of Maxwell's *A Dynamical Theory of the Electromagnetic Field*, 1982, where Torrance connects field theory with the theological principle of dynamic relation and inter-relational personhood. See also T. F. Torrance, *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture*, 1981, especially p. 54, T. F. Torrance "Christian Faith and Physical Science in the Thought of James Clerk Maxwell.", 1984, and W. Jim Neidhardt, "Key Themes in Thomas F. Torrance's Integration of Judeo-Christian Theology and Natural Science," 1989.

16 Bhaskar, 249.

17 Ibid.

18 It has been brought to my attention that this principle of a body of generative mechanisms is very similar to the philosophy of Imre Lakatos. Lakatos posits 'scientific research programs,' within which a coherent unity of theoretical structures is viewed alongside a Manifold of explanatory mechanisms. An important difference, however, is that Lakatos is operating within a phenomenological framework, and therefore does not have the allowance for the ontology/phenomenology distinction that is central to my philosophy.

19 Popper, Karl, *Conjectural Knowledge*, 1972, 13-23.

20 Bhaskar, Roy, 248.

21 Ibid, 112.

22 Ibid, 181.

23 Ibid, 180-81.

24 "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," 286.

25 Popper, 21-22.

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Why Robert Nozick Should Have Played More Video Games

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Robert Nozick's "Experience Machine" thought experiment is a central idea in the debate over psychological hedonism. Nozick (1974) suggests a machine that creates a simulated reality inside a person's mind. The machine "would give you any experience you desired," while all the time "you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain" (43). The machine would also make a person forget plugging into it, so that anyone who plugs in would think the simulated reality was real. Nozick then asks whether the reader would plug into the machine for life, knowing that the machine would provide as much pleasure as the reader could possibly want.

Nozick intended his machine to be a refutation of psychological hedonism. Since most people would feel some reluctance to plug into the machine, there must be something more that we desire from life than the unending pleasure the machine could provide.

What that "something" is has been left up to the readers' imaginations for more than thirty years. For Nozick's purpose, the reasons why we would not plug into the Experience Machine are not important as long as they are not dependent on maximizing personal pleasure and minimizing personal pain.

But the reasons why people will not plug in become more important when we are forced to take into consideration that people have, for

the past seven years, been plugging into the best approximation of Nozick's Experience Machine we have available. When *Everquest*, the first largely successful 3-dimensional massively-multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), went live in 1999, it began a trend of people flocking to alternate reality simulations. By 2006, MMORPG's have become the biggest money-maker in gaming with the most persistent player-base, and with players numbering in the millions in a half-dozen leading MMO games.

The success of the MMO industry is all well and good. However, what gives Nozick and contemporary philosophers cause for consideration is that MMORPG's are closer in essence to the Experience Machine than they are to traditional games. These games offer persistent, immersive (though not sensory-immersive) worlds, and people sign onto them specifically for pleasure. And whatever the reasons why they wouldn't spend their whole lives in the Experience Machine, the players of MMORPG's are spending significant portions of their lives in game. Millions of people ages ten and up are sacrificing free time, conventional social interaction, television, other games, work, school, friends, family, and (in extreme cases) eating for these games.

Were these games to be sensory immersive – that is, to allow the players to perceive the fictional reality as if it were real – there is little doubt that the MMORPG players of today would jump at the chance to adventure in such a world. With a contemporary example of people's willingness to forgo actual reality for its virtual counterpart, we must readdress the Experience Machine and our reasons for refusing to plug in. What are the differences between MMO games, and the Experience Machine? Despite their differences, does pleasure remain the purpose of both? If so, is it possible for a case to be made that an MMO game actually provides more pleasure for the user?

As we begin to take a look at these issues, it is important first to note a distinction that has been made in debate over how we might hedonistically consider whether to plug into the Experience Machine. The arguments offered in this paper will not rely on this distinction, but it remains important because it is the mind of the person who is considering whether or not to plug in that we are interested in.

i. The Decision

Recent controversy over the Experience Machine and psychological hedonism centers on arguments presented by Elliot Sober and David Sloan Wilson (1998) in *Unto Other: The Evolution and Biology of Unselfish Behavior*. They assert that "quite apart from the amount of

pleasure and pain that accrues to subject after they decide [whether to plug in or not], there is a level of pleasure and pain arising from the deliberation process itself" (285). Sober (2000) later elaborates on this further in *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, claiming that "Plugging into the machine resembles suicide in terms of the utter separation it effects with the real world." However, unlike suicide, "the experience machine delivers (literally) escapist pleasures" (139).

The argument that the decision to plug into the Experience Machine must be considered apart from the experience that the user would have inside the machine has fallen under scrutiny. The purpose of this paper is neither to attack nor to defend this argument. However, as we are looking at what people who are considering plugging into the machine consider important, the notion of game-assisted suicide must factor in.

ii. Games vs. the Experience Machine

The manifest purpose of both playing games and entering the Experience Machine is pleasure. However, Nozick and the people who create MMO games do some very different things when they go about designing their hedonistic devices. Looking at these differences will perhaps give us some insight into why we like MMO games, but generally feel some reservations about Nozick's Experience Machine:

Persistent world beats instanced world every time.

There is an in-joke in the gaming community in which, when describing someone of surpassing skill (at anything), we will claim that this person beat *Tetris*. This is a joke because the game is un-winnable and will go on forever if a player is skilled enough. However, no matter what kind of recognition a person could earn for the feat (gamer godhood, really), it is difficult to imagine anyone playing *Tetris* for the rest of her life. There is an important similarity, though, between an unending game of *Tetris* and Robert Nozick's Experience Machine.

When a person sits down to play *Tetris*, the world which she will occupy for the duration of the game is created for her. Without her, the world would not exist, and when she stops playing, the world ends. In gaming, we refer to this as instancing. All single player games are instanced, as is Nozick's Experience Machine.

There are limitations that we associate with instanced games. Anything instanced is necessarily static, since by the time that we see a game, it is complete. We assume that the designers who created it must

stop work on a product before it can be made available for use. This is not strictly true, and in the case of Nozick's Experience Machine, a static play experience would be impossible (as variety is necessary for pleasure).

The underlying assumption that Nozick makes when he proposes his Experience Machine is that it will be controlled by an Artificial Intelligence. This is the only way to accomplish a dynamic instanced play experience without devoting a team of people to creating content, full-time for each person using the machine. An AI may seem like an easy thing to assume in this case, but we must consider that Nozick is now not only positing a machine that provides pleasure, but also a completely alien intelligence that we know next to nothing about. Further, we now have to consider every bias we have developed for and against thinking machines, and everything that we know, think we know, and know we don't know about AI. That's a lot of extra baggage to throw into something that used to be as simple as a pleasure machine. And we haven't even considered our feelings about a machine simulating people.

All of these issues are resolved in MMO games with persistent worlds. A persistent world allows multiple users to interact with each other in an environment that exists independently of any individual. By allowing other users into one simulated environment, we create a scenario where a comparatively small team of developers can create dynamic content for the game. Further, the other players themselves provide dynamic interactions that make the play experience more pleasurable.

Using only the technology of today, and only entities we are capable of understanding, we can create a simulated environment that exists for the purpose of pleasure and that people will willingly take part in.

There are other problems that we are faced with when considering whether to plug into Nozick's Experience Machine. We'll now look at the problem of legacy, and see how games with persistent worlds help resolve this as well.

*We really like people – maybe even need them –
and definitely want them to know what we're doing.*

Among the reasons that people most often give when they justify refusing Nozick's Experience Machine is that they want what they do with their lives to have some impact, or tangible effect on the world. What cause does the rest of the world have to look at the actions of a person plugged into Nozick's Experience Machine? Apart from entertainment ("MTV's The Fake World"), there aren't very many reasons to do so. The purpose of Nozick's Experience Machine is to provide a person who enters

it with the maximum pleasure and the minimum pain. While it may seem as if we could minimize pain by simulating human interaction, it is that interaction that is our greatest source of pleasure. As social creatures, the greatest pleasure that could possibly be provided to us would be in allowing the people who are using the machine to interact with each other. We could then maintain the purposes that we derive for ourselves and achieve some personal recognition in doing so. We can maintain a potential for legacy. If we do this, we will start to see a significant number of people who willingly enter the machine.

Recognition isn't the only type of legacy that we find pleasurable. By entering into the machine, a person would be sacrificing any reproductive potential. From the perspective of someone outside the machine, two offspring who will continue to exist after that person dies offers significantly more pleasure than two kids who the Experience Machine will eventually just turn off.

The problem of reproductive legacy is somewhat more complicated to solve, because it requires us to address deception.

What's it like to have a memory forcibly removed?

Nozick's Experience Machine doesn't strike us as a particularly friendly device. Upon plugging in, we are forced to forget anything we know about the real world and are deceived into believing the computer-generated world is real. The machine severs our link with anything that we have been or done in the real world in the interest of providing us pleasure in the fake one.

On the matter of memory alteration, Nozick is being a little unfair. None of us have ever had a memory removed (or at least don't remember it if we have). Further, the prospect of being forcibly parted with our memories seems more than a bit unpleasant, since we base so much of who we are off of our experience. Because of this, when Nozick asks if we would forgo the real world for a more pleasurable fake one, what we instead hear is "Would you forgo being a person for a happiness that it is impossible for you to comprehend?" We say no, and we say no hedonistically.

However, were the machine not to deceive, it would seem that the amount of pleasure it could provide us would be limited. People who plug into the machine would take with them whatever burdens they bring from the real world. Further, the content of the simulated world would always be under scrutiny, since it can be compared to its real life counterpart.

What we often overlook is that the primary reason for entering the

Experience Machine is to be able to have the experiences we couldn't have in real life. If the machine forces us to think that the computer-generated world is real, then our fear of consequences will continue to limit the experiences we will have in the machine.

Further, the machine deceives because it seems that people using the machine would gain greater pleasure if they thought their accomplishments, recognition and legacy were real. The counter to this is obvious to any gamer. Accomplishment in game is real accomplishment. When a basketball team wins a game, its members have done something they can be proud of. The fact that the environment in which they had their success was artificially constructed makes little difference. And, like with a well-known basketball team, there is similar opportunity for recognition amongst those interested. MMORPG players generally know who the best players on their server are, or at least the name of an elite organization. Without deception, the potential for accomplishment is preserved.

