LUX Undergraduate Journal of Literature and Culture

Issue 7

Summer 2023

Cover art by Annie Varney

Editor's Bios

Beyla Carys took on the role of Journal Administrator for LUX and is a second year English Literature with Creative Writing student. Their interests include queer theory, transgender readings of literature, and understanding perceptions of the grotesque in horror and dystopia.

Hannah Clery, the Copy Editor for LUX Journal, is a second-year Linguistics and English Language student, with a particular interest in phonetics and sociophonetics. She holds a position as Features Editor for The Lancaster Tab, and enjoys writing both more creative and serious pieces.

Amy Dixon, the Contributions Editor for LUX Journal, is a second-year English Language and Literature student interested in modernism, biopolitics and dystopian fiction. Her third-year dissertation will focus on the eerily clairvoyant work of George Orwell. She is currently completing a TEFL course with the aim of teaching abroad after graduation before exploring the world of publishing.

Sana Lokhat is an English Literature student who acted as our Publicity Editor. She has a keen interest in the publishing industry. Her past experience includes work for a publisher, and she is currently a freelance editor for an academic proofreading company. Her interests lie in contemporary literary fiction and the bridge between literature and film.

Contents

Staff Endorsement

Reading the seventh issue of LUX makes me feel incredibly proud of the students in the English Literature and Creative Writing department at Lancaster University. I feel a particular sense of privilege at having been asked to write this year's staff endorsement as I had the pleasure of reading much of the journal content when it was just coursework. The inimitable Executive Editor, Sarah Wagstaffe, and her team have put together another exceptional issue of the journal, with socio-political themes which demonstrate the wide-reaching importance of the discipline.

What to say about the articles themselves beyond their exceptional excellence? Eleanor Bowskill weaves an alluring argument about the political spaces of body and immortality. Becky Gilbert finds inspiration at the ballet, highlighting the political possibilities of protest through adaptation. Astrid Welfare takes horror to new levels in Jacobean theatre. Thomas Bailey gives us a wonderful creative and critical piece drawing on the vampire and immigration. Finally, Beyla Carys explores the dystopia and violence, specifically highlighting the working-class body.

LUX journal is a real highlight of the department that demonstrates a rich ecology of research exchange between undergraduate and postgraduate students. The amount of work that goes in to making this journal a success year after year must be celebrated. I am in awe of the hard work that Executive Editor Sarah Wagstaffe has put in to not only launch this issue of the journal, but to host the very first live LUX event. I look forward to seeing the future of LUX and am proud to provide this endorsement.

Happy reading!

- Dr Dany Girard, Senior Teaching Associate in Media and Cultural Studies

Editors' Introduction

Our editorial team is immensely excited and pleased to present the seventh issue of LUX Journal. Our team has been incredibly fortunate to be working with a group of tremendous authors, whose writing subtly engages a vast range of themes. As a team, we have identified the articles in this journal to be important due to their ability to open conversations surrounding violence, protest, bodies and grotesqueness throughout various socio-political experiences. We welcome you to question the social and political dynamics that are explored critically through literary, philosophical and *creatical* debates. These essays engage with exceptional creativity to critically discuss contemporary issues of the body and autonomy.

The process of assembling this issue in collaboration with our contributors and peer reviewers has been one that has allowed us to think creatively in many aspects, from the selection and shaping of our articles through to the decisions we make in presenting our issue in its final form.

The creation of this issue has truly been a team endeavour. From social media outreach and advertising the work of LUX Journal, to the editors' diligent work communicating with our contributors and peer reviewers, whom we owe great thanks to, and finally down to the efforts put into editing this final selection of published pieces, all our members are truly invaluable to the issue's success.

Eleanor Bowskill's essay on the desirability of immortality engages critically with ideas regarding the physicality of life. Is immortality so important to humanity that we would be willing to give up the physical body to achieve it? This essay explores the body as a political space of life and death.

Becky Gilbert's essay discusses ideas of protest within Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, positing that the continued importance of Shakespeare within modern contexts is linked

inextricably to adaptability. Our ability to change the lens through which we perform *Romeo and Juliet* allow it to be continually politically relevant.

Astrid Welfare approaches a discussion of horror within Jacobean theatre. It is an essay that sets itself within the contexts of the Jacobean stage to expose and consider the horror and grotesqueness of the Jacobean revenge narrative with a focus on *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

Thomas Bailey's creative critical piece focuses on immigration through the lens of vampire fiction, paying close attention to the parallel marginalisation of immigrant communities and vampiric bodies. He discusses the isolation of the immigrant community through the application of a creative-critical exploration of the figure of the vampire and its inherent politicisation.

Our next piece by Beyla Carys is an anarchist analysis of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* applied to themes of bodily autonomy within dystopian science-fiction narratives. It is an exploration of the exercise of political control through the application of violence to working-class bodies. It focuses upon *Dune*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Blame!*, and *Possessor*.

The last ten months spent working on this issue could not have been possible without all of the hard work of our incredible Executive Editor, Sarah Wagstaffe. Sarah has not only led our team in organising and arranging our meetings, overseeing decisions and always being present to offer her help and support, but she has also worked with our assistant executive editor Anubhuti Sharma to help create a foundation for the next issue of LUX Journal. Our team is excited to see what next year's LUX team, will publish a year from now and we wish them all the best of luck as they step into their roles in the coming months.

The Burden of Immortality: Boredom, Categorical Desires, and Psychological Connectedness

Eleanor Bowskill

Abstract

The conviction that our lives have intrinsic value is fundamental to the human condition. However, the profound goodness associated with a human existence can only be experienced through physical endurance. It follows that the radical extension of individual lifespans should benefit mortal beings. In practice, certain constraints must be placed on an extended life to preserve a meaningful sense of selfhood for each person, otherwise such an existence becomes undesirable. In the face of conspicuous disagreement about the prospective harms sustained through death, this paper considers Williams' contention that an immortal life ought not to be pursued. It will emerge that much of the discomfort associated with mortality derives from an assumption that death inhibits the fulfilment of our categorical desires. The question, nevertheless, is whether these desires can prevent insufferable tedium forever. To evaluate the misfortune death represents for the deceased individual, we need to establish a finite threshold after which all meaningful projects have been completed. In this final stage, though we might feel doubtful in adolescence, death has an undeniable appeal.

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Introduction

Radical life extension may seem like a modern prospect. The idea of having one's consciousness uploaded into a computer or corpse frozen has only become a faint possibility due to recent technological advancements; however, widespread beliefs in other kinds of eternal life, such as the existence of an afterlife, are inherent to the human condition. In the end, it has become less important for people to comprehend the likelihood of achieving

immortality than to agree on its overall appeal. We believe that our lives are intrinsically good for us; more specifically, life as we know it is good, and the only way to ensure these continued benefits is through physical survival. I believe this premise, combined with a universal fear of death, has led us to assume that eternal life would be nothing short of a gift to humanity. In *The Markopoulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality*, Bernard Williams has argued that it is both reasonable to "regard [death] as an evil" and to admit that immortality would be unbearable for beings like us (85). In other words, eternal life is not something our current selves would wish for.

This paper will provide an in-depth analysis of Williams' thesis, accepting his conditions as stated, in the interest of breaking key criticisms down into three main categories: those that dispute the significance of categorical desires, the preservation of personal identity over time, or the inevitability of boredom. I also will assess the argument presented by Aaron Smuts, whose work provides a defence of the claim that an immortal life would be tedious. I will conclude that his justification is weaker than that of Williams. The two arguments present different interpretations of categorical desires; where Smuts allows for a much weaker connection between those desires held in the present and future, he undermines their important character-forming aspect. In this sense, I favour Williams' thesis, which holds that future existence should appeal to our present selves rather than motivate our continued survival at any given point.

I will begin the first part of my essay exploring Williams' argument against a specific kind of immortal life–a *human* one. Of course, the substantial difference between this kind of human existence and a mortal one is the immeasurably longer life span. Williams' argument could collapse into a tautology without highlighting this key detail. Thus, he puts forward two further constraints on an immortal human life: (a) that it must preserve a sense of self over time; (b) that the physical condition in which the self will be, given its endurance, should allow

the self to achieve those aims that motivate Its continued survival. So, what does it mean to live a *meaningful* human existence? Here, Williams' argument is built on the concept of categorical desires. Categorical desires provide us with a reason to live, but they also reveal core aspects of our character. We can deduce that death must be a bad thing if it prevents us from fulfilling these desires as this would deprive us of something valuable. Nevertheless, Williams still believes that mortality is good because our categorical desires can only give us a reason to live for a finite amount of time before oppressive boredom sets in. Moreover, as these categorical desires are exhausted, the future person left to suffer this subsequent boredom will begin to appear unrecognisable from our standpoint in the present. That is, the relation between our present and future selves is insufficient to ensure the first of Williams' constraints.

In the second part of this essay, I will explore what Williams believes would happen if we attempted to avoid our monotonous fate by creating *new* categorical desires. Initially, it would seem that if this variation in our interests over time was gradual enough, some of our categorical desires could be replaced with new ones. However, Williams maintains that there is still no way to *make* eternal life desirable. He argues that our altered future desires would eventually cause us to become detached from life under our current categorical desires because multiple elements of our character will have been changed. Perhaps this does not seem immediately concerning, given that transformation is preferable to annihilation. However, our forward-looking desires must be connected to our memories of completing past ones, as this continuity upholds our identity through time. Although I believe this can allow minor alterations to our categorical desires, this relation is undermined once they are wholly replaced.

Lastly, Williams contends that *any* categorical desire would eventually lose its appeal if given enough time. Here, I believe Williams is identifying a unique species of boredom. It is not only the case that there are no *new* things in the world to inspire us, or that there is nothing left to explore within our interests, but that everything has become *insufferable*. Thus, although

some may argue against Williams, for instance, that if a mathematician discovered a new formula, they would become re-motivated by their desire to solve every existing equation; this is *still* not enough to sustain their existence. As the satisfaction of each subsequent desire shrinks in value, we must conclude that no desire is inexhaustible or repeatable and immortal human life is undoubtedly undesirable.

The Dilemma of Categorical Desires

When analysing the desirability of radical life extension, it is important to remember that those open to interventions in biological ageing might not consider them to be a realistic prospect. Thus, in an attempt to preserve an idealistic vision of immortality, we have failed to seriously ask the question of how *truly* desirable this kind of existence would be for creatures like us. Given that optimistic approaches to scientific progress, with respect to life-extending therapies, feature throughout recent philosophical discussion, it is reasonable to believe that an extended lifespan would benefit humankind (Pijnenburg and Leget 585). However, "immortality curmudgeons" have offered compelling reasons to believe that an immortal life would not be one that our current selves have reason to wish for (Pereira and Timmerman 1). Most notably, Bernard Williams claims that eternal life would be of no value for human beings. Moreover, Williams' argument poses a dilemma: in an immortal life we would either (a) cease to be the same person we were at the start of our lives or, (b) we would be overcome with boredom and purposelessness.

My own position is similar to that of Williams, to the extent that it *is* crucial to preserve a meaningful connection between past and future selves for an immortal life to be worthwhile. This section will demonstrate the importance of certain motivational factors in providing us with a reason to pursue radical life extension in a recognisable form. However, it is possible to interpret the relationship between these selves in a broader sense; this trace of identification is

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found in their most significant desires. Therefore, the threshold to which an immortal life should be thought undesirable is much higher than on a narrow interpretation but can still be met with minimal adjustments.

Firstly, I will distinguish the *kind* of life Williams believes one would suffer when stretched to immortality: a "human life" (82). What does Williams mean by this? Smuts points out that, by definition, it seems that human life cannot be an immortal one if notions of an "average human lifespan" are encompassed within it (135). Therefore, Williams must have something more abstract in mind. Perhaps a life is human insofar as it includes the things that we associate with our lives going well. Here, Williams' argument centres on the distinction between categorical and contingent desires, helping us to justify if life is worthy of an extension. Contingent desires are "conditional on being alive," such as food or protection (Williams 85). Although we will desire these things *if* we are to *continue* living, they do not give us a reason to stay alive. Conversely, categorical desires possess this motivational property because they make us look forward to living. For example, a parent's desire for their children to do well in life can be fulfilled without said parent's continued existence (Luper). However, we often feel that we can see to our categorical desires better if we survive and, therefore, aim to do so. Furthermore, categorical desires vary greatly between individuals (Pereria and Timmerman 2). Thus, if given unlimited time, we can infer that each person would achieve all that *they* are interested in.