Further, without deception, users who would plug into the Experience Machine would retain the pleasure granted them by knowing that they could leave the machine. Users can maintain reproductive potential, and be free to enter the machine without regard for preservation of their personal genes or of the species at large. Moreover, having the memory of an often unpleasant, unforgiving world outside the machine would allow users to know just how pleasurable an experience they are having inside (is pleasure really pleasure if you don't know how pleasurable it is?). The knowledge that players are free to leave the real world for the machine and vice versa would likely go a long way toward alleviating the feeling of being trapped or limited that we often encounter in everyday life. And people who know that they can leave the machine are that much more likely to remain inside it willingly. MMO players don't have to spend every second of their available time in game. They know that they do not. They do it anyway, because they want to.

iii. Fun, Games and Conclusions

MMORPG's and their future incarnations (visual internet community, virtual reality, sensory immersion) address the problems that we have with Nozick's Experience Machine. They take into account that people really do derive pleasure from interacting with other people. They do not deceive users (apart from the willing suspension of disbelief that any fiction requires). They allow users freedom to act in ways that survival instinct, the physical world and society prohibit. They exist for the purpose of pleasure and they are seeing plenty of use.

When we closely examine Nozick's Experience Machine with

regard for what these video games are doing differently, we begin to notice some assumptions Nozick makes that limit the amount of pleasure we could get from the machine. A static play experience for Experience Machine users would produce only limited pleasure. A dynamic experience controlled by an AI brings into play all the philosophical baggage that any discussion of AI requires. We derive pleasure from interaction with other people, yet the Experience Machine forbids this. We do not like being deceived, and we have no idea what it's like to have a memory taken from us, but it certainly doesn't seem pleasant.

Robert Nozick asked us to conceive of a device that would cause us the maximum pleasure and the minimum pain. But the device he outlined as his Experience Machine is not that device. Nozick instead created a device that was, by its very nature, unpleasant and difficult to understand. Yet, we understand games, we like them just fine. In a time when more people than ever are turning to games as a source of pleasure and those people are devoting more of their lives to the games, we must reconsider what we thought we learned from the Experience Machine. Psychological hedonism may not be a complete account for human motivation but, for gamers at least, it is a notion that cannot be so easily pushed aside.

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A Short-Term Ethnographic Study of a Popular Massively-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game

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Virtual worlds provide a unique opportunity to study human behavior in a novel environment. Modern online video games place players in social situations with objectives that are unlike those found in the non-virtual world. For example, many traditionally scarce resources are unlimited in virtual worlds (food, animals, etc.); though, scarcity does still exist with respect to each player's time.

To acclimate myself to this culture, I asked my colleague, Josh, to let me observe his girlfriend and him while they played what is currently the most popular massively multiplayer online role playing game: World of Warcraft. In addition to observing, I had many opportunities to ask the players questions about their experiences, and I was also able to create a character myself. Some of the specifics mentioned in this paper will be altered when the expansion is released (it is due in late 2006), but the overall culture and norms should not be affected significantly.

i. Wednesday, February 22, 2006

I sat down at Josh's computer a somewhat experienced video game player. Having owned and played several game systems (Nintendo, Super Nintendo, Nintendo GameCube, and a computer), I had some familiarity with the types of games that can be made for traditional systems. I had played first-person shooters, like Doom, role-playing games, like Final

Fantasy, and adventure games, like *The Legend of Zelda*, so I felt comfortable with video games before playing *World of Warcraft*. What I learned, however, is that *World of Warcraft* is not simply a video game, and traditional video game experience could not have prepared me for what amounts to a virtual world.

To understand the game better, I was allowed to create my own character and begin playing *World of Warcraft*. I was able to assign my character a name (with the help of the random name generator, I was christened Ulshataar). I also was able to choose my race and class. *World of Warcraft* has two main sides: the Alliance (the “good guys”) and the Horde (the “bad guys”). Races within the Alliance include Human, Dwarf, Night Elf, and Gnome. The Horde races are the Undead, Trolls, Tauren, Orcs, and after the expansion is released, the Blood Elves. Because Josh had an affinity for the Horde, I chose to become a Tauren, a larger species with cow-like features and a hairy, powerful body.

Within the Tauren race, I could choose either males or females, different hair/head styles, varied outfits, and more, making my avatar (the graphic representation of a player in a gaming environment) very customizable.

I enjoyed customizing Ulshataar, but my choice of class was the most important choice I made. Most classes are available to both the Horde and Alliance, with some limitations depending on race. I chose to become a Shaman, as Josh informed me that it was fairly middle-of-the-road—somewhere between classes that mainly battle (e.g., Warriors) and those that predominately use magic (e.g., Mages).

The class decision is important for many reasons. Class determines not only the types of quests you undertake and the types of items you can use, but also your role in large instance runs, one aspect of this game that sets it apart from standard video games.

Upon completion of my character profile, I entered the *World of Warcraft*. The game’s setting has a mythical, middle-age fantasy feel, and the game has impressive graphics. The game is three dimensional, meaning that the player can see their character and other aspects of the world from any angle. I could run while watching myself from the front, back, or from an aerial view. I began in the Tauren homeland, Mulgore, and I was immediately given several tasks to complete. I was instructed to find some people in my village to speak to, and, as I walked around, I was impressed by the size of this game’s world. Almost every element within view was approachable. The mountains, lakes, huts, etc. in the background were all elements of the game. In many games, the background is just a decoration and the playable area is much smaller; in *World of Warcraft*, there was no

distinction, as the background was the world.

I learned of more tasks by talking with people in my village. My mission was to bring back a certain number of skins from animals near the capital (Thunderbluff). During this task I encountered my first enemies: Plain Striders. At first I was surprised that they just walked by me without attacking. Josh explained that they could not get aggro on me (i.e., target me or engage me in battle) until I attacked them, because I was at such a low level and they were not set to do that. My first World of Warcraft attack spell was unsuccessful. Undaunted, I approached my second Plain Strider. This time I got closer and was able to score a hit, but then the creature ran towards me, and I had not yet figured out how to use my mace. Josh called out commands as I flailed about the enemy, accidentally zooming and panning the view wildly. I finally got the hang of it and successfully slew the Plain Strider.

This battle marked my first break from realism within the game. When I stalked the Plain Strider, I felt as if I was watching a scene from a movie. When I attacked, however, a very strange thing happened; instead of bleeding or reeling after the first blow, the Plain Strider simply emitted a two-digit number that floated upwards and dissipated. This, I learned, was the amount by which the enemy's health just dropped. After the Plain Strider rushed me and attacked, our battle was nothing but my avatar swinging a weapon at the air and the Plain Strider pawing without ever visually touching my character. I later learned that scenes like this rarely look real, as characters do not take up physical space within the game. If they did, the towns, which may contain hundreds of players at a time, would become too congested. The result of this necessary aspect of the game design is, unfortunately, a very unrealistic battling interface wherein characters rush one another and, instead of visually fighting, simply trade damage.

The battle was not won easily, and I was proud of my accomplishment. I started to look for Ulshataar's next victim when Josh stopped me and told me that I still needed to search the carcass. That did not appeal to me, but, after finding one of the animal skins I was looking for, I found the process more amenable. Ulshataar overcame several other Plain Striders, collected the requisite number of skins, and returned to Camp Narache.

Upon delivering my skins, I received two things that seem very important to the game: more tasks and experience points. Receiving more tasks after completing one is common in this game. In fact, there are often many tasks/quests that a player may choose to undertake at any given time. While I was playing, there seemed to be an endless line of missions,

but I began to realize that this is what would make someone want to keep playing. There was no downtime in the game as there was always something more to do.

I also received experience points. Players receive these points from many things in the game: killing enemies, completing tasks or quests, and discovering new areas. Players accumulate experience points in order to “level up”. With higher levels come more abilities, more weapons, and more game content.

The highest level in the game is currently 60, and reaching this is no small feat. It took Josh about three and a half weeks to “ding” (slang used to denote reaching a level) 60 with his first character. Three and a half weeks may seem not so long, until one considers that these three and a half weeks were all game time. This means that Josh spent 3.5 weeks, or 24.5 days, or 588 hours actually playing the game to reach level 60. He did this during the past summer. If we assume that the summer is 98 days long and that Josh only slept seven hours a day, he had 1,666 waking hours this past summer, and he spent roughly 35% of that playing World of Warcraft.

As a novice gamer, I have played long games. The longest game that I have completed was about 100 hours long. What I have noticed while playing these longer games is that, during the last quarter of the game, there are few novel events. Everything in the game usually succumbs to repetition and becomes less interesting. Though aspects of World of Warcraft do become repetitive, parts of the game are not unlocked or available until level 40, 50, 60, or beyond. This high-end content is one aspect of World of Warcraft that separates it from many games that I am used to, and it keeps many people playing the game, for many hours.

“Many people” may be an understatement; at the time of this observation, there are over six million people playing World of Warcraft. There are more than 100 countries in the world that do not have a population this high.

This is the other factor that separates World of Warcraft from conventional video games. These players interact, work together, form guilds, make friends, get married, and perform a slew of other social interactions all through the interface of this game. It is not surprising that, with players constantly encountering one another and being forced to work together, certain cultural norms and regulations would begin to develop. This population is ripe for ethnographical study, especially since this game elicits its real human social behavior in surreal environments that have not yet been studied, as they do not exist anywhere in the world. For example, this

world has unlimited resources, no class structure, and many fixed and understood rules along with many social norms not yet solidified. For these reasons, I look forward to studying this culture, but not until I get the head of Chief Sharptusk Thornmantle to a man back in Camp Narache; I am trying to ding level six tonight.

ii. Tuesday, March 14, 2006

After playing WoW (World of Warcraft), I still had many questions, so I decided to schedule an interview and observation session with Josh and his girlfriend, Andi, during our university's spring break.

When I think of college kids on spring break, images of inebriated students flocking to costal hotspots for a week of revelry come to mind. For gamers, however, paradise can be a hotel room, assuming it has internet access.

Josh said that he felt like a hacker carrying two desktop computers (his and Andi's) into the cheap hotel room located about 10 minutes from his dormitory. Hacking, however, could not have been further from couple's minds, as they were both intently playing WoW when I arrived at the hotel. After ensuring that my questions would not be an interruption, I began to watch Josh play.