Leading on from this, Williams believes that categorical desires can only offer us a reason to live for a finite period. This is because they are *exhaustible.* One can exhaust a desire in two ways: through completion or loss of interest. The further implication here is that any unfulfilled desire will inevitably be exhausted no matter how strongly held. The sheer discouragement of repetitive failure will eventually translate into a lack of appeal. What happens if there is nothing left to look forward to? At this point in eternity, we would be left

with only the "repeatable pleasures" of sex and cuisine (Fischer 85). Given that Williams concludes that this kind of existence would be ultimately *meaningless*, I believe that one particular categorical desire has been given a value above all others – the desire for significance. However, this kind of prolonged life appears demanding, since it is difficult to conceive of a recognisable human existence that could retain the same level of significance whilst providing individuals with the kinds of desires that would render life worthwhile for them. Here, Williams places two conditions that any immortal life must satisfy to achieve plausibility. First, I must be the one living the extended life in question. Second, for an immortal life to be desirable, my future aims should be "adequately related" to those that "myself looking forward" currently holds (Williams 83).

So, what options do we have? If we are to live a continued existence, such as an extended version of the lives we currently lead, we would be connected to our future selves. However, we would most likely run out of categorical desires to occupy us. Therefore, as Smuts describes, this would cause us to deplete our "motivational store of reasons to go on" (136). The obvious alternative is to accept that we would undergo a series of different existences, making up one eternal life. This suggestion echoes religious ideas such as reincarnation. However, these existences involve a being living through various organisms throughout their life and, thus, the connected lives of different humans and animals are not considered as the same *person*. Therefore, we cannot say that someone's previous and reborn selves have an obvious continuity between them, as the one which exists in the present cannot retrospectively identify the other. It is worth pointing out here that religious ideas of reincarnation, such as the existence of the soul, often imply a more spiritual version of personal identity. Whilst this suggestion remains plausible, I do not believe that proponents of life extension would favour the endurance of a distinct non-physical self, given their aim is to overcome the concern that *our* lives, as we know them, will come to an end. It follows that one must remain aware of their

subsequent existence to find the appeal of an eternal life lived through a series of distinct selves. Given that reincarnation cannot guarantee such a degree of certitude with regard to endurance this form of life extension becomes redundant.

What if we *replace* our categorical desires? Intuitively, it seems sensible to avoid taking on unachievable goals during an average lifetime, as this would prevent disappointment if nothing else. Moreover, if we somehow manage to extend our lives by hundreds of years whilst maintaining our health, we could surely find a way to accommodate our fluctuating interests over these years. However, categorical desires are more significant than ephemeral, short-term wishes for food or shelter, as the latter do not provide guiding principles for our lives or inform our *character* (Williams 92). Therefore, replacing one's categorical desires entails replacing their identity along with it (Smuts 137). Over such an extended time, this change will be considerable enough that the "degree of identification" held with my later life will become "absolutely minimal" (Williams 85). Thus, a life spent in the fulfilment of my future desires would not meet Williams' earlier conditions for a desirable extended life. However, we may not all agree that this is a problem. An eternal life with changing categorical desires may be appealing, even if this requires a change to current characters. Indeed, Williams himself does not claim that new categorical desires entail an entirely *new* person, only that this future person will not be wholly the same as before (Luper).

In addition to these considerations, we should acknowledge the gradual nature of these changes in desires which occur across the span of a whole life. This kind of transformation can only be *similar* to death as it does not entail our lives *end*. Instead, they are radically altered. Therefore, it would seem that an extended life would be preferable to extinction. Moreover, Smuts criticises Williams' account in this respect for failing to consider the possibility of "overlapping categorical desires" (137). Given the aforementioned gradual transition between desires, could it not be the case that some of these pre-exist when newer ones are introduced?

This seems plausible and would provide us with the necessary motivation for living, whilst still undergoing a substantial transformation.

I believe that such an amendment is possible on Williams' account. Nonetheless, it has been argued that his requirement that we "relate all of our future categorical desires to our current aims" is too demanding in this regard (Smuts 137). Thus, to fulfil this condition, we must have the *same* categorical desires at the beginning of our lives as we do at the end. However, this conclusion is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of Williams' argument. Immortal life is desirable precisely because the knowledge of my future existence provides a source of comfort to my present self. Hence, given that my categorical desires serve to propel *me* forward, it must be "comprehensible to me" how these future desires could reasonably be *mine* (Williams 92). This entails a close *relationship* between present and future desires, as each of these should reflect my current character, but there is no requirement for them to be *identical*. Therefore, immortality cannot be deemed undesirable on the grounds that it entails the pursuit of *different* goals to those held in the present; however, an immortal life, that my current self would have no interest in whatsoever, would be. In this sense, Smuts is correct that in the future "we need not have the same categorical desires that we have right now" (137). Nevertheless, it seems rational to suggest that we still need some remnants of these desires to identify our earlier selves.

Identity and Significance

Having established that the appeal of radical life extension depends largely on the preservation of one's sense of self over time, this section will assess the extent to which personhood is reducible to the relationship between their mental states. If we can begin to understand which factors make a particular life desirable, it becomes easier to decide whether an extended lifespan would contribute to the public good. Those in favour of biological intervention stress

the intrinsic value in being alive but fail to distinguish between the continuation of an asset we are entitled to maintain and an expansion beyond these limits. In the absence of moral considerations, it would always be better for us to live as long as possible. In fact, it is the completion of one's categorical desires that gives a life this intrinsic value. Although life extension can afford an individual more time to accomplish their desires, it will become clear that senescence limits this total value over time.

In the first place, Williams can dispute claims about the value of immortal lives through an appeal to the psychological criteria of personal identity. This theory holds that to exist as the same person over a prolonged period, one must maintain psychological continuity relations or overlapping chains of strong links between mental states (Glannon 270). However, Derek Parfit argues that whilst personal identity is strictly based on the relation of continuity, it is psychological connectedness that matters to us (Parfit 245). Here, psychological connectedness consists of the specific direct links between mental states, such as desires. Through this mechanism, my present self becomes a point of *unification* between "forward-looking desires" and my memories of past ones (Glannon 270). In terms of life extension, we specifically wish to extend a person's continued consciousness rather than the functioning of their biological organism. This is not to say that our physical well-being is irrelevant; the body and brain must function to the extent that they facilitate this higher brain activity. However, we presuppose that personhood is ultimately *reducible* to certain psychological events, such as our categorical desires and their relationship (McMahan 54).

At this point, we can begin to understand why a particular life span may be preferable to another. It has been argued that, without "the capacity for mental life", an organism cannot be considered a fully developed person (Glannon 271). If this is the case, it must follow that a human considered to lie below this threshold cannot be the *same* individual as the person who will come to exist later in life. This idea has been developed by Jeff McMahan, who argues

that since an unborn foetus has no significant "mental life", little value can be lost through its death, as its life belongs to a future person who does not yet exist (55). In this sense, if the death of an unborn child cannot be bad for *them*, it must also be true that the badness of this death cannot be *worse* than one fifty years on.

What does this mean for extended lives? It goes without saying that mental capacities begin to take form in later life and, therefore, we must take a different approach. McMahan proposes that this process is a gradual one, given that the psychological attributes which constitute personhood do not appear all at once (55). This argument is compelling because our desires change through a similar gradual process. It seems reasonable to suggest that the formation of one's personal identity is also a matter of degree. However, this must entail a period under which it is not obvious if *full* existence has been reached. I believe this problem demonstrates why we care about our *adult* lives so much. If we assume that someone over the age of eighteen is a fully existing person, then the value lost through their death must be attributable to them alone. On these grounds, McMahan argues that harm can only be attributed to an infant in a partial sense, as they have not yet reached the threshold for a full, adult existence (56). It follows that death cannot be as bad for an infant as it would be for an adult person, as the latter has reached a higher degree of personhood. Therefore, once the existence threshold *has* been met, as evidenced through the presence of particular psychological attributes, a person's death is "normally worse" for them than if it would have occurred earlier in life (McMahan 56). Here, I believe the term *normally* is especially important, as it could equally be the case that senescence causes a person to lose their identity towards the end of their physical life, If it sufficiently hinders their mental life. Given that this outcome is likely within a radically extended lifespan, I believe McMahan's proposal supports Williams' claim that immortality is undesirable.

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Following on from my previous analysis of psychological connectedness concerning life extension, I will address how this theory of personal identity can also provide a basis for egoistic concern about the future. To understand this, I must ask, what gives us a practical reason to care about our *own* lives being longer? As established, our sense of identity is strengthened by the connections between our beliefs and desires over time. Thus, Williams has concluded that our categorical desires form a substantial part of our character. Furthermore, human beings take a "first-person perspective" towards their own lives (Glannon 269). As conscious beings, we not only situate our present selves within our past and future experiences, but we ascribe *meaning* to them. As Lynne Rudder Baker has argued, the *narrative* aspect of our personhood provides us with an awareness that our mental states, such as our categorical desires, are our *own* (85). Because of this, most individuals *recognise* the *changes* in their identity, goals, and desires across time. Here, we should be reminded that psychological connectedness is a matter of degree. Accordingly, individuals who exhibit high levels of psychological connectedness only experience marginal identity changes across their lifetimes.

However, those who feel their identity will change drastically over time are often described as experiencing *discontinuity* with their future self. Therefore, McMahan has inferred that weaker psychological connectedness "between a person now and the same person later" will provide weaker grounds for the individual's egoistic concern about their future (56). The key implication is that an individual experiencing psychological continuity with their future self is less willing to sacrifice their immediate needs for future benefit. From a moral standpoint, it has been argued that this can lead to impulsivity and selfish decision making (Hershfield et al. 300). If we accept that radical life extension threatens the persistence of our bodily functions over time, those of which include our overall brain health, it follows that our psychological connectedness will suffer relative to our physical deterioration. Thus, we must

conclude that there is no reason to wish for an eternal life that our current selves would not care to live out.

Furthermore, our differing views towards immortality can be explained by the comparative *strength* of the links between our desires. Some desires persist longer than others and, thus, we will inevitably develop a stronger sense of connectedness to those desires we have held for large parts of our lives (McMahan 56). Here, Thomas Nagel has argued that most people are disproportionately more concerned about their future than their past (10). Accordingly, this is due to the individual's strong sense of psychological connectedness with their future self. They only intend for their identity to undergo marginal changes throughout their lifetime. This conviction essentially promotes a policy of saving the best for last. An ideal life would have the good experience of us achieving our desires in the later stages (Glannon 272); this is the stage we hope to have the most opportunity to enjoy.

Moreover, to maintain connectedness, we must also have a substantial period for reflection on our past accomplishments (Glannon 272). We can already begin to see the problems senescence could pose from this. If we take it that the value in a person's life is a matter of whether or not their desires were achieved, then we are *not* making life any more valuable by extending the stage of age-related illness. As established, our sense of self is tied up in our physical and mental well-being. Thus, it seems possible that we could become detached from our identities in a prolonged stage of disability. Additionally, given our asymmetrical attitudes toward the future, an insufferable ending could "disvalue" our lives overall (Glannon 272). This kind of immortal life would be a worthless one of physical, psychological, and emotional decline. However, eventually, the healthiest of lives unbeknownst of these defects, would become unliveable without sufficient motivation. In the next section, I will evaluate concerns about boredom and life extension before concluding that

even if we cannot agree that immortality would be undesirable as a result, it is at least true that there would be no *additional* value in a longer but ultimately dull life.