General Game Information

I first asked about the structure of the game network. Blizzard is the company that created and maintains this game. Players purchase the game software for about \$35, and then have to pay a \$15 per month subscription fee to play online. Regular (non-online) games usually cost between \$20 and \$50, so the software fee is standard. The \$15 per month pays for upkeep of servers. Blizzard maintains many different servers that allow players from all over the world to access the online component of WoW. Each server is given a name (the two Josh has played on are Icecrown and Dark Iron), and any character a player creates can only exist on one server. Blizzard is currently servicing America, Oceania, China, Korea, and Europe, making it the largest online game of its kind.

And what kind of game is WoW? It is a Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG). The second element mentioned in that title is more familiar to me; the essential features of a role playing game include playing the game through an avatar and getting better as you progress. The avatar one plays through can be anything from a dragon to Mario, and "getting better" can involve gaining new abilities/skills or more characters and usually is tracked by something like experience points.

Brief History of Online Games

The first element of the MMORPG title is what makes this game very different, but it is not the first of its kind. The first big Massively Multiplayer Online game (MMO) was Ultima Online, but a limitation of this game was that players had to watch their avatars from a $\frac{3}{4}$ view, so everything in this game-world was experienced from a fixed, semi-aerial angle. The next two big MMO games were Everquest and Anarchy Online (AO). Everquest was a fully three dimensional fantasy role playing game, and it really defined the market in which WoW now operates. The three dimensional element adds greater depth and detail to the world, which gives the game a broader appeal. Anarchy Online was different from Everquest, as it had a futuristic setting rather than a fantasy one, but there were many similarities in terms of game design. WoW followed these games and has been successful for many reasons, some of which are the very immersive and impressive three-dimensional graphics and corrections to problems of the earlier MMOs. These explanations were all related to me by Josh, who wished for it be noted that he is not an expert on these game histories.

One thing these games all have in common, but that is lacking from most standard video games (and even many online games), is a persistent world. The world in WoW exists and is active even when a given player is not online and playing the game. This is very different from most games, in which the world is active only when a player is in it. When I stop playing *The Legend of Zelda* (a traditional, non-MMO game), I save my game, turn off the system, and the world stops until I return. The persistent MMO world may add to the desire at times to continue playing, as a player may not want to miss out on the action going on in the world or he/she may have an appointment with their guild at a specific time.

Classes and Talents

Josh had been playing as his Horde Discipline priest during my time at the hotel. Discipline refers to the specific talent he has chosen to focus on, and the decisions to specialize talents start when a player reaches level 10. There are three priest talents: Holy, Discipline, and Shadow, and each class has the ability to specialize in particular talents.

Talents and class will determine how a character functions within World of Warcraft. Some characters are more able to “go it alone”, like Warriors, while others will be more successful in groups, like some priests, and there are many dimensions like this on which various classes and tal-

ents can be compared. For example, Josh's priest works better in a group, whereas rogues are good at soloing (playing without a group) and farming. (Farming is killing mobs to acquire specific items. Mobs and Non-player characters [NPCs] are characters in the game that are not avatars of players, but are instead controlled by the game's artificial intelligence. Though they are both non-player characters, "Mob" generally refers to enemies, while "NPCs" are generally allies.)

Guilds

Though much group work takes place after a player reaches level 60, one does not have to wait for this milestone to begin exploring the social side of this game. One of the most salient social features of World of Warcraft is the division of players into guilds. Guilds are created and maintained by players, generally having a website that houses all the registration procedures, points earned, etc. Though joining a guild is voluntary, much of the social side of WoW takes place in guilds, and they are usually the more effective way to earn the high-end items many players seek. Josh's guild is Tainted, and Andi's is Panda Attack.

In addition to helping a player get high-end items, guilds also help teach players many other aspects of the game. Josh feels that the difference between a good and bad guild depends on the level and focus of the player. He was lucky to find a first guild (Twist of Fate) that was focused on helping lower level players while maintaining a familial atmosphere. Josh felt like the members were playing for the fun of it. The other side of this spectrum is a guild that focuses mainly on high-end acquisition. These high-end oriented guilds become valuable once a player is ready to work for those rare items, because the high-end instances are difficult and knowing your partners helps a lot. Groups that attempt to work together that are not from a guild are called Pick-Up-Groups (PUGs), and this name generally carries a negative connotation, as these tend not to be as effective.

Players may choose to leave one guild for another once their current guild no longer satisfies their needs (though it should be noted that some guilds have subdivisions within them that focus on different areas, allowing for different specializations within the same guild). From what I observed, it seems as if leaving a guild generally has few, if any, social consequences in the game (unless a player is forced out). Changing guilds seems to happen relatively frequently, which is most likely why it is socially acceptable.

Being guilded also generally allows players working together to

“voice chat” (use vocal communication) through either Teamspeak or Vent, the two most popular voice programs used by guilds in the game. Voice chat is not a feature of the game and must be purchased and maintained by each guild. Though players can always communicate through typing (with the exception of Horde and Alliance characters, which cannot communicate—their words scramble to become nonsense), voice chatting is more effective in many cases, which gives an advantage to the guilds that use it. Other advantages of guilds are the collective knowledge about the game and banks which some guilds create that can distribute items to members of the guild who need them.

There are several ways to get into a guild. The easiest way is to be invited, and this usually happens to those who know someone in a guild or who impressed a guild member. Otherwise, players must apply to join a guild, and this process can be lengthy, with some guilds requiring several recruitment phases and group work before accepting a player. Players may also be recruited into a guild, but guilds that recruit, especially lower level players, are not usually considered very desirable. Josh recommended that players start looking to join a guild or be recruited while their level is in the teens, though some of the better guilds only let level 20 characters or above join, and raiding guilds typically only permit level 60s.

The minimum requirements to remain in a guild vary, with some requiring a given number of hours or group runs a week. If a player meets the minimum standards consistently, it is difficult to be forced out of a group unless he or she does something very socially undesirable (and what this might be varies from guild to guild as well).

An example of a very socially undesirable action is “ninja-ing” an item. Josh first heard this term in Anarchy Online, and it refers to a player in a group taking an item that a boss dropped when that player did not deserve it. This social taboo illustrates one of the most interesting aspects of online games. WoW is structured to require that the very best items only come from very large bosses (enemies that players fight at the end of a phase, level, or instance) that take many players working together to kill. The problem arises when it comes time to distribute the one or two items the boss dropped among the 40 people who just contributed to killing the boss.

Bosses are usually found in an instance, which is a special game-world separate from the general world in which players exist. An instance is a separate world created for only a set group of players, so that many different groups can play them at once. Each instance has a maximum number of player that can play at a time—5, 10, 20 or 40—and the enemies (all Mobs) that the party encounters are set to be challenging for that number

of players. When I was killing the Plain Strider by Thunderbluff, other players could have tried to kill the same one, because I was in the general WoW world. When a group enters an instance, a new world is created for them, and any other groups entering the instance will have a separate world for themselves as well. This serves several purposes, including giving players unlimited accessibility to instances and allowing the game to limit the number of players in any given instance.

The larger the group that is required by an instance, the better items the bosses will drop. To ensure equitable distribution of items, guilds developed a point rewards system. This is important because, when a player picks up a valuable weapon, it binds to that player and cannot be traded or given away. If a player takes a weapon that he or she should not have taken, this action cannot be undone, and this is why ninja-ing is such a taboo.

The point rewards system used by guilds usually involves Dragon Kill Points (DKP; this name comes from a former game). Guild members accumulate DKP for certain group actions. For example, participating in a 40-person instance will earn DKP for a player, because the guild needs many people to play these “raids” (group instances involving more than five players), though each individual will not benefit directly by getting a rare item every run. When an item drops, each player can “roll”, or bid, on it. In smaller raids, DKP is usually not used to determine who gets the items that are dropped. In 20- or 40-man raids, however, items are awarded to players who have the highest accumulated DKP and who ask for the item. If a player is awarded an item (even if they were uncontested), an amount of DKP is subtracted from their total equal to the value of that item (determined by rareness, usefulness, etc.). For example, if a player has 17 DKP and wins a 40 DKP item, the player’s DKP will drop to -23 DKP and the player will generally not be able to roll on another item until he or she has reached positive DKP again. In addition to the item winner losing 40 DKP, each member who participated in the raid would receive 1 DKP (a 40 DKP item divided by 40 players equals 1 DKP per player).

The DKP totals of all guild members are tracked on the guild website and are on file with the raid leader. The above is an example of a basic system, and these systems vary from guild to guild. What impressed me most was how carefully guilds monitor their member’s DKP, and how many rules there are concerning them. Considering, however, that one of the main purposes of a guild at the high-end is to acquire rare and powerful items, a fair and accurate DKP system may be the most important aspect of a guild’s survival.

Other Taboos

Besides ninja-ing, two other, less serious, social taboos have developed in online gaming. Ganking refers to killing another player when there is no reward for it. In WoW, players can choose to play on a PvP (player versus player) server or a normal server. On a normal server, players can only kill one another in specific areas, but on a PvP server, players can attack another player at almost any time. Josh described PvP servers as “WoW on hard mode” because of the increased difficulty due to unexpected player attacks. In some cases, it behooves one player to kill another, but ganking, with its negative connotation, refers to one player (usually of a higher level) killing another player just to aggravate them.

Corpse-camping is the extreme form of ganking. When a player in WoW is killed, he or she resurrects within the general area of his or her death. If the aggressor waits in the area, the victim will resurrect with $\frac{1}{2}$ health, and can be killed again. This is considered so unappealing that many players will come to help if the victim calls for it.

Game Milestones

In addition to specializing (level 10) and joining a guild (level 10-20), there are several other milestones a player reaches while maturing a character. At level 40, the player gets a mount, which is a creature to ride that makes avatars move through the world faster. The next big milestone is dinging 60, which opens up entirely new areas in the gameworld and offers the opportunity for high-end raiding. After level 60, milestones have to do with sets of items (each player has armor, weapons, etc, which make up a set) that a player can collect. There is a “set zero”, “set one” (all “purple” items) and “set two” (a set of better “purples”). Items are classified by a color system. Blue items are available when a player reaches experience levels in the high teens or low to mid twenties. Purples are called “epics”, and they are usually available only to level 60 players running 40-man instances. The level above this, orange items called legendaries, will rarely drop from the end boss of a high-end 40-man raid, and are usually built from a series of items that drop off of raiding bosses and difficult to acquire tradeskill materials. Legendaries may also require an additional world or instance event to be finalized.