Boredom

Williams describes an immortal life as one of "boredom, indifference, and coldness". This feeling arises because there is nothing else to look forward to. The categorical desires that once motivated one's existence are now either exhausted or lack appeal (Williams 82). Assuming one does not attempt to starve off boredom by acquiring all new categorical desires, as this could lead to the problems of personal identity I previously described, the only option left is accepting a prolonged state of joylessness.

This status, with no projects stemming from an individual's categorical desires, has been called "content boredom" (Fischer and Mitchell-Yellin 355). If one suffers from content boredom, they are essentially so *satisfied* with themselves that they cannot find more reasons to continue living. This might lead us to ask: at what point does a life become infinitely too long in this way? We may want to accept that a life extended across a millennium is damagingly long in the sense that Williams intends, but can we be sure that the same can be said of a few hundred years? It might well be that either of these lives would be boring, but it might not *necessarily* be the case. John Fischer and Benjamin Mitchell-Yellin argue that Williams takes quite a pessimistic outlook in assuming that *anyone* with an extended life will run out of categorical desires (355). In one sense, human beings have broadly the *same* capacity for mental life and bodily function, which makes them a *person* as opposed to any other kind of organism. However, Connie Rosati contends that although all people will encounter "built-in limits", we should still judge each person's capabilities individually (365). Some of us are more irritable and quicker to boredom, whilst others have "nearly boundless" capacities for enjoyment (Rosati 366). This would infer that the desirability of life extension is predominantly

a matter of personal temperament. Just as our categorical desires constitute our individual character, some individuals can hold on to them for longer.

In contrast, Williams' claim is universal, referring to the durability of *all* persons. In this sense, boredom should be understood as an unavoidable condition rather than a personality trait. It has been argued that we have reached the opposite conclusion because of the empirical correlation between a person's boredom and their lack of emotional awareness (Eastwood et al. 1037). If people are less in touch with their mental states, their lack of psychological connectedness will make them more prone to boredom. However, this evidence is based on mortal beings. If an average human life span is enough to provoke boredom in some people, the prospect of immortality seems far more worrying. In particular, Williams believes that eternal life is far more repetitive and, thus, even potentially rewarding experiences, once overdone, can cause detachment from one's own life. Moreover, Lisa Bortolotti and Yujin Nagasawa acknowledge that the "repetition of similar experiences" can be thought of as a "trigger" for boredom (261). What does this mean for immortality? Yes, it is the case that individuals are the subjects of this dull experience, but environmental factors must also contribute to "how boredom develops" (Bortolotti and Nagasawa 271). In other words, given the radical enhancement required to facilitate immortal life, boredom triggers are likely to be much more frequent, increasing the risk of tedium, especially for those already susceptible.

Shelly Kagan takes the view that an eternal life would be unfavourable, even in the best possible circumstances. In his influential lecture series *Death*, Kagan presents his argument as follows: "After a hundred years, a thousand years, a million years, whatever it is, eventually you are going to say, 'Yes, here's a math problem I haven't solved before, but so what? I've just done so much math, it holds no appeal for me anymore.'" (243). Despite their evident agreement on the matter, Kagan articulates an important aspect of Williams' work that is often neglected. When an individual is trapped within the tedium of immortality, it is not only that

they have run out of things to do, but that these things have lost their previous *appeal*. For example, the categorical desire to read as many science fiction novels as possible may enrich a person's life to the point that they have amassed hundreds of thousands of pages and enjoyed every chapter, but can we blame them if they one day decide literature of any kind has become insufferable? Kagan argues that new things are "not new in a way that they can still engage you afresh"; this implies there is something valuable in experiencing something for the first time – something few and far between in immortality (243). It could be said that this argument is *reductionist* in the sense that it diminishes the aim of our intellectual pursuits to one for new information. Fischer and Mitchell-Yellin uphold the same criticism, arguing that there is something wrong in believing that an experience is only worthwhile if we can "derive" knowledge from it; they suggest an additional value to be found in the accumulation of experiences (359). I think this approach is much weaker than the alternative view that categorical desires make a profound contribution towards our individual character development. Therefore, I believe that these kinds of life projects are intended to serve an intellectual purpose beyond enjoyment for its own sake. I could continue reading books forever, but they will come to lose their *motivational* aspect. I may derive some superficial sense of enjoyment, but there is no need for me to continue living just to experience more of the same.

At this point, we must ask whether *all* categorical desires are exhaustible. Perhaps the more academically challenging desires, such as reading, mathematics or knowledge in general, are not the best examples because we can reasonably imagine a situation in which one becomes too overwhelmed by their demands and begins to associate them with negative emotions. Adam Buben makes a slightly vaguer claim that self-improvement could suffice as an inexhaustible desire (213). If this is true, we must also accept that *some* immortal lives could be desirable, but only if the individual pursued these categorical desires. However, if we follow this suggestion, we do not get any closer to understanding what this kind of life would look like in

real terms. Arguably, most people would see their lives as being motivated by the aim of self-improvement, even though we often have different categorical desires. It remains unclear how one could pursue a life of self-improvement in the broad sense. However, an infinite array of these open-ended projects have been suggested, many of which are less existential than Buben's proposition. More significant is the collective suggestion that a person can be content as long as there remains work to be done. Jeremy Wisnewski has argued that the categorical desire to become a skilful musician could be continually inspiring if we assume that new instruments are eventually invented, each needing mastering (34). However, I believe this objection interprets categorical desires as *obligational* rather than *motivational*. It seems unreasonable to suggest that if someone could be interested in something, they must stay alive to achieve it. I think this would make immortality even more undesirable than boredom ever could.

Notwithstanding this, it has been argued that there is another sense in which categorical desires could provide infinite satisfaction: if they were *repeatable* rather than inexhaustible (Fischer 84-5). Repeatable desires resurface during a person's life but are not necessarily persistent throughout it. Many other desires are "self-exhausting" because there is little appeal in experiencing them more than a few times (Pereira and Timmerman 5). In fact, I believe that John Fischer's need to distinguish between these two categories justifies my concern that intellectually challenging projects, such as those to read difficult novels or solve mathematic equations, would likely grow tiresome through immortality. Here, Fischer offers an important insight in highlighting that all desires can be measured in terms of utility – the satisfaction of some desires provides more value to the individual than others (84-5). Importantly, if a desire is deemed valuable enough, there could be grounds to conclude that life is still worth living. Therefore, can Williams still be right in thinking that immortality is always undesirable? In short, I think so. Each time a desire is satisfied, its fulfilment *diminishes* in value (Pereira and

Timmerman 4). If there exists a threshold by which desire satisfaction is measured, it must also be true that at some stage, a categorical desire can give no additional value to a life at all. Although I gestured towards this idea previously in my analysis of Kagan's work, I believe a different mistake has been made with repeatable desires that I have not seen articulated elsewhere. Namely, repeatable pleasures seem to be contingent rather than categorical.

Repeated desires, such as listening to your favourite song, will not trigger boredom or diminish in value if they are appropriately spaced out (Fischer 84-5). However, the truth of this claim is irrelevant, given that repeatable desires are closer to contingent than categorical desires. Admittedly this is only partly true, given that contingent desires are usually just those necessary for survival. Following Smuts' description, if left with only our contingent desires, we become reduced to keeping our "stomach full and genitals stimulated", concerned with our biological survival alone (136). Nevertheless, these are experiences of sexuality and taste. Thus, there must be some level of frivolous enjoyment outside of pure endurance. I am not arguing that these experiences are *enough* to motivate existence; I believe precisely the opposite. However, it is difficult to conclude that the repeatable pleasure of a delicious meal is any different from that of a beautiful song, leading to the conclusion that *both* are contingent desires. Williams does not think contingent desires can motivate an extended human life or one of average length (100). Therefore, we cannot say that acquiring repeatable goods is enough for someone to desire immortality, as it is already insufficient to propel them into the next year.

Conclusion

This essay has delved into Williams' argument that immortality is ultimately undesirable for beings like us. For Williams, we have been led to believe we should want an eternal life because it is true that death is *sometimes* a misfortune for the individual who dies. However, we are only justified in condemning a death if it is premature. This notion of prematurity refers to how

death prevents someone from fulfilling their categorical desires. Therefore, after the point at which all of someone's categorical desires have been *exhausted*, death can no longer be considered an evil. Instead, death offers us a time limit to complete our projects, and mortality prevents us from living a tedious and unbearable existence.

As has been highlighted, Williams' argument that immortality cannot be made desirable remains contentious. Even if it is the case that our categorical desires are character-defining, it is not initially obvious that changing either of these would be a bad thing if we could enjoy perpetuity in return. However, there are limits to how much change a life can undergo before it becomes that of another person entirely. Thus, it is somewhat true that this kind of change would not be good *or* bad for *us* because it would concern someone else altogether. Importantly, we want *our* lives to be eternal; we want to be the ones to benefit from a continued existence, so in another sense, this is not enough to satisfy us. Equally, too little change can limit the value of a life just as much. If a life sees no change, it will become insufferably dull. Therefore, the problem at the crux of the human condition is how to counterbalance the two: to have the same life *and* one worth living. I have shown Williams to be correct in thinking that this is impossible.

Nevertheless, one could hold that some humans do not *want* to die *and* that they would still prefer a mortal life to an immortal one. Williams demonstrates that these claims only *appear* to contradict one another. Perhaps this is a reasonable assumption, the value of life is somewhat due to the presence of death, but it is death that will eventually take it away. Hence, there must be another explanation for our reluctance to accept Williams' remarks about immortality. We are inescapably emotional towards our lives and their looming end, recent developments in the field of life extension attempt to respond to this. However, if Williams is right, and I believe he is, they are deluded in wishing for an eternity that will make their lives insignificant.

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How has context affected the way that themes of protest have been presented and received by audiences in relation to adaptations of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'?

Becky Gilbert

Abstract

If one was to debate what makes Shakespeare's work so timeless, it's unlikely that the universal themes created throughout all his works wouldn't be considered. This essay explores one of these themes by comparing and contrasting how Protest has been translated within different adaptations and explorations of Romeo and Juliet. What is potentially most interesting in the exploration of research presented here is that the focus is on how the original play is received outside of Western countries compared to a Western adaptation of the play into a contemporary choreographic version. Therefore, by taking into consideration the limitations that these specific forms create, it offers an understanding how the theme of protest is demonstrated both explicitly as well as subtly simply through how these adaptations of the play are received. By providing a close reading of Sperlinger's text "Romeo and Juliet in Palestine: teaching under occupation" as well as exploring Bourne's choreographic adaptation, this essay presents the view that it is specifically the theme of protest that allows the original play to remain universal and timeless because of the important position that protest holds in contemporary life, inside and outside of Western countries. By drawing on current examples such as the Black Lives Matter movement, and Sperlinger's anecdotes of life under occupation, the essay explores how protest has always been a significant part of society, from being a part of the backdrop while Shakespeare was writing, to being a constant in contemporary life, therefore proving this is what evokes such strong reactions, proving its place in the original canon of Literature.

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Despite being originally written and performed during the renaissance era, *Romeo and Juliet* has consistently allowed its performers and directors an opportunity to translate or adapt the play into a text that feels modern. It is because of these universal themes of love and protest that have intermingled into a similar marriage as the titular characters have become entwined in that has encouraged Sperlinger to note in his novel "I do not think Romeo and Juliet is a love story".[1] It is from this quote that I was inspired to explore the ways in which protest remains such a prevalent theme that audiences – no matter what culture, will understand and effectively receive the story Shakespeare is attempting to tell. I will investigate how this theme affects the performance of the play with a specific exploration of how Sperlinger describes teaching it in his novel *Romeo and Juliet in Palestine.* Furthermore, I will also look at how Matthew Bourne's adaptation of the play into a ballet performance adapts the story for a modern audience's reception. These sources will allow an exploration into the way modern audiences receive the play in different contexts, presenting therefore not only an insight into the universality of the work but also exploring the ethics of adaptation.