Newbs

Newb (short for “newbie”) refers to either players brand new to the

game, like me, or to players who are not good at the game. Calling a player a newb in the latter sense is derogatory. Newb always refers to the player, not the character. If a player already rolled a 60 and then start another character, they are not a newb even when their character is level one.

How does a player mature from the position of newb? Josh said that there are two necessary things to learn: the jargon and the basic strategy of the game. I have been writing with as much jargon as I can because it is so important to the game's culture. Because so much communication is typed, players tend to abbreviate everything, including jargon, which makes learning it even more difficult. A mature player can spot a newb very quickly if he or she does not use proper words. Guilds can help a player learn the slang if they have not already grasped most of it by the time they join. I found it interesting that many of these terms had originated in older MMO games and have found their way into WoW since then.

The second step to becoming a mature player is learning the basic strategy of the game. To Josh, this means learning how to kill a mob without dying, and this usually requires an appropriate use of a character's special abilities. I found learning the appropriate spells and attacks a bit difficult, and I only had a few at my low level. When characters are in their teens, they have a lot more to think about and many more types of enemies to fight. Part of maturity in the game involves knowing how to kill a given mob, but knowing if your character should be able to kill a mob is easy, as they are labeled with a level of difficulty that matches a character's experience levels. The only exceptions are mob elites, which are usually found in instances and require about five people at the listed level to kill (e.g., a level 25 elite mob will take five level 25 characters to kill).

Introduction to Party Fighting

When a party runs an instance, they have to make sure that they not only have all the given classes and talents necessary, but that those individuals know their niche while fighting enemy mobs. The general strategy is to have the warriors (a class with the strongest defense because it can wear mail or plate armor) attack an enemy first so that it can get and keep "aggro" while the rest of the party performs their functions. Aggro refers to the process by which a mob chooses when and whom to attack. For example, the Plain Striders did not get aggro on me until I attacked them. When a group attacks, the goal is to have a strong character with armor get aggro and keep it so that the enemy does not attack party members with less defense. Warriors are equipped with several means by which to do this, including a special ability called taunt which builds aggro

against the warrior. The amount of aggro an enemy assigns to each player is determined by a formula that considers which player struck first, who is the most dangerous, etc., and the enemy will attack the player who has the most aggro built against it.

The reason that warriors must hold aggro is to keep the attention of the enemy off of the “cloth” characters, or characters without armor that wear mostly cloth, like priests, mages, and warlocks. Cloth characters are most effective when casting spells from a distance, whether these are spells intended to damage the enemy (nukes) or spells used for “crowd control”. When cloth characters participate in crowd control, they are using their abilities to incapacitate the less powerful enemies while the strong attackers in the party fight the large enemy. This is a very basic strategy, and players must adapt their strategy to every different boss and circumstance.

Besides the general instances, there are also special PvP instances, and they all pit the Alliance against the Horde. The three battlegrounds are Warsong Gulch (max of ten players on each side, a capture-the-flag style game), Arathi Basin (max of 15 players on each side, a king-of-the-hill style game), and Alterac Valley (max of 40 players on each side, a defeat-the-opponent’s-general game).

iii. Thursday, March 16, 2006

During my final session with Josh and Andi, I was invited to observe my first 40-man raid, and, as I arrived, the party was “res-ing” (resurrecting everyone after being defeated by an enemy). Many of the group members in this raid were new to this instance, including Gorefast, their raid leader. Gorefast was the main warrior, and served as the “tank” (warriors get aggro and have to withstand a lot of damage, so they are dubbed “tanks” when instance-running). The tank does not always lead raids, but they tend to be dominant in the group.

Shamans have the ability to resurrect themselves. Therefore, it falls to them to res other characters that can res the whole group. After regrouping, everyone drank potions and ate to refill their mana and health before making another attempt.

Priests are helpful in this resurrection process, but their main job is to keep the tank alive. Other cloth characters that deal greater damage per second (DPS) will use their magic for attacking (these include mage, rogues, and warlocks).

After discussing it, the group decided that the battle did not go well because everyone was too spread out, so they regrouped and strategized. There are spaces in instances for groups to do this type of strategizing,

and, though there is usually an enemy in the background, no mobs will get aggro on the party in these spaces. They were attempting to kill Gehennas, one of several bosses in the Molten Core. Gehennas has two guards surrounding him, so the strategy upon which the guild decided was to kill the guards first and then attack the main mob.

The second attempt was successful, and cheers erupted through Andi's speakers. The team was using Vent, which allowed them to speak verbally to one another. The cheering quickly became warnings for everyone to get their reses up because the nearby enemies would be respawning quickly.

Gehennas dropped the Gloves of Prophecy and a Warrior Ring, two epic (purple) items. Items are usually restricted in their usability, and one class will generally benefit most from an item. As these were a priest's item, Andi and another priest rolled for them. The gloves went to the other priest, who had more DKP.

Though this narrative may make it seem like these items were easily won, it has taken two hours to finally get to and kill this boss. I missed much of this buildup as I arrived only at the boss, but even preparing for the second attempt took about 15 minutes. This planning is necessary because, though death in WoW is never permanent, dying does damage a character's items and will end up forcing players to spend more money on upkeep after the instance. For a tank, this type of run may cost 10 or more gold.

According to Josh, the value of WoW gold can be understood as an exchange rate of 100 gold is being equivalent to about \$10. I then reasoned that 10 gold (one dollar) was not that high a cost at all, but Josh further explained that gold is actually very time consuming to acquire. It may take a few hours to acquire the 10 gold necessary to repair all a warrior's equipment. To circumvent this, some people actually sell gold on E-Bay, an online auction site, and 100 gold tends to sell for about \$10.

The players who generate gold with the intent to sell it to other players are called Gold Farmers, and many of them are from China. Ten American dollars in China are fairly valuable, and Gold Farmers can make a living in this way while working from home. Unfortunately, this job is not very fun. Even though they are playing a game, it is imperative that Gold Farmers acquire as much gold as they can in as short a time as possible if they are to be competitive in this market. This usually means that they will be repeating the same activities for many hours. This practice does not hurt the game's economy, as many prices are set by the market, which will change as more money floods into it. In the past, Blizzard, in an attempt to discourage farming, banned many farmer accounts and deleted

thousands of gold from servers, causing prices to skyrocket briefly. WoW has an economy that can experience inflation and even spill out into the real world economy, with real currency equivalents for gold in the game. We have come a long way since Pong.

As the Panda Attack 40-man group worked their way to the next boss, Josh explained that everyone in this group is hoping to get an epic. Since the group contains at least one of every class, someone is likely to be able to use anything that drops, and those classes with the fewest players the raid party will always have the greatest chances of getting the epic. In the case of priests, Andi's class, there should be about four in a 40-man instance, and in this group there were five.

After about an hour of working though the Molten Core, the next boss, Garr, loomed in the distance. Garr was a creature made of molten rocks and surrounded by six smaller versions of himself, called firesworn. The raid leader was planning the attack as Andi and the group waited. As they were waited, Andi asked Josh if a tank from his guild, who was familiar with this boss, could tell them what to do, but Josh said that Panda Attack would never give him their Vent password, and he could not organize the attack without voice communication. High levels of communication are one reason that guilds work best in a high-end instance like this; the other is that each player needs to trust all the others to be successful.

After about 20 minutes, the party had still not attacked Garr. The leader sent out a ready check to all members, but, when they did not all respond, the attack was held off for longer. One group member had typed "Afk for drink", which means "Away from keyboard for a drink". Everyone waited.

The strategy that the group devised had to account for the fact that, if the firesworn died before Garr did, Garr would get very strong. The warlocks were each assigned to "banish" a firesworn, which should incapacitate but not kill them during the battle. During the next ready check Andi's connection died, so she let everyone know through Vent that she would be back shortly. Had she not reported the loss of her connection, her party may not have known about her disconnection, as an avatar will remain in the game for a couple minutes, even if the connection is dropped. This mechanism is designed to prevent players from having the ability to leave the game for strategic reasons (e.g., they are being attacked and cannot defend themselves)

Once Andi was back, the ready check went through successfully and the party attacked. Though I was not very familiar with large raids, I could tell that it was not going well. Group members were yelling, "No healing on...", which meant that some group member needed to be healed.

With only four warlocks, the group could not control all eight fireworn, and the raid party was “wiped” (completely killed).

The team leader asked, “Does everyone understand what went wrong?” He went on to explain that no one stayed on their targets and that the hunters needed to be closer to their targets while moving in. A small dispute started about when the mob’s aggro was pulled and by whom, and the leader responded with, “Hey everyone, this is a tough fight, so don’t get down just ‘cause I’m pointing out things. It’s all part of the learning process.”

After this, all the group members started to chime in and agreed that this was a tough fight and that positioning was important, etc. This kind of cooperation is necessary if the team is to work together successfully. Josh said that it is rare to kill a boss like this on your guild’s first attempt; a party usually wipes first. As the group was resetting for the next attempt, I asked Andi a question and she did not respond. She was intently focused even on this setup, which to me seemed like downtime.

Josh explained that, though getting to bosses is time consuming and setting up for bosses is time consuming, resetting after a wipe is the most time consuming. This is because some member will generally leave after a wipe, and the group must wait to replace them. In addition, other members will go afk for bio (take a “biological” break, like urinating or defecating) or other reasons.

Andi’s group decided that the original strategy was good, but that things just happened too quickly. They were wiped again after their second attempt, and the moods of the members were very negative. Josh assumed that that this second wipe would be the last round for tonight.

Meanwhile, Josh was traveling from one end of Azeroth (the WoW world) to the other to participate in a 15-man raid. To get there, he had had to jump on a windrider (part of the mass transportation in the world), catch a blimp, and connect to several other flying windriders before his destination. This trip took about 20 minutes in total. Besides being instantly transported by warlocks and mages, there are few warps in the game. Josh sees this in a positive light, as it forces players to commit to where they are going. From my perspective, it seems like there are many times in the game where the player must simply sit and wait for something to happen.

As Josh was flying, he passed a capital city in which Onyxia’s head was on a pike. Onyxia was originally a very difficult boss in the game, and when a Horde guild defeated her, her head appeared for a short time on the pike in one of their capital towns.