To first consider the theme of protest present within different adaptations of Shakespeare's play, it is interesting to first consider whether the simple act of translating or adapting is an act of protest in itself. Since the renaissance era, *Romeo and Juliet* has been retold and adapted countless times:

> "It has been filmed in relatively straightforward versions at least thirty times, and many more times in freely adapted and even off- beat versions (such as Tromeo and Juliet and the Swedish Sex Lives of Romeo and Juliet, known also as Romeo and Juliet II), inset within another story (as in Dickens's Nicholas Nickleby and Carry on Teacher (1959)), or mercilessly parodied (Ustinov's Romanoff and Juliet (1960))."

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[1] Tom Sperlinger, *'Romeo and Juliet in Palestine: teaching under occupation',* (UK, Zero Books) p.142

With this constant retelling it poses the question as to whether the original meaning becomes lost through all these versions.[2] However, before we turn our focus to the work of the Bard, an answer to this question could be seen through the acknowledgement that Shakespeare's play is an adaptation itself. There is some scholarly agreement that "the principal line of development … begins with the thirty-third novella of Masuccio Salernitano", which was published in 1476, a whole century before Shakespeare has been dated to have written his version.[3] Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that *Romeo and Juliet* becoming a part of the Literature Canon, whilst the four huge contributors to the original story (Salernitano, Porto, Bandello and Boaistuau) remain largely unknown, which could be construed as the original act of protest present during writing.[4] Critics have long stated that "Shakespeare is about the intoxicating richness of the language," therefore implying that adaptations and translations simply lower the standard of the works to something more primitive.[5] Yet, once again, if we were to remember that the play is an adaptation, in which Shakespeare already chose to translate and anglicise even the main characters name (from 'Giulietta' to Juliet), how can we as consumers struggle to see this as a protest of the 'Other'?[6] Despite what may have been seen as a "dangerously foreign and corrupting influence, especially in translation," Shakespeare exerts his power to create an English perspective on a foreign country to tell his own story, therefore evidencing the theme of protest immediately through his translation.[7] However, despite this

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[2] R. S, White, *Shakespeare's Cinema of Love* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016)

[3] Da Porto, Luigi, Masuccio, Bandello, Matteo, Boaistuau, Pierre, Prunster, Nicole, and Victoria University . Centre for Reformation Renaissance Studies, *Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare : Four Early Stories of Star-Crossed Love* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation & Renaissance Studies, 2000). P.6

[4] Ibid., p.1-5

[5] Daniel, Pollack-Pelznar, Why We (Mostly) Stopped Messing With Shakespeare's Language*, The New Yorker*, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/why-we-mostly-stopped-messing-with-shakespeares-language> [accessed 30 May 2022]

[6] Da Porto, Luigi, Masuccio, Bandello, Matteo, Boaistuau, Pierre, Prunster, Nicole, and Victoria University . Centre for Reformation Renaissance Studies, *Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare : Four Early Stories of Star-Crossed Love* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation & Renaissance Studies, 2000). P.7

[7] Shakespeare, William, and Callaghan, Dympna, *Romeo and Juliet : Texts and Contexts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). P.155

perspective, I would argue that the ability for different communities to reimagine his plays nowadays suggests what could be seen as a timelessness or universality of the basic plot of the story, but I believe it to be evidence of protest as a way to reclaim the story from the English xenophobia that was so present during the Renaissance.[8] I bring this aspect of protest through translation up because even Sperlinger explores this idea within his novel by acknowledging that "the rhythms of Shakespeare are similar to that of the Qur'an".[9] Not only does this liken the play to that of a Holy text, therefore implying its value to readers from all eras, but also proves its accessibility outside of Western cultures, meaning that Shakespeare's message is therefore not still limited to simply the white European audiences that it may have been in previous years specifically because of this act of translating. Interestingly, if one was to explore the power struggle present during translation, Sperlinger comments on how in a rewrite, his students chose to use a mix of "Shakespearean verse, Arabic and scouse", presenting what I see as part of the theory of a bridge translation.[10]

What is important about this theory in this specific context is that what these students are describing represents a multidirectional bridge, rather than a unidirectional one. Therefore, the students (acting as the translators) have created a translation in which they have asserted power over the original authorship of Shakespeare's words. This is so significant in exploring how translation, and especially translation by another community of people, is in itself a protest to the Eurocentric hegemony on classical literature.[11] Therefore, it would be amiss when understanding how different contexts have affected how themes of protest have been shown to not understand that every act of translation is one of protest, because of the power the translator can now exert over the work previously not theirs.

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[8] Ibid., p.159

[9] Tom Sperlinger, *'Romeo and Juliet in Palestine: teaching under occupation',* (UK, Zero Books) p.29

[10] Ibid., p.4

[11] Jen Calleja and Sophie Collins, *"She knows too much: "Bridge Translations," "Literal Translations," and Long-Term Harm"*, Asymptote, < https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/jen-calleja-sophie-collins-she-knows-too-much/> [accessed 4 June 2022]

Similarly, the power that the specific words Shakespeare uses is further challenged when looking at how performances of plays over the years have been translated through the medium of dance, with audiences understanding the plot with no spoken words being used. I am specifically going to explore the use of ballet as a performance because there have been several versions of the play having been created and choreographed with Prokofiev's music translated through the choreography by Sir Kenneth MacMillan. In 1965, this became one of the foundations for other artists and choreographers to create their own versions. It is entirely true that "The paradox of the choreographic Shakespeare is that it silences Shakespeare in order to speak", posing the question of whether it is the words that have the power to communicate this love, or whether it is through these dancers and this powerful score that these performances remain filled with such an emotional and romantic dynamic that audiences still understand the plot.[12] However, before understanding the way Bourne's choreography lends itself to creating universality specifically through the medium of ballet, it is interesting to investigate how dancing has always been so integral to how Shakespeare can be told. Of course, *Romeo and Juliet* already includes an element of dance within the play with the couple originally meeting at a ball, but connecting and kissing outside of the dance, therefore creating a link for these characters to be outside the normal pattern of order.[13] The fact that the audience is aware of dance being the backdrop to this declaration of love seems to cement the idea that McGowen suggests, that "both dance and love possessed transformative powers", thereby once more likening the two experiences together.[14] Not only this, but if one was to look towards the art of ballet, an audience member would also understand a similarity between how Romeo and Juliet both seem to move against the structural and political constraints of society, in the same way

[12] Joseph Campana, "New Directions: Dancing Will: The Case of Romeo and Juliet", Romeo and Juliet: A Critical Reader, ed. Julia Reinhard Lupton (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016), pp. 153-176 (p. 156)
[13] Brissenden, Alan., *Shakespeare and the Dance* (London: Macmillan, 1981) p.64
[14] McGowan, Margaret M., 'Love and Dance as Transformative Powers', *Textual Practice*, 33.8 (2019), 1311–20

ballet is "nothing if not rigorous and enclosing, however much its protagonists seem to move without a care in the world."[15] It is worth mentioning when considering how this work lends itself to create universality through its mediums that Prokofiev's original ballet almost included a 'happy ending.'[16] Despite the reasoning being accounted to a choreographic pursuit, scholars have claimed it was more likely because of the constraints of censorship around socialist realism at the time. Therefore, despite this suggesting the dance's universality may be limited by political restrictions during the time of performance, it does present an interesting revelation that there has been a significant link to the theme of protest with the history of staging the balletic adaptation. Despite this history, I would argue that it is through the couples *Pas de Deux's* that Shakespeare's language remains able to be conveyed effectively, therefore reiterating universality for the language of the play. Principal dancers Sarah Lamb and Stephen McRae have explored the way these duets stand-alone through the emotions of the dancers, and the way the choreography progresses over the course of the performance, maturing just as the characters do in the original play.[17] Consequently, in response to the question of whether silencing Shakespeare is an act of protesting, I would simply argue *Romeo and Juliet's* universality is achieved through the emotional connection created between the audience and the performers as well as between the performers themselves. It is through great skill that both mediums of performances can evoke the same level of emotion for audiences, but it is through the ballet that the audience has more of a level of control over the plot, with the acknowledgement that despite being Shakespeare's work, there is an element of authority left to them to understand the play in the context they wish to.Therefore, through these ballets it is not just the directors and performers who have the control over the story they perform, but

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[15] Edgecombe, Rodney Stenning, 'SHAKESPEARE, BALLET AND DANCE', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), pp. 200–218

[16] Bennett, K, '"Star-Cross'd Lovers": Shakespeare and Prokofiev's "Pas de Deux" in 'Romeo and Juliet'', *The Cambridge Quarterly.*, 32.4 (2003), 311–47

[17] Royal Opera House, *How Kenneth MacMillan turned Romeo and Juliet into a ballet (The Royal Ballet), (YouTube),* 2016

through the act of protesting, the audience may wish to exert their own creative liberty if the performance speaks to them differently to how the original play would. The audience therefore become active participants in the creation of the story, with the medium of ballet offering the audience the chance to passively protest the original narrative.

Of course, to explore the theme of protest in the original play one of the first aspects to investigate is the feud that opens the performance. Despite leaving the reasons for the fighting up to the audience's own interpretation, the impact of the rioting remains profound for any audience member. This could be especially relevant for the Palestinian students learning the play in Sperlinger's novel, who were also living through generational trauma much like the Shakespearean characters. Though it may seem like mindless violence for Western audiences, a similar element of protest is demonstrated in the opening of his novel through the feud between the Sawaheran family and the boys from Abu Dis, with the observation that "Nobody seemed sure about the origins of the feud, which had been going on for several years".[18] Sperlinger choosing to discuss this violence at the very start of the novel mimics Shakespeare's use of the prologue, ironically mirroring the third line "from ancient grudge break to new mutiny" demonstrating the magnitude of the conflict and the extent of how protesting was such a common experience.[19] This contrast between old and new protests is so prevalent to the students who lived so close to the wall dividing the occupied West Bank to Israel, a sentiment explored and acknowledged when looking at how

> "In Palestine the doubleness of the sign is starkly apparent in the Apartheid Wall … It is a symbol of the two sides of the story, of the conflict, told to the world: the Israeli side humanised, sanitised, made to look good; the Palestinian dirty, anonymous, dangerous … it is one or the other depending on where, and who, you are. It divides

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[18] Tom Sperlinger, *'Romeo and Juliet in Palestine: teaching under occupation',* (UK, Zero Books) p.5-6
[19] William Shakespeare, '*Romeo and Juliet',* (UK, Penguin Random House) p.5

metaphorically and linguistically, as well as physically. These binary opposites dominate the lives of Palestinians.[20]

This idea of a constant conflict was so relevant to the society Sperlinger discusses in his novel through the conflict between how people were protesting in everyday lives, just as it was to the people in Shakespeare's Verona. Interestingly, this idea of a wall is reinforced within the play through Romeo's comment "there is no world without Verona's walls" (III.III17), further emphasizing this idea of conflict through boundaries.[21] In Shakespeare's Verona, "the city both is and is identified by the institutions of violence and disorder that are part of its underlying structure" just the same as Sperlinger's description of Palestine. Though despite this, Sperlinger does discuss the idea of there being a sense of community within the boundary of the wall, leaving one to imagine the conflict that may arise in reference to the ethics and morals of protesting in such an allied community; similar to the characters in Shakespeare's original text having different opinions towards the fighting. On page 83 of his novel, Sperlinger notes the debate between Haytham and Ameera from Facebook where Haytham declared "we better learn how to deal with things in a civilised way".[22] Consequently, just through this there becomes a parallel between Haytham and Friar Lawrence in the original play, with both attempting to protest the feud in non-violent ways unlike others around them. Friar Lawrences makes his opinion clear through his statement, "For this alliance may so happy prove, / To turn your households' rancour to pure love" (II.iii.87-88) and his position as a religious Friar proves to contemporary audiences why he would choose to seek a non-violent form of protesting the constant feuding.[23] However, this may not have been the case for Elizabethan audiences. Modern critics have been divided over whether his character is simply evidence of

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[20] Monica, Brady, 'From Verona to Ramallah: Living in a State of Emergency', *Changing English*, 22.4 (2015), 365–77