The game’s geography includes capital cities for each race and then

two very big cities that serve as the capital for the Horde and Alliance. These major capitals are heavily guarded, with many 60-elite NPCs and many players as well. Though there is little in-game reward for doing so, some guilds seek to kill the king or queen of the opposite side. This is a monumental task, requiring several hours and possibly 100 or more players working together. Once an attack like this begins, many players from the defending side will come to the capital for aid, which is why the offensive side needs so many players. Josh said that he would gladly leave an instance to defend the Horde Queen, because having her killed while one is online is like letting down a player's entire country.

Many guilds that undertake these or similar tasks may make videos of their fights, and many of these are available online. These videos are usually set to music, and they tend to be impressive due the "camera" angles and effects possible with the three dimensional view. Guilds often will make these videos to help recruit members, and the videos can help prospective members understand what the core values of a given guild are. About a half-hour later (it was now past 1:00 am), Andi's party had geared up for another attack on Garr. Josh was surprised, especially since some tired members dropped out. Though they had less than 40 people, they went in anyway, which put them at a significant disadvantage.

While the battle ensued, I was excited to see that all the tanks were alive and doing well. The voices speaking over Vent were much calmer now, and they were giving commands to have injured players step out and bandage themselves (which seemed like a good thing). The other ensuing statements seemed similarly encouraging.

I watched as Garr dropped to 89% health. Then 66% and 39%. While Garr was dying, everyone in the guild seemed stable, with Andi's tank not even taking damage (only the main tank was). When Garr was at 5%, commands not to celebrate yet issued forth from the main tank. There were still six more firesworn to kill, but this was much closer than they had come to killing Garr before, and it was hard for the members to hide their excitement.

As the guild killed the firesworn, commands for the melee (DPS) characters to get out of range were given, and only tanks were allowed to remain close to the enemies. This is to protect the team from the final explosions of each of the firesworn, which can seriously damage players without strong armor. Despite this order, many members of the party rushed the final firesworn in order to be propelled into the air as it exploded in a show of victory. Everyone cheered and congratulated one another after the final firesworn died, and the process of distribution began again. Their mission was accomplished, and they would retire to sleep victorious.

This was only a small glimpse of what happens all over the world, frequently, every day. Elation and devastation, friendships and betrayal, marriages and funeral processions, all in the name of WoW and the social bonds formed therein.

But is this world so different from ours? The differences elicit some interesting behaviors, but the human tendencies for cooperation and hate (of a different group), desire for status, creation of legends, etc. all have referents in our quotidian existence. These similarities have led some gamers (my key informant included) to argue that, as gaming instruments and worlds increase in their realism, they have increasing potential to supplement—and possibly supplant—our social, economic, and, of course, recreational world. If all the world's a stage, and we are merely players, should it matter whether our stage is the physical earth or virtual data? To what extent this virtualization will happen, one can only speculate, however, my experience with WoW has shown me that the potential of virtual worlds is great, and this encroachment of the virtual may be more plausible than I previously imagined.

Presently, still far from this virtual world, I have matters in the physical world to which I must attend.

Afk for drink.

Overthrowing Optimistic Emerson: Edgar Allan Poe's Aim to Horrify

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The 19th century writer, Edgar Allan Poe, creates a dark view of the human mind in his poetry, which serves to challenge Ralph Waldo Emerson's popular belief in optimism. The idea of beauty is important in both Poe's and Emerson's thinking, yet Poe's view of atmospheric beauty confronts Emerson's view of truth and intelligence as beauty. The composition of poetry, in Poe's opinion, is a mechanical, rough, and timely process. Poe argues against Emerson's belief that the poet is inspired by an idea, and then effortlessly creates the poem, with the form coming into place naturally. Emerson believes that mankind is in charge of its own destiny, and seeks for higher reasoning. Poe challenges this idea, and argues that the human psyche is instinctual, and therefore humans can not control their desire for the perverse. Further, Poe overthrows Emerson by vastly contributing to the modern literary analysis of poetry. During Poe's life he, "managed to perfect two forms of fiction- the mystery, [and] the horror tale-that have made him have a greater influence on the popular culture of our century than any other writer of the 19th century" (Hoffman 11). Edgar Allan Poe defies Emerson's popular 19th century optimism, by demonstrating the value of beauty over truth, through outlining the importance of structural composition over divine composition, and explaining how the perverse is mankind's desire, not higher reasoning. Poe also prefigures modern literary analysis, which further proves his argument against Emerson's optimism. Poe ultimately displays how his

arguments challenge Emerson's thinking, because they are respected in the present day.

The importance of beauty is found in both Poe and Emerson's thinking, however, Poe challenges Emerson's belief that truth equals beauty. Poe states in, "The Philosophy of Composition," that: "beauty is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem" (1600). In addition, Poe says that, "passion or even truth, may not be introduced, into a poem, [they only serve to], aid in the general effect" (1600). This general effect is beauty, which is the aim of the poem; passion and truth only help to create the poet's goal of beauty. This argues Emerson's point in his essay, "Nature," as he says: "the true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which is beauty, is the aim of both" (47). Emerson defines truth or intelligence as equal to beauty, because he believes that by knowing the great truths one can achieve higher reasoning. Poe challenges Emerson's idea by creating beautiful poetry which contains, "that intense and pure elevation of soul- not of intellect" (1600). This feeling that Poe describes is what he believes beauty truly is. In, "The Raven," Poe creates what he believes is true beauty:

Prophet! said I, 'thing of evil! prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us- by that God we both adore-
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore." (1521)

This stanza displays the beauty which is the essence of the poem as it reaches the climax. Consequently, this serves as what Poe calls the "pure elevation of the soul" (1600). There is no need for the truth and reasoning that Emerson says is beauty. Poe challenges Emerson's belief of beauty defined by truth. Poe strategically uses his poem, "The Raven," as an example for his argument against Emerson, in his essay, "The Philosophy of Composition." This poem perfectly displays Poe's argument that beauty is an elevating feeling found in his poetry. This feeling is predetermined by Poe, which shows how much work the poet must put into the poem to create the feeling of beauty.

The idea Poe has in mind when it comes to composition, is that the work is created through a predetermined, mechanical method, which creates the overall idea in the end. Poe argues against Emerson's thinking, and challenges his belief that the thought makes the poem, and the structure comes naturally with the thought. For instance, Emerson states this in his essay, "The Poet":

For it is not meters, but a meter-making argument that makes a

poem,- a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing. (190)

Emerson believes the poet is like a philosopher and produces divine ideas through putting nature into words. Therefore, he believes that structuring the poem comes naturally with the idea. Poe defies Emerson's idea by explaining in, "The Philosophy of Composition," how poems are structured and created tediously through constant editing in order to arrive at the central idea:

Most writers- poets in especial- prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy- an ecstatic intuition- and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought. (1598)

This description of the poet as human is quite realistic, and serves to defy Emerson's view of the poet as a 'divine philosopher'. Poe even uses his poem, "The Raven", as an example in his critical essay, "The Philosophy of Composition," to show the reader how he created this popular poem through precise measures:

I select "The Raven," as the most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referrible either to accident or intuition- that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem. (1599)

Poe has a solid argument against Emerson's idea of how a work of literature is composed, because he is able to back up his idea of using precise structure in his own poetry, and also as a respected literary critic. An example of Poe's criticism is, "The Philosophy of Composition," which is essentially the, "portrayal of the poetic act of creation not as a spontaneous overflowing of inspiration but as the conscious embodiment in verse by a craftsman of his predetermined ideas" (Hoffman 12). In this critical essay, the poet is seen in a revealing light that exposes all of the flaws and hard work that goes into creating a poem, or any work of literature. Conversely, Emerson envisions the poet as someone who is able to become a part of nature and inspired by the divine to easily create the perfect work. However, due to Poe's argument, the artist is now seen as a skilled craftsman who knows the complexities involved in creating the work.

In Emerson's view mankind can achieve higher reasoning, and has an ingrained desire to find truth, and reach a divine state. Poe has argued against this view by demonstrating in his works how humans seek their demise, because they are driven by their instincts towards the perverse.

Emerson's view is seen in his poem, "Self Reliance":

Man is his own star; and the soul that can
Render an honest and perfect man,
commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early or too late. (93)

This essentially means that humans are in charge of their own destiny. Emerson points out that, human beings are searching for a divine, higher reasoning. Poe challenges this by stating that death is ultimately what we long for, arguing that humans instinctively seek their demise, and retain a primal tendency to lean towards the perverse. For instance, in "The Imp of the Perverse," this desire for darkness is seen: "There is no passion in Nature of so demoniac an impatience as the passion of him who, shuddering upon the edge of a precipice, thus mediates a plunge" (1591). This argument against Emerson's optimistic view of human beings striving for the divine is strengthened, as Poe says that death is what human beings are striving for, in order to reach unity with the divine. His tendency towards the perverse defies Emerson's optimism and sheds light on the darkness of the human psyche. Poe definitely changed the idea of 19th century optimism as he, "worked hard at structuring his tales of aristocratic madmen, self-tormented murderers, neurasthenic necrophiliacs, and other deviant types so as to produce the greatest possible horrific effects on the reader" (Baym 1510). Through delving into Poe's works, the argument against Emerson's optimism is accomplished by displaying the darkness and perversity resting in the human psyche.

Poe has contributed to modern literary analysis in several ways, which helps to prove his reliability and solid argument against Emerson. Poe is a widely read author to this day, and influences the fictions of mystery and horror. Poe also aimed to become a powerful literary critic, and he has established consistent literary principles (Baym 1509). An example of his criticism is found in, "The Poetic Principle":

It is to be hoped that common sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of art, rather by the impression it makes, by the effect it produces, than by the time it took to impress the effect, or by the amount of "sustained effort" which has been found necessary in effecting the impression. (1607)

This idea that the effect is more important than the effort is common sense and is also found in modern criticism. Poe created this simple yet important assertion, which has predicted modern literary analysis. Along with Poe prefiguring the methods of new criticism, he also influences the fictional forms of mystery and horror. He influences mystery and horror forms through his dark ideas about the perverse and death. These dark

ideas are placed within a melancholy tone and dismal setting, with characters that are desperate and on the verge of insanity. Poe is widely read, and influences many authors to write mysteries and horrors. By prefiguring such modern elements like literary analysis and perfecting forms of fiction, Poe presents himself in a powerful way that overthrows Emerson's popular way of thinking in regards to literature and life.

The popular trust in Emerson's 19th century optimism is denounced by Poe's literary criticism and his donations to the fictional forms of the horror and the mystery. Poe successfully challenges Emerson's ideas about the human psyche, the composition of poetry, and the definition of beauty in poetry and life. Poe's argument that beauty is an elevating feeling is enforced by how, "The Philosophy of Composition," explains that the poem, "The Raven," is an excellent example of this idea of beauty. The idea of using a precise structure to create poetry is argued by Poe through his literary criticism and examples from his own works. The darkness and perversity laying dormant in the human psyche is brought to life through Poe's works. This serves to argue against Emerson's idea of humanity desiring an optimistic idea of higher reasoning, because Poe shows the reader how the instinct for perversity and corruption is ingrained in the mind. Poe believes that human beings actually desire death in order to reach a higher level of existence. By predicting contemporary literary elements, such as analysis and perfecting forms of fiction, Poe presents himself in an influential way that conquers Emerson's way of thinking in regards to the construction of literature and life. Emerson remains a respected author, yet with his optimistic views that impact the literary worlds of the past and present, Poe's work is still able to challenge his thinking. The impact Edgar Allan Poe has made on the present day literary community has inspired the fictional traditions of horror and mystery tales, and his poems are still able to horrify and excite the modern reader.

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Mind Over Matter, Matter Over Mind: Phallusophy and Diotima

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Men get laid, but women get screwed.

—Quentin Crisp

The age-old notion of the “reign of the phallus” has presided over much of the course of human history and pre-history. Women joyfully embracing Bacchantic practices and cavorting with satyrs in various images of ancient Greek art attests to that fact; and the women of today who do not earn the same “dollar” as their male colleagues, for example, serve to continue that tradition. However, within Plato’s *Symposium*, there resides a progressive mind among the sea of Y-chromosomes in the guise of Diotima, a woman who teaches Socrates the “art of love.” Not only does she infiltrate the male sphere by her mere feminine presence, but she also acts as the figure that makes reachable what the men have placed upon a pedestal: the possibility of “reproduction” through Love. With regards to the maleness of the philosophic profession, she aims to universalize the concept of Love. It is no longer solely a male venue, but one which can be of use to the whole of human race, rather than focusing on the “reign” of men who aim to define it specifically.

The *Symposium* itself is a phallic practice: men match their wits by using eloquence of language and argument as they make merry in the midst of wine, women, and song. It can be paralleled with a typical

American Super Bowl party (sans the nonexistent brevity of ancient Greek pontification which would probably ruin the game!) As a woman, Diotima supposedly represents the insatiable sexual drive of women, which is a risk to the balance of a sophrosyne-practicing male majority. However, Diotima does not present an invasive threat to the masculine setting of the symposium. Rather, she serves to speak on behalf of her belief pertaining to the nature of Love. Thus, she enters the symposium as challenging the realm of men already: she offers discourse on a topic that they have chosen, while keeping a distance from the physicality of her Being as a temptation to them. She takes into account the others' arguments in a passive-aggressive fashion; she calmly questions, rather than using her sexuality as possible power over them.

In her argument, Diotima aims to characterize Love by means of "reproduction and birth in beauty" (Plato 53). Reproduction, here, must be discussed by Diotima herself: the female, in her possession of a womb, is the only one able to see to it that reproduction is carried out. Men simply supply the means of being able to engender. They will always lack the ability to physically understand birth. Reproduction, Diotima says, is ongoing: "it is what mortals have in place of immortality" (Plato 54). So, if "a lover must desire immortality along with the good," then Love is eternally connected to virtue, whose reward is immortality. She also speaks about possibility of a "virtuous man" to reproduce. He "conceives and gives birth to what he has been carrying inside him for ages," (Plato 57) which is the idea, inspired by the beauty of a subject. Diotima acts as a contrast for the male here, in the sense that she represents what they are trying to imitate.

There is an instance of Lochrie's "queer practice" here: the male wishes to take on "various strategies by which makes, in many different cultures, arrogate to themselves the power and prestige of female (pro)creativity" (Halperin 285). Halperin presents the possibility that the male desires to have a vagina. It seems to be a reversal of the "penis envy" that is attributed to Greek women of the time, who were obsessed with filling their "vaginal void", depicted as jumping joyfully into baskets full of obscenely large phalloi. Diotima's insistence on the importance of the ejection of the construct of Love (in this case, the idea), its birthing, further strengthens the aim of Diotima to bring the two sexes together. One would err in saying that she gives the female any more access to the male world; rather, she denigrates the status of men in their desire to be like the women that they are so determined to subjugate and control.

Diotima can also be viewed within Galen's lens of the human being during ancient Greek times, which is exemplified by the one-sex model.

He compares the difference between female genitalia with that of the eyes of a mole.

The eyes of the mole have the same structures as the eyes of other animals except that they do not allow the mole to see. They do not open, “nor do they project but are left there imperfect.” So too the female genitalia “do not open” and remain an imperfect version of what they would be were they thrust out. (Laqueur 28)

Hence, the male and female that are presented here appear as a “freakish variety” (Laqueur 28) of each other. It is important to note that Diotima is a “freakish variety” of Socrates himself; she speaks through his voice and, in essence, acts as his contribution to the symposium. Another incidence of “queering” takes place: she plays the role of the man without physically being there; here, Socrates acts as the “thrust out” organ for the (feminine) internalized idea. Halperin’s theory of the “active” and “passive” roles can be applied in this situation.

sex was not conceived as a collective enterprise in which two or more persons jointly engaged, but as an action performed by one person upon another; sex therefore effectively divided, classified, and distributed its participants into distinct and radically opposed categories (“penetrator vs. “penetrated”) (Halperin 266)

Here, conversely, the theory is reversed: Diotima is the active speaker, while Socrates is the passive vessel.

It is also important to note that Diotima does not mention women as her subject; it is not Plato’s aim for her to speak for women in general (Halperin 295).

Nothing in herself, “woman” is that pseudo-Other who both makes good what men want and exempts men from wanting anything at all; she is an alternate male identity whose constant accessibility to men lends men a fullness and totality that enables them to dispense...with otherness altogether. (Halperin 297)

It is true that Diotima is defined within the male realm of the symposium, and she only appears to give her argument. She does not proposition Socrates as Alcibiades does, but demonstrates a reserve that is uncharacteristic of the typical female depiction of the time. She contrasts with the Bacchantic figures of the flute girls as an entity that Socrates himself respects for her intelligence and offer of teaching. Diotima is actually never discussed without mention of Socrates: they seem to appear as a whole. This occurrence in itself does indeed prove Halperin’s argument, but also promotes the idea of universality in the sexes. Some theories that

Diotima never existed prevail, but it is in her existence as the Other that is merged with Socrates, the one who defines her, that makes the construct powerful. Diotima is within Socrates (whether imagined or as a memory), and femininity cannot heretofore be considered a separate individual from him, which essentially implies a merging of the sexes.

The one-sex model, conclusively, is rather ambivalent. If “the vagina [is] an eternally...unborn penis [and] the womb a stunted scrotum,” then is it not possible that the penis can represent an inside-out vagina? (Laqueur 28) In turn, one must consider whether or not this bi-conditional inversion proves to be a detrimental aspect within this argument: does it not follow that if women are simply inverted men, then are they not simply abnormal men who want to be penetrated by their normal selves? Both sexes have an inherent desire to be penetrated when this bi-conditional is applied: men have their “phallic void” as possessors of an inverted vagina, thus paralleling the supposed characteristic of women having an unquenchable sexual vigor. Again, equalization occurs within the one-sex model, which hearkens back to Diotima’s aim to lessen the disparity between the sexes.

The issue that naturally follows, then, is the discrepancy between male desire for women and for Athenian adolescents. How would the (supposedly) gender-universalized man now choose between the woman, who would fill his hypothetical “phallic void” and the young boy through whom he must birth his brainchild? The man must bear in mind his own attempt at practicing *sophrosyne*; after all, they must uphold their social status, and the fact that sex is not a private thing. The later example of the *lex Julia* exhibits this societal “problem”: the penetration of a male is punishable by death, and a woman is only protected by the law depending on her degree of usefulness to the whole of society. A similar phenomenon of the male as desiring to control the female productivity and activity is again manifested in this attempt to hold back the desire of the female. Males are protected by the law only until they are penetrated—they then become women who cannot practice *sophrosyne* and will no longer positively contribute to the polis.

This, however, does not reconcile the inevitable choice that is made by any “virtuous man.” The lack of availability of the role of pederast to the woman therefore hands her the short end of the leash in that, despite the equalizing of gender attempted by Diotima, they still do not possess the power to give knowledge. They simply engage in “erotic desire [consisting] of excitation brought on by pregnancy and climaxing in the ejaculation of a baby” (Halperin 281). Oddly enough, reproduction (which places them in a state that men cannot attain) is the very element in their

sexuality that does not allow them to fully complete the circle of equalization.

One must consider the how well the phallus is “reigning” with respect to the arguments that have been put forth. There seems to be a dichotomy between seeming to reign and the façade that the phallus hides behind. Socrates, who, in essence, taints Diotima’s discourse with the presence of his maleness, is in turn castrated by her femaleness. A double “castration,” happens here. The “reign of the phallus” is made effeminate in paralleling with women, but it is important to remember that the female does not grow a phallus in response. She remains “the penetrated”: she is “both active and passive at once, both [a subject and object] of desire” (Halperin 270). Despite the fact that Diotima participates in pederasty in the case of Socrates, she remains only behind him, contaminated by the sheer usage of his voice as hers: she is still the Other. However, the fact that the female Other, defined by the normative male, continues to exist outside the realm of defined “authentic femininity” (Halperin 297) still prevails. It has yet to occur: this is its advantage over the male. Their masculinity is already defined, while femininity has yet to truly challenge its supposed “reign.”