[21] William Shakespeare, '*Romeo and Juliet',* (UK, Penguin Random House) p.72

[22] Tom Sperlinger, *'Romeo and Juliet in Palestine: teaching under occupation',* (UK, Zero Books) p.83

[23] William Shakespeare, '*Romeo and Juliet'*, (UK, Penguin Random House) p.47

Shakespeare's catholic sentiments or whether the majority of the play's conflict is brought on by his character, proving his character to be a symbol of religious corruption.[24] This creates a sense of irony to his character and his sentiments because Shakespeare does seem to depict the character with the comic effects that Friars were often associated with in 1594.[25] Therefore, if one was to investigate the irony created through this, it would seem that the place where protest as we understand it to be in the rest of the play is not evident, it is the one place it should have been if the tragedy hoped to be avoided. Despite this, there is a conflict within the play between the passive and active forms of protesting, just as there is shown in Sperlinger's novel. An example of this can be seen through the observation of his student scouring the shops to confirm he does not buy any Israeli cheese by accident.[26] Though to Western audience this may feel like an over-exaggeration or simply an inconvenience, this demonstrates how prominent the theme of protesting was in the everyday lives of these students and exemplifies the suggestion that they were willing to protest even passively for their own morality. Therefore, just through looking from this perspective, it invites one to consider how these students may have took the deaths of Romeo and Juliet and whether this finale became more effective due to them receiving 'metaphoric martyrdom', as evidenced through Capulets exclamation that his daughter had been "matyr'd" (IV.V.59).[27] Ironically, this idea of a martyr was immediately introduced by Sperlinger on the first page with the scathing statement "the problem is people think they will be martyrs if they die" instantly creating the implication to outsiders and the Western audiences that unlike the end of the original play, the ending, and the deaths of these two children would fail to change anything in the real situation.[28] Therefore, one can conclude

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[24] Shakespeare, William, and Callaghan, Dympna, *Romeo and Juliet : Texts and Contexts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). P.380-382

[25] Andrews, John F., *Romeo and Juliet : Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Pub., 1993) p.322

[26] Tom Sperlinger, *'Romeo and Juliet in Palestine: teaching under occupation',* (UK, Zero Books) p.64

[27] Laroque, François, 'The Cult of Saints Revisited: Shakespeare's Martyrs of Love', *Cahiers élisabéthains*, 73.1 (2008), 23–30 , William Shakespeare, *'Romeo and Juliet'*, (UK, Penguin Random House) p.102

[28] Tom Sperlinger, *'Romeo and Juliet in Palestine: teaching under occupation',* (UK, Zero Books)., p.1

that although his play does withstand some cultural differences, there must be an element of adaptation taking place if other cultures are to effectively rationalise not just their deaths, but to also understand why they are known to be martyrs afterwards.

The idea of a constant conflict is central to both *Romeo and Juliet* itself and the context in which Sperlinger's students received and understood the play in Palestine, as well as how it is presented in Bourne's ballet. The tensions in both situations become escalated due to the power vacuum caused by the lack of an effective police force controlling the West Bank, just as the Prince's character fails to control his subjects throughout the course of the plays events. Of course, when looking at the original context present when Shakespeare was writing, it is important to acknowledge the argument that Shakespeare may have been inspired by the London Riots of the 1590s, in which "a poor man was hanged for stealing food for his necessities and a luxurious courtier . . . could be pardoned after killing the second or third man," thereby implying the reason for the power vacuum is due to the aristocratic class of the families creating little consequences for those that do protest.[29] This does seem to be a valid interpretation especially when considering how much power the Prince has in other adaptations with Bourne choosing to simply forgo the character entirely and Tybalt, performed by Dan Wright, as the authoritative figure instead.[30] Despite this disappearance of the Prince, one would argue Bourne creates a much more effective presentation of power abuse through the scene of Tybalt killing Mercutio, therefore making the demonstration of protest much more prevalent. What is so noteworthy about this aspect of the performance is the extent to which Bourne directed the dancers, as seen in Figure one, which to modern audiences could become so reminiscent of the Black Lives Matter imagery and the murder of George Floyd.[31] Though

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[29] Chris, Fitter, '"The Quarrel Is Between Our Masters And Us Their Men": Romeo and Juliet, Dearth, and the London Riots', in *Radical Shakespeare* (Routledge, 2012), pp. 156–85

[30] Sulcas, Roslyn, 'Even More Woe for Two Young Lovers', *New York Times* (1923-) (New York, N.Y: New York Times Company, 2019), p. C2

[31] *Matthew Bournes Romeo and Juliet,* Sir Matthew Bourne, Sky Go, [accessed 7 March 2022]. 55:52

this is just one way of understanding this scene, it is through the acknowledgement that to define identity, is to understand it "according to patterns of ideologically-weighted polarities", reiterating that to contemporary audiences new ideological patterns have been created with certain aspects of media that weren't coded initially in the same way they have since become.[32] Not only does the audience associate Tybalt's character with the police due to his uniform, but the decision to present such a violent death is significant because it exemplifies the authority the police, especially in modern America, are willing to assert over those below them. Consequently, by removing the character of the Prince, Bourne manages to remove the power vacuum and offers his characters a justification to protest. Even with the acknowledgement that "the definition of police brutality is up to the interpreter", it is clear that Bourne has represented an oppressed group standing up for themselves against their oppressors.[33]

Figure 1

[32] Counsell, Colin, and Mock, Roberta, *Performance, Embodiment and Cultural Memory* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009)

[33] Eriksson Krutrök, Moa, and Mathilda Åkerlund, 'Through a White Lens: Black Victimhood, Visibility, and Whiteness in the Black Lives Matter Movement on TikTok', *Information, Communication & Society, ahead-of-print*, 1–19

Looking at this still from Figure One, the performance is so interesting because one can understand the divide between the 'patients' and the 'guard' just through the semantics of their costume and the juxtaposition of the black and white clothing. What is noteworthy however is Bourne's choice to subvert the narrative through the actions of the patients choosing to protest, therefore contrasting the connotations of peace and innocence that the white clothing creates. Just through the imagery of the costumes, I would argue that Bourne's artistic decision to keep the patients in such an innocent colour is a statement on the morality of protesting. In my opinion, the patients seem to remain pure because they were choosing to protest for selfless reasons in order to avenge Mercutio. Therefore, the decision by the end of the performance to have only the titular dancers look bloody and dishevelled is significant, as shown in figure two, because it does create the implication that they have been tainted by their choice to protest for a more selfish reason.[34]. However, though in the original play the titular characters become martyrs for their deaths, it seems selfish in this adaptation to fight for themselves in comparison to the rioting done as a collective earlier in the performance. Although, I would argue that Bourne's characters does not intend for their death to become a statement, with it simply being a result of the pressures that society placed on them, straying from Shakespeare's tragic ending to an accident caused by tormented victims.[35] Therefore, it makes sense for their costumes to become tainted because they are not fighting together as a group anymore but are too preoccupied by their love for each other.

[34] *Matthew Bournes Romeo and Juliet,* Sir Matthew Bourne, Sky Go, [accessed 7 March 2022] 1:22:43
[35] Sulcas, Roslyn, 'Even More Woe for Two Young Lovers', *New York Times* (1923-) (New York, N.Y: New York Times Company, 2019), p. C2

Figure 2

Similarly, if we were to investigate how costuming affects the way the protest is received through the performance, it's also important to acknowledge Juliet as radical just through her choice of hair colour. It is not uncommon for actors to change the way they look for a specific role, but this conscious decision to have Juliet's character constantly stand out proves her not only as the titular character but cements her radicalism. This assumption of a protesting nature makes a lot of sense for the character in many versions of the play over the years, stemming from Shakespeare's decision to present a character that does have more agency than what may have been expected from women in such a patriarchal time. To investigate the agency Juliet is given, it is first important to understand the context of women in the Renaissance with the "patriarchal daughter [having] to fulfil three roles in her life within the private family context: a daughter, a wife, and a mother."[36] Yet, Juliet obviously contests this societal norm, even going to the extent of siding with her husband without her parents knowledge. Lady Capulet parallels her daughters characters through her statement "I would the fool be married to her grave" (III.V.140) with the noun "fool", not only creating a reference to 'fortune's fool' that was previously mentioned by Romeo himself, but by creating this

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[36] Kakkonen, Gordana Galić, and Ana Penjak, 'The Nature of Gender', *Critical Survey (Oxford, England)*, 27.1 (2015), 18–35

reference, the audience is aware of Juliet's limitations in this situation.[37] If her parents have what could be referred to as the fortune (i.e. the dowry that a typical husband would expect) then Juliet must simply submit to their wishes. Not only this but the dramatic irony surrounding the imagery between love and death being so intermingled further reminds the audience that despite any radicalness or protesting against the societal norms, Juliet will always be doomed. Yet, in saying this, it would be amiss to comment that one way of reading the play could actually be that Juliet does indeed become successful in forging her own identity outside of her father's daughter. However, has Shakespeare given her true agency? I would argue not, as it has only been recently that stage adaptations (*&Juliet* in particular) have focused on a truly feminist retelling, one where she dominates the title rather than shares it.[38] Now, if we are to investigate this radical attitude and how Bourne has chosen to present this within the ballet compared to Shakespeare's representation, it would be pertinent to investigate the finale and the element of what can be seen as gendered protest that is evident through the deaths of the two titular characters. Even in the finale of the stage version, Shakespeare chooses to subvert the gender expectations by having Juliet die in a 'masculine way' compared to Romeo dying from the 'feminine' poison. It could be argued this subversion is even evident through the penultimate lines of speech in the final scene "for never was a story of more woe / than Juliet and her Romeo" (V.iii.309-310), with the possessive pronoun suggesting that Romeo belonged to Juliet rather than what was typically expected from the time.[39] This is so significant when looking at the ballet's finale because in it Romeo does not willingly choose to commit suicide. Instead, Bourne uses his creative liberty as director and demonstrates the effects of PTSD through Juliet's character who stabs Romeo by mistake. If one is to take the original stabbing

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[37] William Shakespeare, '*Romeo and Juliet',* (UK, Penguin Random House) p.85 , p.64

[38] Brown-Clark, Layla, 'Juliet Has One Less Problem Without Romeo - & Juliet Musical Review', *UWIRE Text* (ULOOP Inc, 2022) , Andrews, John F*., Romeo and Juliet : Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Pub., 1993) p.356

[39] William Shakespeare, '*Romeo and Juliet',* (UK, Penguin Random House) p.121

as a sexual innuendo, just as critics have stated how "sexual union in marriage and union in death, become completely and finally, indistinguishable" then I would choose to argue that though accidental, Juliet stabbing Romeo evokes such a strong reaction from the audience because subconsciously they are aware of this sexual implication.[40] Therefore, even in current times, the element of protesting the gender norms is further reinforced by Bourne through Romeo yielding to Juliet both sexually through their Pas De Deux, and through his death.

To conclude, *Romeo and Juliet* has become one of Shakespeare's most well-known plays, having been translated and adapted countless times since his first performance, an idea even more significant when investigating the plots universality by understanding that Shakespeare himself is an Adaptor. The themes of love and protest have become a tool for directors, actors, and choreographers to present contemporary contexts and prove that radical protesting can be ever-present in even centuries-old texts, with simple changes to Shakespeare's own daring choices.

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[40] MacKenzie, CG, 'Love, Sex and Death in Romeo and Juliet', *English Studies.*, 88.1 (2007), 22–42

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<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/jen-calleja-sophie-collins-she-knows-too-much/> [accessed 4 June 2022].

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The Significance of the Horror Genre in Jacobean Revenge Narratives

Astrid Welfare

Abstract

This essay explores Richardson's argument that the horror genre has "remained suspiciously absent" in theatre[41]. Through exploring Jacobean revenge narratives, a theatrical sub-genre I considered would effectively assess Richardson's claim, I concluded that the horror genre is an element that multiple aspects of theatre depend on. Within Jacobean revenge narratives, horror was utilised through staging elements, dialogue, and characterisation. Tricomi argues that within Shakespeares' *Titus Andronicus*, "artful imagery, metaphor, and paronomasia reify disturbing concepts and images so that language becomes a spectacle"[42]. The horror genre is a necessity that aids in highlighting the dialogue and characters' acts of revenge. The imagery of a "monstrous devouring pit" in *Titus Andronicus* envelops the stage and emphasises the gruesome violence that is hidden from the audience. The grotesque staging symbolises "ravenous, ungoverned appetites associated with revenge and lust, and the cycle of mortality represented by the devouring", visually conveying the tragic downfall of the revenger[43].