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Distinct Cultures Create Similar Themes: A Study of Langston Hughes and Cathy Song's Poetry

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America's rich history has produced ethnically diverse individuals who recorded the emotions and struggles of their time through powerful and inspiring poems. Their poems encourage Americans to support wars, to condemn civil rights abuses, or to understand the liberties and responsibilities of an American citizen. Among these poets, two stand out for their unique rendering of their cultures' strong heritage and their influence in the American society. African-American poet Langston Hughes and Asian-American poet Cathy Song hail from different ethnic backgrounds, but the figurative language found in their respective poems "Theme for English B" and "Lost Sister" indicates similar perspectives on being a minority in the United States. Their similar themes of examining one's identity, rebellion as it relates to freedom, and the significance of acquiring a sense of belonging in the American society are revealed differently in the poems because of the experiences that the poets encounter in their lives. These experiences not only shape the poems' distinct cultural touch, but also add to the poems' universal appeal to readers.

Born in 1902 in Missouri, Langston Hughes lived at the time when African-Americans were discriminated against and relegated as second-class citizens. The prejudicial circumstances he dwelled upon encouraged

him to pursue the life of a writer and a celebrated poet whose work focuses strongly on ethnic freedom. The African-American struggle for equality is mostly depicted in his poem, "Theme for English B," a section of a longer work called "Montage of a Dream Deferred." The poem describes the life of an African-American college student who examines his existence in the American community. The audience is drawn to the persona's plight as he presents his emotions and ambitions to the assignment given to him by his white professor. For him, having a college education is not only an opportunity to defy the current second-class status of African-Americans, but also to encourage others to follow his actions of working for a better standard of living amid discrimination. Therefore, the persona's goals parallel Hughes' struggle for respect and recognition in America through his writing.

Like Hughes, Cathy Song wrote about the lives of ethnic minorities in the United States. Born in Hawaii in 1955, Song is of Chinese and Korean descent. She writes about "the lives of her grandparents in Hawaii following their immigration from China and Korea, the resistance of third generation Asian Americans to the traditional Asian ways and their paradoxical needs to embrace their Asian ancestry" (Huot 352). Her ethnicity is strongly depicted in her poems when she transforms simple actions and objects into something that represents a particular aspect of her ethnic heritage (Tasillo 268). This is evident in her poem, the "Lost Sister" when Song introduces two personae: a daughter who is living in a conservative and tranquil Chinese society and a sister who chooses to leave her ancestral land for the liberal and noisy environment of America. Song's unique treatment of imagery encourages the audience to visualize the poem's two distinct settings, thereby allowing readers to either sympathize or relate more fully with the women's plight

The poems' similar themes emphasize the experiences of minority groups in America. One such theme is the necessity of making a journey for a better life. In Hughes' poem, the speaker travels from Winston-Salem, North Carolina to New York City just to attend college. The move implies the significance of education to the persona, especially when he travels a great distance to attain it. This migration to a foreign environment to seek better opportunities is also evident in the "Lost Sister" when one sister travels to America to escape the restrictive lifestyle of Chinese women. Thus, the personae's journeys reflect the sometimes unfortunate circumstances that cause minority Americans to leave their comfort zone or even their homeland and adjust to a different life elsewhere.

The personae's ethnic identities play a pivotal role in defining the consequences of the journeys they made. In "Theme for English B," the

speaker examines his identity in relation to his white professor, the Harlem community, and the American society as a whole. He wonders why even though he is identified as an American, he must still be discriminated against because of his physical appearance and his desire to attend college. In "Lost Sister," both personae identify themselves as Chinese, but when one immigrates to the United States, that identity is tested as she is enveloped in a world completely opposite to her life in China where her ethnic identity is nurtured. The poem's final stanza stresses the powerful connection between the persona and China:

You find you need China:
 your one fragile identification,
 a jade link
 handcuffed to your wrist. (Song 53-56)

This stanza reiterates the special role of jade in the Chinese tradition where it is highly regarded as a symbol of beauty. By stressing the significance of the jade stone in symbolizing the Chinese identity and the persona's apparent attachment to the stone, Song evokes a feeling of longing for China, a desire fostered by the persona's complete physical separation from her homeland.

The personae's identities correspond with their perception of rebellion to attain freedom. For them, freedom means the ability to act and speak beyond what their ethnic identities present to society. Therefore, to attain such freedom, they rebel. In both poems, a rebellious tone is incorporated. The student in the "Theme for English B" rebels by choosing to write a poem instead of an essay in response to his teacher's ambiguous and somewhat difficult instructions regarding the assignment. The student has a great deal of flexibility with respect to what he will write and how he will write it when the professor simply states:

Go home and write
 a page tonight.
 And let that page come out of you –
 Then, it will be true. (Hughes 2-6)

By formatting the assignment into a poem, the student not only asserts his individuality but also challenges those who infringe upon his freedom (Semansky 2).

In "Lost Sister," leaving China indicates a rebellion against the traditional and restrictive norms of Chinese society. Women in China do not receive the same liberties as women in the United States. Chinese women "never left home / to move freely was a luxury / stolen from them at birth" (Song 11-13). Women were given limited opportunities and were expected to simply pursue a domestic lifestyle. Because of these circumstances, the

“other sister” saw freedom awaiting her in America, where “women can walk along with men” (Song 37). The rebellious tone in both poems highlights the necessity of being or doing something unconventional to hopefully attain freedom.

The poems emphasize that freedom parallels the need for the personae to acquire a sense of belonging in the American community in which they are currently residing. For the student in “Theme for English B,” making the journey to receive a college education also involves taking the steps to assimilate himself into the white community. For him, a college education might mean the opportunity to finally receive more respect from the white community and more freedom, regardless of race. Also, belonging is presented in another way when the persona not only lists what makes him similar to others, but also reiterates that the color of his skin has little significance to the fact that he is an American and therefore part of the American society.

In “Lost Sister,” establishing a sense of belonging in America is difficult because the sister who left has a Chinese upbringing that conflicts with the new American metropolitan lifestyle. The stress involved in adapting to America makes her miss China, the community where she felt she belonged regardless of the constraints placed upon her. Therefore, the newfound freedom she has in America does not prevail over the sadness and emptiness brought about by the physical absence of China. Thus, the major themes of examining one’s identity, rebellion as it relates to freedom and the significance of acquiring a sense of belonging in the American society in both poems have a connection because they all echo the struggles of minority groups in America.

These struggles are best revealed through the poems’ imagery and diction. Hughes and Song successfully describe the personae’s environments by their use of detailed visual imageries. Hughes illustrates Harlem through the persona’s experience of passing by street signs on his way home. According to the persona, he gets home by walking “through a park.../ Eighth Avenue, Seventh” (Hughes 12-13) until he reaches the Young Men’s Christian Association where he rents a room cheaply. The imagery provided in this passage illustrates the personae’s despondent living standards, thus emphasizing that most minority groups in America do have a low income.

Song, on the other hand, illustrates China and America by mentioning simple everyday actions that symbolically correspond to them. The strong presence of the country life in the first few stanzas of the poem is a sharp contrast to the urban imagery apparent in the sixth stanza. The imagery presented echoes the difference between the tranquil and primi-

tive life in rural China where the women were “as dormant as the rooted willows / as redundant as the farmyard hens,” (Song 19-20) and the raucous and very modern life in America, where “dough-faced landlords slip in and out of your keyholes / making claims you don’t understand” (Song 48-50). Song’s description of the personae’s environments reiterates the difficulty for immigrants to balance the influences of different cultures.

Through the imagery describing American places and lifestyle, the poems indicate the poets’ struggles in making a name for themselves amid the stereotypes and racial obstacles placed upon them as minority writers. “Theme for English B” makes references to Columbia University as “the hill above Harlem,” where Hughes studied and later left because of the pressure placed upon him by his white colleagues. For Hughes, having his work published and then accepted was difficult at first because of the lack of opportunities for him to showcase his work and later because of the financial problems brought about by the Great Depression. Like Hughes, Song has faced problems as well. The persona’s difficult life in America suggests Song’s effort to free her work from the standards placed on Asian-American writers. For most of her career, Song has been critical about being labeled as an Asian-American or Hawaiian writer because she prefers her work to have a more universal appeal (Tasillo 266). Thus, it is through the personae’s connection in their particular ethnic origins, of which people have their own version, which makes these writers’ work appeal so powerfully to people of all backgrounds.

Neither poem has an apparent rhyme scheme, yet the poems are easy to read and to comprehend mainly because of the simple and informal diction that reveals the poets’ attachment to their ethnic identities. With regards to diction, the words “colored” and “Harlem” in “Theme for English B” are closely associated to the African-American identity. Similarly, Chinese culture comes alive in “Lost Sister” with the inclusion of the phrase “fermented roots, Mah-Jong tiles and firecrackers” (Song 46). These objects are exclusive representations of the Chinese culture. The lighting of firecrackers annually, for example, originated in China and the act is believed to draw away bad spirits. Yet regardless of how strongly the poets present their respective ethnicities, they manage to free their work from just being considered as just an African or Asian poem that happens to be written in America, but into poems that allow readers to relate with the personae’s lives.

Langston Hughes and Cathy Song have written poems that recognize the plight of African-Americans and Asian-Americans in identifying themselves fully as Americans, especially when the society itself provides barriers that prevent them from integrating themselves completely. The

poems reveal to the readers that the poets value their ethnic identities, their freedom, and most especially, their being American citizens. They have provided different perspectives on such themes because they grew up in different times and circumstances. Yet regardless of how dissimilar their approach is in presenting the themes, the poets created works that have a universal appeal. Readers from all over the world can easily relate to the personae's struggles, while simultaneously appreciating the poets' talents in skillfully communicating those challenges through the use of pen and paper.

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Darwin as a Humble Revolutionary

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Charles Darwin's voyage on the HMS Beagle was completed in 1836, and he began to formulate his theories on evolution and natural selection at that time. By the year 1844, he had sketched out what he considered the "probable" conclusions or his arguments (Darwin 95). Surprisingly he did not publish his first work on the matter, *The Origin of Species*, until 1859. The delay can be partially understood due to Darwin's wish to complete his research and flesh out his theories, but was also in part because of Darwin's own anxiety over the controversy he knew they would provoke. When Darwin did finally present his ideas to the public, it was his own understanding of their revolutionary nature that allowed him to minimize those qualities in his writing and convince others of his theory's correctness. In this initial introduction to his theories, he was forced to deal with both religious resistance and emotional resistance to his ideas, but he manages to overcome these opinions by both attacking them head-on and using his own humble conviction to persuade. Through an examination of the methods Darwin used to show his awareness of the newness of his ideas and yet strip them of radicalism, it is possible to see how greatly those methods contribute to the eloquence of his arguments.

Darwin's reluctance to publish is not the only way that he shows his awareness of the controversy surrounding his theories. In the introduction to *The Origin of Species*, he steadily chronicles the length of time it has taken him to arrive at his conclusion offering the dates above. He states his purpose for this very clearly: "I give them to show that I have not

been hasty in coming to a decision” (95). He then goes on to write about what has changed that allows him to now feel that he can present his theories, mentioning that his “health is far from strong” and he has “been urged to publish” by such distinguished men as Sir Charles Lyell and Dr. Hooker (95). He also mentions that a Mr. Wallace had arrived at similar conclusions and was preparing to publish them (95), so there was likely also some fear of being scooped influencing his decision. When one considers the fact that Darwin felt the need to immediately use the first two paragraphs of his work in almost direct defense of it, there can be no doubt that he recognized that there would be those reading it with pre-conceived opinions in opposition to it.

The third paragraph of his introduction continues in a similar vein. It offers an understanding on Darwin’s part that this work is only an “Abstract” which “must necessarily be imperfect” (95). He admits that “errors will have crept in” and not all of his arguments will have the full facts or references justifying them presented, but hopes to do this in a future work. Again, Darwin shows a large amount of humility in calling a book that approaches 500 pages a mere “Abstract” (95). This and his other comments recognizing the work’s imperfections serve to take the wind out of his opponents’ sails and preemptively discourage any nit-picking behaviors on their part. He is also careful to note that there are holes in his theories that are visible even to him.

The issue of gaps in the fossil record upon which much of his theory was based is one of many that he took care to address. Because his theories argue that there must have been almost “an infinitude of connecting links, between the living and extinct inhabitants of the world, and at each successive period between the extinct and still older species” (160), it raises the question of why there is not plain evidence of each of these different mutations in the fossil record. In his defense, Darwin recognizes that the only way he can combat this objection is “on the supposition that the geological record is far more imperfect than most geologists believe” (160). The facts as he presents them being that fossils are only preserved under certain specific circumstances and that, as “only a small portion of the world has been geologically explored” (161), it is also likely that many fossils remain unrecognized or undiscovered. He also confronted other issues such as a lack of understanding with regards to the methods of heredity (genetics) and “the existence of two or three defined castes of workers or sterile females in the same community of ants” (158), but in each case he did his best to master the difficulties presented him:

That many and grave objections may be advanced against the theory of descent with modification through natural selection, I do not

deny. I have endeavored to give them their full force. (158)
 These lines are part of the opening to Chapter XIV where he attempt to summarize and restate arguments made earlier in the text. That he does not leave it to his opponents to criticize the work, but begins each time with his own criticisms forces his opponents to initially agree with him and approach the work from within his view of it.

Another way Darwin disarms his opponent is that he writes in such a way as to remove the stigma of being innovative or revolutionary from his ideas. There is no disputing the fact that Darwin's ideas are both of these things, but he is careful to take away the negative associations that would cause them to appear radical or unnatural. This is best accomplished by the way he makes it seem as if any rational person when presented with the same information would come to the conclusions; in fact, he is even able to use Mr. Wallace as an example of someone who has (95). Other times he uses phrases such as "no one ought to feel surprise" (97) and expresses things with the assumption that they are practically self-evident. There is also a sense in Darwin's writing of suddenly seeing things from a different perspective and having everything click into place. This feeling emerges in a way that is extraordinarily reminiscent of the childlike discovery and awe, which accompany one's first understanding of the magnificent balance and symmetry inherent in our world.

The fact that he writes in the first person as if expressing his own humble opinion does much to further his cause. Rather than building up his ideas with grandiose language or claiming that his ideas are going to change the world, he states his opinions simply and with less drama than they have shown themselves deserving of. Observe some of the language he used in the introduction:

These fact seem to me to throw some light on the origin of species... it occurred to me that perhaps something might be made out on this question by patiently accumulating and reflecting on all sorts of facts which could possibly have any bearing on it. After five years work I allowed myself to speculate on the subject and drew up some short notes; these I enlarged... into a sketch of the conclusions, which then seemed to me probable. (95)

At a time when one would normally want to make what is to follow seem as thrilling as possible, Darwin purposefully uses language that makes him seem reluctant, shy and even demur. It builds very little expectation for the extraordinarily complex and almost fully fleshed work that the reader will actually be faced with. When one does come to realize what Darwin is actually giving one, that sense of it being beyond expectation and astonishing is much more powerful than if he had set up the text as a great revolu-

tionary work and then disappointed the reader by only meeting or even failing to meet what was anticipated. Darwin's ability to use his opponents' expectations against them does much in the way of disarming his opponents and his idea of the pre-emptive attack is exceedingly useful for anyone presenting an idea which they know will be met with controversy, especially when one is not aware of what precisely his opponents will attack. Where Darwin was aware of the specific complaints that would have to be met, he was not shy about confronting them head-on, though he did so with his characteristic humility.

Religious resistance was something that Darwin could not have failed to be aware of, as it was and continues to be a common ailment of the world's independent thinkers. Rather than attacking the religion that opposed him, Darwin was careful to instead treat the explanations religion used to deal with the *Origin of Species* logically, pointing out their problems and conveying how much more adequately natural selection handled those issues. While he considered it "quite conceivable" (96) that another naturalist could come to the conclusion that each species was descended, like the different varieties, from one instance of independent creation with variation caused by external conditions, Darwin was quick to point out that such a theory would be unable to deal with the incredible complexities of development, citing the adaptation of woodpeckers and mistletoe as examples. The other popular religious theory was the notion of 'Vestiges of Creation' in which one could theorize that "some bird had given birth to a woodpecker, and some plant to the mistletoe, and that these had been produced perfect as we now see them" (96). However, Darwin saw that this theory left the issue of "coadaptations of organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life, untouched and unexplained" (96). He also points out that such theories do not answer the questions of why, if we are assuming an intelligent creator, "upland geese, which never or rarely swim, should have been created with webbed feet; that a thrush should have been created to dive and feed on sub-aquatic insects; and that a petrel should have been created with habits and structure fitting it for the life of an auk or grebe" (164-165). Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection explains all of these things, showing that, as nature is slow to change unless forced, the webbing on the feet of an upland goose could be vestigial from its prior development in a swimming goose for which it was helpful. Though it no longer helps the upland goose, it also does not hinder it and therefore no change is made. Thus, natural selection finds it easy to explain that which is "inexplicable on the theory of independent acts of creation" (166). Only after treating religion-inspired origin theories in a scientific manner, does Darwin venture to actually comment on the

religion stating that:

To [his] mind it accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator, that the productions and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world should have been due to secondary causes, like those determining the birth and death of the individual. When I view all beings not at special creations, but as the lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before... they seem to be to become ennobled. (174)

With this and other comments Darwin shows an understanding that beyond just religious resistance there are definite emotional reasons why society would prefer not to believe his theories. He realizes that the theories of Creation appeal much more to our pride than the idea that we are simply the process of natural phenomenon and does what he can to add glamour to humanities position at the end of natural selection. For Darwin, looking at our past from an evolutionary viewpoint allows man to conclude that good things are in store for man in the future:

As all those living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before..., we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally appreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection. (174)

While Darwin acknowledges that he does not “expect to convince experienced naturalists whose minds are stocked with a multitude of facts all viewed... from a point of view directly opposite” (170), he is not afraid to point out the foolishness of their claims. As he puts it: “It is so easy to hide our ignorance under such expressions as the ‘plan of creation,’ ‘unity of design,’ &c., and to think that we give an explanation when we only restate a fact” (170). More than just simple prejudice developed from years of believing the same theories and reluctance to accept change, Darwin’s theories were also hampered by “our natural unwillingness to admit that one species has given birth to other and distinct species, [in as much as] we are always slow in admitting any great change of which we do not see the intermediate steps” (170) Darwin compares this difficulty to that first felt by geologists when confronted with Lyell’s theories regarding the uniformity of geological processes in the formation of today’s sea-cliffs and valleys. As he puts it:

The mind cannot possibly grasp the fully meaning of the term of a

hundred million years; it cannot add up and perceive the full effects of many slight variations, accumulated during an almost infinite number of generations. (170)

This is indeed a hard concept to grasp and Darwin does not offer any persuasion with regards to overcoming it, but simply by causing each reader to acknowledge his or her own limitations he can inspire his readers to dismiss the possible effects of their emotions and help them to approach natural selection from an impartial point of view.

When Darwin has laid out the full extent of his theory and defended it to the best of his ability he returns to the belief that despite gaps, opposing viewpoints, the remaining unexplained phenomena, or religious and emotional pressures, he is convinced in the correctness of his theory. After listing the most basic elements of his theory he reminds his readers “The truth of these propositions cannot, I think, be disputed” (158). This conviction on his part is not a new thing; it has been reinforced repeatedly throughout the work and is stated direction both in the above example from Chapter XIV and in the closing paragraph of his introduction. This conviction too appeals to our emotions leading us to ask why we should disagree with someone who seems to be such a humble and rational being and is looking at the same information we are. With some strong emotions working against him, Darwin realizes the need to line up emotions on his side of the battlefield and acts on that need.

Faced with the prospect of introducing a new and exceedingly controversial theory into his society, Darwin managed to overcome more than two decades of indecision and cautiousness to produce a remarkable work that both explained and defended his revolutionary ideas. He used a direct approach to the controversy to show his own awareness of it early on and, in doing so, started in an offensive position. He then freely admitted all of those things that he realized his opponents would be likely to use against him, effectively disarming his opponents. Throughout the rest of the work, he was careful to not provide any ammunition that could be used against him keeping a humble tone and downplaying his efforts while simultaneously earning himself allies. Besides his remarkably strong efforts in support of his theories, his head-on attacks on the popular theories (in a polite and logical manner) helped prevent any attack from that direction later. Finally, Darwin recognized his own inability to convince everyone and after discouraging emotional resistance to his theories, brought out emotional arguments in support of them. Each of the many and diverse tactics he employed served its purpose exactly as he

wished it to and subtly showed his understanding of the nature of his opposition, allowing his arguments to be more convincing than he, himself initially thought possible.

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