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The inclusion of horror in modern adaptations of Jacobean plays gives credence to the reliance on the genre; the gruesome imagery and language oriented for a Jacobean audience, one that would be accustomed to scenes of social unrest and distress, remains vital despite perhaps the risk of not being palatable to a contemporary audience. In contrast to Richardson's argument, it is evident that the horror genre is essential to theatre; it provides the audience with immersive

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41 Jolene Richardson*, Horror Theatre: Investing in the Aesthetics of Horror as a Theatrical Genre* (Columbia: Columbia University, 2015) pp. 2
42 Albert Tricomi, ed. Catherine Alexander, *The Aesthetics of Mutilation in Titus Andronicus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 226 - 239
43 Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004) pp. 62-63, 79

imagery, nuanced interpretations of characters and cultural reflections that engage both intended and contemporary audiences.

Richardson argues that, historically, the horror genre "remained suspiciously absent" in theatre.[44] This essay will dispute this statement by discussing how the aesthetics of horror in Jacobean theatre significantly drove revenge narratives such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* and Middleton's *The Revengers Tragedy*. I will explore early seventeenth century cultural shifts, including King James VI's rule and publication of *Daemonologie,* which influenced playwrights to incorporate grotesque images and language on the stage. To assess whether the relevance of Jacobean horror remains significant in a contemporary context, modern adaptations of Jacobean plays will be examined, determining the significance of the horror genre to the revenge plot. Additionally, I will discuss how the horror genre was utilised to present male and female revenge narratives respectively; I will conclude that, through the horror genre, female characters were shunned from the narrative and provided with overlooked, belittled deaths. Whilst their revengeful characteristics conveyed empowerment, they are ultimately presented as silenced, grotesque bodies.

To dispute the "absence" that Richardson argues, I will explore the context of the historical motivations behind Jacobean horror.[45] I argue that the context in which these plays are performed are pivotal to their content; as Jacobean playwrights engaged audiences with culturally relevant scenes, contemporary playwrights have modernised adaptations to retain their significance. For example, Goold's adaptation of *Macbeth* provides a setting of World

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[44] Jolene Richardson*, Horror Theatre: Investing in the Aesthetics of Horror as a Theatrical Genre* (Columbia: Columbia University, 2015) pp. 2
[45] Andrew Dickson, *Jacobean Tragedy: of Love and Death* (2012) *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jan/20/jacobean-tragedies-changeling-duchess-malfi> [Accessed 20 May 2022]

War Two, instead characterising the three witches as nurses.[46] Here, aspects of Jacobean horror have been adapted to become recognisable for a contemporary audience.

The influence of the outlandish portrayal of horror in a Jacobean context, as argued by Porrello, stems from the influence of King James' VI's rule, which created "an increased global sense of the world born of exploration, trade expansion [..] bought often disquieting news and lurid stories from faraway places".[47] Tales of intriguing explorations were often included in protagonist's dialogue to show their worldly knowledge; Othello's horrific but exciting stories of "the cannibals that each other eat/ the anthropophagi, and men whose heads/ do grow beneath their shoulders" secures him as the adventurous protagonist to emphasise his role as a fallen hero by the end of the play.[48] Furthermore, I consider that King James VI's publication of *Daemonologie* – a widespread publication that expressed "that there is such a thing as Witch-craft or Witches" – which coincided with the beginning of the Jacobean era in 1603, influenced the horror genre in popular Jacobean culture.[49] Persecutions against witches were driven by influential figures and establishments such as the Church of England and James VI, who introduced laws concerning witchcraft in 1604.[50] Following the statements of James VI, the fascination of supressing witchcraft seeped into theatre. This is evident from the inclusion of 'The Weird Sisters' in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; their riddles and secret meetings, integral to the basis of the revenge, opens the play, mirroring characteristics of witchcraft that *Daemonologie* introduced.[51] Immediately, Shakespeare engages the Jacobean audience

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[46] Andrew Dickinson, *Rupert Goold: It was Pretty Intense, Living With My Lady Macbeth* (2016), *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/17/rupert-goold-macbeth-shakespeare> [Accessed 4 May 2022]

[47] Tony Porrello, 'The Jacobean Theatre of Horror' in *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, ed. Kevin Corstorphine and Laura Kremmel (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2018)

[48] William Shakespeare, ed. Michael Neil, *Othello* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2006) pp. 224

[49] James Stuart, *Daemonologie* (Ontario: Devoted Publishing, 2016) pp. 4

[50] Severin, Carrell, *Campaign to pardon the last witch, jailed as a threat to Britain at war* (2007) *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jan/13/secondworldwar.world> [Accessed 4 May]

[51] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing, 2014) pp. 1

through recognisable figures of horror, foreshadowing tragic events and enthralling a Jacobean audience with widespread fears.

Furthermore, Porrello argues "their […] taste for horrifically transgressive dramatic arts may have their roots in a number of resonant cultural shift and consequent social unease"; witnessing unsettling events occur in a fictional context perhaps created a space to escape the horrors of Jacobean society.[52] Ultimately, Jacobean playwrights sought an outlet to navigate the turbulence of the political and social state, leading to the prevalence of the horror genre throughout the period. Similarly, it provided the audience to resonate with characters pursuing revenge in their own unjust society. An example of "teetering between horror and hope" is displayed in Middleton's *The Revengers Tragedy*, in which The Duke "rules in spite of his crimes… the figure of the wronged man set against a system which denies his access to earthly justice".[53] A revenger succeeding was atypical of the period, and many Jacobean protagonists ultimately faced demise from their heroic states. The Duke, therefore, provides audiences with an empowering character similarly seeking justice against the horrors of reality.

Aesthetics of Jacobean Horror: Staging

Through staging, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,* a play renowned for gruesome scenes and disturbing acts of violence*,* heavily relies on the horror genre. Tricomi argues that "artful imagery, metaphor, and paronomasia reify disturbing concepts and images so that language becomes a spectacle". Here, horror is emphasised through the staging techniques; discomforting scenes are hidden, leaving audiences to their own imagination, thus effectively increasing the element of horror. Additionally, Jacobean staging elements act as metaphors to

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[52] Tony Porrello, 'The Jacobean Theatre of Horror' in *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, ed. Kevin Corstorphine and Laura Kremmel, (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2018) pp. 129
[53] Tony Porrello, 'The Jacobean Theatre of Horror' in *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, ed. Kevin Corstorphine and Laura Kremmel, (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2018) pp. 129

present the consuming emotions associated with revenge. This is evidently conveyed in *Titus Andronicus'* stage design. Garber states;

> "The audience of Titus Andronicus is put on notice [..] by the 'pit' [...] that swallows up the young Andronicus, that we have entered a new kind of theatrical world, one in which imagery, staging, and dramatic action work together to create a visceral effect of lust and horror"

I argue that the "pit", through the consumption of characters, is a "figuration of [Lavinia's] rape" and disfigurement. Horror is utilised to heighten the violence occurring away from the stage, emphasising the destructive forces of revenge. A "monstrous devouring pit" is a recurring image used throughout Jacobean plays, such as *The Bloody Banquet*, a seventeenth century revenge tragedy of unknown authorship.[54] The hellish pit literally and figuratively encompasses the stage and consumes characters, presenting the bold aesthetics of horror alongside the inescapable demise following revenge. Garber further argues that this image represents "ravenous, ungoverned appetites associated with revenge and lust, and the cycle of mortality represented by the devouring".[55] In contrast to Richardson's argument, the horror genre is evidently not "absent" from the stage; the aesthetics of horror "devours" the play, creating dramatic effects whilst allowing the audience to appreciate the complex mind of the revenger.

As argued by Tricomi, plays that "exploit the shock value of creative bloodletting and nightmarish psychological and physical torture" are an element of Jacobean horror that is positively received in a modern context.[56] Through the evolution of the horror genre, it presents itself in contemporary culture predominantly through film and literature, in which there have

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[54] Alison Findlay, *A Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999)

[55] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004) pp. 62-63, 79

[56] Albert Tricomi, ed. Catherine Alexander, *The Aesthetics of Mutilation in Titus Andronicus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 226 - 239

been an increasing emergence of sub-genres like slasher films with excessive uses of gruesome imagery. Jarrett states that seeing fears played out in a fictional plot "provide a safe way for us to rehearse mentally how we would cope with old age dangers".[57] Whilst elements of the horror genre have been adapted to become recognisable for a contemporary audience, both modern and Jacobean horror ultimately present gruesome scenes and the abundance and encompassing nature of gore (for example, the inundation of blood from the elevators in Kubrick's *The Shining*) to navigate and expose human fears, allowing audiences in both contexts to resonate with themes and characters.

On the other hand, Dickson argues that, in a contemporary context, the extremities of the horror genre can lead to negative reception of adaptations, stating that "there wasn't any blood at all, but even so, people in the audience were sick and fainted" when reviewing Fentiman's modern adaptation of *Titus Andronicus.*[58] The ability to engage with subtle uses of the genre and its "artful imagery" becomes lost within the excess of gore; as the "pit" encompasses the stage, the gruesome aesthetics similarly become overbearing for audiences.

The Aesthetics of Jacobean Horror: Pathetic Fallacy

Jones discusses the significance of meteorological events in Shakespeare's plays, including thunder and lightning, as horror aesthetics. Pathetic fallacy is included to drive tragic plots, causing shipwrecks, alongside subtle mentions through dialogue; Juliet states to Romeo, "yond light is not daylight/ It is some meteor that the sun exhales".[59] In a Jacobean context, lightning, believed to be "fire from heaven", and thunder held biblical connotations, and was thus used by playwrights to express the significance of the revengers demonic disorder and chaos.

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[57] Christian Jarrett, *Why Do Some People Love Horror Films?* (2022) *Science Focus* <https://www.sciencefocus.com/the-human-body/why-do-some-people-love-horror-films/> [Accessed 4 May 2022]

[58] Andrew Dickson, *The Gory Details of Titus Andronicus* (2016) *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/feb/08/titus-andronicus-rsc-blood-actors> [Accessed 9 May 2022]

[59] William Shakespeare, ed. R.B. Kennedy, *Romeo and Juliet* (Great Britain: Harper Collins, 2011) pp. 179

Through metrological events, the playwright conveyed a tense atmosphere and foreshadowed the tragic events unfolding throughout the play.[60] For example, a reference to a storm is made in the First Player's speech in *Hamlet*; "but as we often see, against some storm/ a silence in the heavens […] the bold winds speechless, and the orb below/ As hush as death; anon the dreadful thunder/ Doth rend the region".[61] I argue that the violence of storms contrasted with the "silence" that follows foreshadows the impactful and destructive journey of Hamlet's revenge. Jones argues this "silence" encourages patience in Hamlet's revenge that is "thunder-like".[62] Here, pathetic fallacy aids the revenge narrative in multiple ways; it creates an oppressive atmosphere whilst simultaneously allowing the audience to understand Hamlet's "inner feelings", which he often "criticises himself for being unable to express".[63]

The Aesthetics of Jacobean Horror: Mental illness and turmoil

The horror genre presents the revengers' inner turmoil through nuanced language and demonic imagery of "burning hell" to convey their loss of humanity and rationality, figuratively transforming them into a murderous monster.[64] Jacobean plays can thrive in modern settings, where contemporary audiences have a greater understanding of mental health issues, allowing for the engagement of complex emotions ranging from hatred to empathy towards the inner workings of the revenger. Lacan adopts an empathetic perspective when analysing Hamlet's actions. Lacan recognises Hamlet's contemplation "to be or not to be" and understands this infamous quote to stem from the guilt of vengeance; "Hamlet can neither pay in his own place, nor leave the debt unpaid". The revenge that his father's ghost urges him to ensue is forced upon him, leaving him no choice but to either engage in revenge, or live with the burden of this

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[60] Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare's Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015) pp. 52

[61] William Shakespeare, ed. T.J.B Spencer, *Hamlet* (Great Britain: Penguin Classics, 1996) pp. 60

[62] Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare's Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015) pp. 26

[63] *Hamlet; Scene by Scene* (2022) *The Royal Shakespeare Company* <https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/hamlet/story/scene-by-scene> [Accessed 9 May 2022]

[64] William Shakespeare, ed. Michael Neil, *Othello* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2006) pp. 381.

knowledge. Lacan highlights Hamlet's resistance to act on his anger, describing him as a "procrastinating" revenger. The suspense of a revenge narrative is driven by something the audience cannot directly witness; the inner turmoil the tragic hero faces in their journey through revenge. The staging and dialogue inspired by the horror genre guide the audience to understand the revenger as haunted, unable to escape the "community of knowing […] which is here the mainspring which creates the whole difficulty of the problem".[65] Typically, the "community of knowing" include spectral, supernatural beings alongside the main tragic hero, meaning that the burden lies solely on the latter, isolating them through their knowledge.

Additionally, the use of the horror genre is significant in providing a supernatural character to deliver the information that instigates the revenge; they are otherworldly and thus portrayed as all-knowing, omnipresent beings that provide truth others are not aware of. As the play progresses, the presence of the supernatural beings, seen solely by the revenger, heightens their delusions and, ultimately, their downfall.

Mitchell's adaptation of *Hamlet* explores the link between the revenger's 'toxic masculinity' and their destructive tendencies. 'Toxic masculinity', that describes "character traits associated with 'hegemonic forms of masculinity' […] such as 'dominance, devaluation of women, self-reliance and the suppression of emotions'", is a contemporary concept and allows for new readings of Jacobean plays in a modern context.[66] Mitchell's adaptation of Hamlet, providing Ophelia's perspective, highlights her overlooked suffering in the original play, in which she is forced to be the receiver of Hamlet's harassment. Mitchell stages Ophelia in a prison-like bedroom; here, the horror genre is utilised to convey Ophelia's mental confinement.

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[65] Jacques Lacan, *Desire and its Interpretation* (2022) trans. By Cormac Gallagher, *Lacan in Ireland* <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-06-Desire-and-its-interpretation.pdf> [Accessed 18 May] pp. 161 - 171

[66] Scott, Wilson, 'Literary Clinical Practice: Desire, Depression and Toxic Masculinity in Hamlet', *Taylor and Francis Online,* Vol. 22 (2018)

I argue that Jacobean female characters, including Ophelia, are victim to 'toxic masculinity'. This is conveyed by the typically horrific ending of Jacobean tragedies in which multiple characters lie dead in the same place, "look on the tragic loading of this bed: this is thy work". The male revenger does not need to be aided by the aesthetics of horror to present the terrible nature of his actions. Their toxicity alone "licenses awful interactions between men and women", leading to greater sins than the initial one committed that instigates the revenge. In doing so, they pass on the burden of revenge to the survivors who are forced to deal with the aftermath of the murders, "this heavy act with heavy heart relate". Here, Shakespeare uses a final theatrical device in *Othello* through a rhyming couplet to emphasise the chaos the tragic hero has left behind in a final attempt to convey the 'toxic' impact of revenge.[67]

The Aesthetics of Horror: Grotesque and silenced female bodies

Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque is defined as "something which […] is between the real and the imaginary".[68] Whilst Thomson considers "the employment of the grotesque purely as weapon of satire", I argue that it is utilised in Jacobean theatre to portray female revenge.[69] The image of the grotesque body is one lacking boundaries, overflowing with fluids and internal body parts. However, whilst female Jacobean characters were not physically grotesque as to appear aesthetically pleasing to fulfil the role as an object of desire, I argue that, alternatively, their vengeful actions were often made synonymous with the Bakhtin's image of the grotesque. Paster argues female characters were unable to direct their passions, describing their bodies as "leaky vessels"; boundaryless in their expressions.[70] For example, Lady Macbeth enacts her revenge through putting "my spirits in thine ear; and chastise with the valour of my tongue",

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[67] William Shakespeare, ed. Michael Neil, *Othello* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2006) pp. 398

[68] Alparslan Nas, *Bakhtin's Carnival and the Grotesque* (2008) *Cultural Representations* <https://alparslannas.com/2008/11/24/on-bakhtins-carnival-and-grotesque/> [Accessed 17 May 2022]

[69] Philip Thompson, *The Grotesque* (London: Routledge, 1972) pp. 28

[70] G.K. Paster, *The Tragic Subject and its Passions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 142 – 159

an act reminiscent of Bakhtin's conceptualisation of the grotesque body that is "most concerned with the body parts that make contact between the inside and the outside world: the orifices and holes of the body".[71] I argue that female Jacobean characters utilise their grotesque language to become proactive revengers, in contrast to the tragic hero, who "procrastinates". I dispute Paster's critical reading of female Jacobean characters, instead arguing that Macbeth presents "leaky" emotions. He often acts in a rash, delusional manner, relying on his wife to act with sense; in Macbeth's hysteric outburst over the hallucination of Banquo's ghost, Lady Macbeth controls the chaos, "why do you make such faces? When all's done, you look but on a stool".[72] Bailey argues that Macbeth "projects his martial manhood" through the horrific device of his dagger; whilst the female revenger is able to maintain order and motivates revenge effectively, the male revenger becomes reliant on violence and objects to convey his rage. Furthermore, Lady Macbeth entirely deconstructs Macbeths masculinity, asking "are you a man?" in response to his "procrastination".[73] I argue that Lady Macbeth calls for a rejection of the human state, alongside female and male expectations, emphasised in her statement "unsex me here", perhaps regressing to and embracing a monstrous form.

However, women's bodies are also silenced bodies in Jacobean theatre. Whilst they drive the revenge narrative, either through desire or motivation, they are ultimately killed by their male counterpart or driven to suicide, such as Lady Macbeth, supporting Mitchell's argument of the selfish acts of 'toxic masculinity'. Lacan views the image of the dead woman in Jacobean theatre as the "horror of femininity", expanding on the argument of the female

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[71] Katherine Greer *et al*., *Spectacles of Agency and Desire: Dance History and the Burlesque Stage* (2015) *Scalar* <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/spectacles-of-agency-and-desire/the-grotesque-body.2> [Accessed 13 May 2022]
[72] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing, 2014) pp. 60
[73] Amanda Bailey, 'Is this a man I see before me?: Early Modern Masculinities and the New Materialisms', in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster (London: Routledge, 2017) pp. 293 - 304

body as a grotesque image.[74] Whilst Tricomi views the aesthetics of the horror genre through gruesome staging, Lacan argues that the "ambiguity" of the deceased female character is alluring to audiences. Ophelia's death is focussed on here; an "ambiguous" death, in the sense that it provides a peaceful description that artists (namely Millais' in his depiction of Ophelia in 1851) have conceptualised, but is contrastingly a tragic event that drives the revenge narrative.[75] I agree with Lacan's argument; Jacobean playwrights utilised female characters as integral drivers of the revenge narratives by incorporating the horror genre in their actions and dialogue, but ultimately denied them the opportunity to be successful revengers. By the end of the play, they are typically shunned to the edges of the narrative, despite their significance in the revenge, and are forced into madness, suicide or murder. The tragedy of their death is conveyed through an announcement, detaching them from emotional connection with the audience and refusing them dialogue to express their own suffering. Ophelia's brother is told "your sister's drowned" whilst the Queen glorifies her horrific death; she is still portrayed as the object of desire for the tragic hero, even in death.[76] Unlike Lacan, I argue that the horror is not in the 'femininity' but is in the ignorance and silencing of female bodies in Jacobean theatre. For example, the suicide of Lady Macbeth is hidden from the audience's view, conveyed only through a stage direction, "a cry of women within", conveying a detached and overlooked death.[77] Paster is perhaps forced to argue that the female revenger was "prone to become overwhelmed by their emotions" due to the limitations placed on their characterisations. The ignorance of Lady Macbeth's death quickly reduces her to a demeaned

[74] Jacques Lacan, *Desire and its Interpretation* (2022) trans. By Cormac Gallagher, *Lacan in Ireland* <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-06-Desire-and-its-interpretation.pdf> [Accessed 18th May 2022] pp. 161 - 171

[75] Terry Riggs, *Ophelia* (1998) *Tate* <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-ophelia-n01506> [Accessed 7th March 2023]

[76] William Shakespeare, ed. T.J.B Spencer, *Hamlet* (Great Britain: Penguin Classics, 1996) pp. 119

[77] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing, 2014) pp. 106

woman, "what's done cannot be undone".[78] Her revenge is no longer empowering, but, using horror elements in her final dialogue, is ultimately delusional.

In conclusion, I argue that the Jacobean revenge narrative depends on the horror genre, contrasting Richardson's argument. Whilst adaptation and cultural influences have maintained audience's engagement with Jacobean theatre, the vitality of horror is evident in prominent, grotesque staging devices, dialogue and characterisation. Contemporary interpretations of the plays expose prejudiced uses of the genre, such as the silencing and gruesome deaths of female characters. However, subverting the horror genre allows modern playwrights such as Mitchell to provide silenced female characters such as Ophelia with an outlet for their suffering.

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[78] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing, 2014) pp. 96

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"Forlorn Snakes, Ninny Lobcocks, Scurvy Sneaksbies", Gargantua and Pantagruel's Grotesque: Dystopian Imaginings of Body, Autonomy, and Commodification

Beyla Carys

Abstract

This essay explores dystopia by investigating a Marxist criticism of societal stations and wealth in Science-Fiction dystopias wherein the concept of class is formed by the description of the Grotesque within Francois Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel.[79] Through an assessment of bodies, their value ,their commodification, and the violence perpetrated towards them, a clear link emerges between the Grotesque, as it is presented in the Rabelaisian sense, and the self-serving motivations of the mega-rich within dystopian Science-Fiction. Through this exploration of class dynamics under the stresses of a dystopian societal system, a depiction of the disparate conditions of that dystopian sphere of influence becomes clearer, and a characterisation of the desperation of proletariat section of these dystopias is created as a by-product of the study of the collective circumstances of dystopia, which would include enforcement of governmental dictations, wellbeing systems, hostile architecture, and bodily control.

This essay's purpose is to illustrate and understand the elements of control and morality within dystopia that are influenced by the Grotesque. It is my theory that within dystopian literature, specifically the subgenres of the '-punk' variety, aspects of human morality must have been twisted beyond recognition to necessitate the formation of an amoral upper echelon of society. This view is developed from the theory that is derived from Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed.

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[79] Francois Rabelais, 'Gargantua and his son Pantagruel', Project Gutenberg, August 2004, <Rabelais: Gargantua and Pantagruel, Five Volumes, Complete (gutenberg.org)>[21/03/2022]

"the idea that there is a universally-valid ethical order; a moral law that applies to all human beings; a law that is in some sense 'natural' rather than a purely social 'construction', and which is therefore discovered by human beings rather than made by them".[80]

This essay believes the introduction of the Grotesque into a Marxist and anarchist moral order will develop a nuanced discussion of power and class within dystopia, helping distinguish traits across a wide range of literature and film through a complex understanding of what control means in a overwhelmingly corporate setting.

<div align="center">*</div>

<div align="center">"Who says class supremacy, says inequality;"[81]</div>

Dystopia's crux is oppression. The ripping apart of society at its seams through violent and financial means to indulge the short-term vices of society's upmost echelons invariably equates to misery for everyone else.

This essay will attempt to prove that a study of oppression and class can be derived through an analysis of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, informed by Anselme Bellegarrigue's *The Anarchist Manifesto*, and that these inferences can be applied to dystopian societies. This analysis will rely upon tenets of anarchism to scrutinise the grotesqueness, the violence, and the extravagances of Rabelais' giant society. From this scrutiny of Rabelais' satire, and its contemporaneous issues, a conclusion can be reached about how inequality functions within a fictional society that is characterised by impossible feats, "riddling language", and "mathematical miracles" of biology and technology.[82] An investigation of dystopia through

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[80] Tony Burns, 'Marxism and science fiction: a celebration of the work of Ursula K. Le Guin', Capital and Class, 84 (2004)

[81] Anselme Bellegarrigue, *Anarchist Manifesto*, trans. by Paul Sharkey (London: Kate Sharpley Library, 1850; repr. 2002) p. 2

[82] Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., 'Alice's Adventures at the Carnival', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37, 1 (2009) p.103

this anarchist understanding of the Grotesque intends to discover the relationship between the commodification of autonomy and the inequality that looms, omnipresent, over dystopia.

Gargantua and Pantagruel will consider these aspects of dystopia as its concept of the grotesque is an ideal candidate for examination due to its position as a satirical critique of the French aristocracy. The lampooning of the aristocracy, specifically their greed and selfishness, is pervasive through the text, "slapsauce fellows, slabberdegullion druggels" are insults aimed at the giants, whom are utilised as an allegory for the ruling classes.[83] Moreover, the genre motivations of dystopia can be considered a tonally shifted mirror of satire's intentions. Where Paddy Bullard contemplates that satirical writers considered "satire as an unstable instrumental force, powerful but liable to backfire", Christine Sypnowich describes dystopia as, "either nourishing the aspiration for an ideal society, or condemning it as folly"; both understand either genre as a form of criticism.[84] [85] However, Sypnowich directs us toward the recognition that dystopia is formed more gently around a critical insight, whereas satire is akin to the blunt force weapon of social commentary. The relationship between these nuances allows a judgement of one to deepen the perception of the other. Thus, a grasp of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*'s grotesque expands the approach to dystopia because it uncovers the genre's conventions with an uncustomary bluntness. The giants are so disgusting they "oftentimes," after eating "thinking to let a squib, they did all-to-besquatter and// conskite themselves".[86]

The application of the grotesque to dystopia is shaped by Bellegarrigue's belief that, "Who says class supremacy, says inequality". Political supremacy as it relates to Rabelais' grotesque can be understood as a disparate and artificial hierarchy founded upon personal

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[83] Francois Rabelais, 'Gargantua and his son Pantagruel', *Project Gutenberg*, August 2004, <Rabelais: Gargantua and Pantagruel, Five Volumes, Complete (gutenberg.org)> [21/03/2022]

[84] Paddy Bullard, 'The Sciblerian Mock-Arts: Psuedo-Technical Satire in Swift and His Contemporaries', *Studies in philology*, 110, 3 (2013) p. 612

[85] Christine Sypnowich, 'Lessons from Dystopia: Critique, Hope and Political Education', *Journal of philosophy of education*, 52, 4 (2018) p. 667

[86] Rabelais.

power, the conservation of status, and the domination of physical authority. The prioritisation of the elite's needs takes form through Gargantua's bottom troubles and his solution to those problems, which suggests the elite are superior to other's property, "I did wipe me with a gentle-woman's velvet mask, and found it to be good; for the softness of the silk was very voluptuous and pleasant to my fundament".[87] Through the actualisation of hierarchy, an aspect of assimilation emerges: the violence that achieves this assimilation and its results commodify the non-elite. The non-elite are commodified in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* through "the sovereign gift of heaven" which describes Gargantua's genealogy and simultaneously designates non-elite genealogies as lesser. Thus, the function of the grotesque in investigating dystopia is its exploration of worker's bodies as property and the excess of the elite.

As Anne-Maree Wicks states: "Exaggerated dimensions, according to Bakhtin, are one of the key, if not the most important, characteristics of the grotesque body".[88] Within Rabelais' work, Giants need more sustenance naturally because of their immense bulk, as upon Gargantua's birth excessive numbers of staff were appointed for him "seventeen thousand, nine// hundred, and thirteen cows… for it was impossible to find a nurse sufficient for him… considering the great quantity of// milk that was requisite for his nourishment", the exaggerated number of cows necessary illustrates an embellished image of excess.[89] Their essential needs outweigh those who suffer starvation because everything is centred around Gargantua's survival. However, Gargantua and Pantagruel have the magnitude to rationalise their greed: the human elite of dystopia have no justification. The giants' survival is already made grotesque by the enormous gluttony that maintains them. The effect of this is the magnification of greed.

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[87] Bellegarrigue

[88] Anne-Maree Wicks, 'J. P. Lovecraft's Weird Tale Ideal: Angela Carter's New Weird Dystopia', 13 December 2018, < H. P. Lovecraft's Weird Tale Ideal: Angela Carter's New Weird Dystopia (monash.edu)> [28 April 2022]

[89] Rabelais.

Greed becomes everything to the powerful, and the proletariat option becomes to assimilate or not.

The social hierarchies of dystopia are rigorously maintained by those who remain at their peak, and, similarly, the hierarchy of Gargantua and Pantagruel's society is bolstered by their actions. Importantly though, there emerges a physicality to the maintenance of the giant hierarchy. These hierarchies are regularly abetted by physical violence to keep the oppressed in position, centring the corporeal body as a focal point for mechanisms of control to interrelate around. Body-centric destruction and manipulation dominate giant society and dystopian spheres. The shepherds of Gargantua's country, for example, punish the "bun-sellers or cake–makers" of Lerne with a show of intense destruction.[90] This violence is a consequence of the bun-sellers insulting the shepherds after they request some of their "celestial food to eat for breakfast// hot fresh cakes with grapes, especially the frail clusters, the great red// grapes".[91] The bun-sellers verbally attack the shepherds, describing them as "prattling gabblers, lickorous gluttons, freckled bittors, mangy rascals", among other riddling insults, but it is their suggestion that the shepherds are not good enough to "eat of these dainty cakes, but might very well content themselves with the// coarse unranged bread, or to eat of the great brown household loaf" that seals their fate.[92] The questioning of status rather than the prohibition of the cakes causes them to "immediately in all disorder, without keeping either rank or// file, [take] the fields one amongst another, wasting, spoiling,// destroying, and making havoc of all wherever they [go]".[93] Through this impassioned, excessive rampage, we see a nonsensical upholding of hierarchy. Any person of Gargantua's kingdom, even a working shepherd, appears of higher status than any person of Lerne, even an artisan.

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

This violent enforcement of social hierarchy is experienced without punishment. The actual crimes committed go satirically unpunished, broadcasting that as the social order is climbed, its denizens become less responsible for their actions. For their part in the frenzy, the giants suffer no consequences: "To which expostulations// and remonstrances no other answer was made, but that they would teach them to// eat cakes", and their actions are treated as successful.[94] Not only are there no ramifications for the actions of the higher-ups, but it is perceived as advantageous to abuse status. Those lower in status learn their lesson and the superior gain another foothold in the social ladder.

The social stratum developed within *Gargantua and Pantagruel* begins to shape the grotesque into a violent and cunning political weapon, wherein control is exercised with either no motive or a ridiculous motive. For example, the violence and abuses of Baron Vladimir Harkonnen in Frank Herbert's *Dune*. Harkonnen regularly rapes young boys, indicated by his request for one to be drugged as he does not "feel like wrestling".[95] Moreover, he orders executions with apparently ridiculous reasoning, for carrying a "sagging load" in a dissatisfactory manner.[96] However, these nonsensical justifications conceal his actual political motivations. The man he executed for carrying a body poorly was plotting against him, and it is through these violent decisions and a cunning control over image that Harkonnen maintains power and status.[97] Thus, we can see the illogic and rampages of Gargantua's society characterise political figures within dystopias. The Baron creates a hierarchy where the grotesque is enacted by examples of physical control and violence, which create an atmosphere of fear and subservience through which the Baron dominates, and, therefore, In the same way that giant society's violence is "excessive" and, thereby, grotesque, dystopia's excess and

[94] Ibid.
[95] Frank Herbert, *Dune*, (London: Gollancz, 1965) p. 122
[96] Ibid, p.239
[97] Ibid.

centralised control through the "Padishah Emperor" embody the grotesque's opulence.[98] The options of working people are limited to assimilate, experiencing the "dirt" and danger of these regimes; or perish, having attempted to upheave the established order.[99]

Within the traditional hierarchy material wealth becomes intrinsic to the elite, and the grotesque body expresses intrinsic material value through the narrator's experience inside Pantagruel's throat where, "I found the pleasantest places in the world… full of pleasure and delight, where I stayed full four months, and never made better cheer in my life as then".[100] Pantagruel's inner physicality being equivalent to luxury satirises the concept of divine right, and it can be applied to dystopia when understanding that their social systems function around the core concept that higher classes or different species are simply born better. *Dune* conveys this special superiority through the pre-eminence of the feudal system within its narrative. However, another dystopia, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, emphasises this contrast between the intrinsically higher and lower. Its presentation of the Andys focuses on the differences between natural and artificial life. Deckard explains that "The electric things have their life too. Paltry as those lives are", and this idea is compounded by the key difference between Andys and humans: supposedly "Empathy, evidently, existed only within the human community".[101] This places humanity above everything else in existence. The application of this hierarchy to solely the human social system implies that there must be a similar dynamic: the belief that the elite are naturally better and those who are working-class are diminished in value. This judgement of intrinsic quality feeds back into the grotesque by enforcing the body commodification of those who are already lesser. The assimilation of the lower classes into the social machine that continually betters the elite is grotesque in the same sense that Pantagruel's

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[98] Rabelais, Ibid, p. 2
[99] Herbert, p. 316
[100] Rabelais.
[101] Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1968, repr. 2012) p. 265, p. 42

"throat" being a luxurious location is grotesque.[102] The physicality of that elite-centric social machine that commodifies bodies creates a living object for the elite to abuse. The grotesque becomes dystopian through the concept of social authority as centring bodily control; the body and its autonomy becomes a mechanism of socio-political control, simultaneously become a grotesque object of physical domination.

Body commodification occurs throughout dystopia, wherein the body becomes an economic object for wealth to be derived from, thereby becoming a grotesque entity to be controlled. The process through which this devaluing of the body and its autonomy occurs can be understood similarly to Clarisse Goulart Paradis' analysis of the development of prostitution; it can be perceived as a product of economic inequality, what Paradis describes as the aristocratic prejudices of society that leads to the destruction of people in the name of economic interests.[103] Body commodification within dystopia becomes similar to prostitution through understanding how Paradis' analysis forms the body as an object of economic interest. Within *Possessor* (2020) the body's boundaries are broken down as another person's consciousness invades that body.[104] The body is prostituted in this sense as its functions are manipulated for economic gain, but within *Possessor* this manipulation is primarily violent rather than primarily sexual. However, its consequences disassemble the body's autonomy because, "the [host]'s language becomes distorted and disintegrates".[105] The language this essay refers to is that of choice, of active participation. Even at its most lucid *Possessor* never answers who is in control of whose body. Whether the body has become a corporate function or if it is maintaining its individual freedoms begins to become irrelevant as its tasks are

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[102] Rabelais.

[103] Clarisse Goulart Paradis, 'The Prostitution in Classical Marxism: Critique of Capitalism and Bourgeois Double Standard of Sexual Morality', *Estudos feministas*, 2018 < 1806-9584-2018v26n344805.pmd (scielo.br) > [28 April 2022]

[104] *Possessor* dir. Brandon Cronenberg (Elevation Pictures, 2020)

[105] Lila McDowell Carlsen, 'Inhospitable Text: Critical Dystopia in Los vigilantes by Diamela Eltit', *Letras Femeninas*, 40, 2, 2014, p 2

fulfilled. Bodily autonomy and its subsequent commodification, therefore, become questions of success. It ceases to matter why an event, such as Michael and Ira's deaths, was necessary. Instead, Cronenberg focuses entirely on the freedom Vos gains to further utilise her body and her mind to manipulate other bodies for economic gain. Vos simultaneously becomes prostituted and prostitutes others within *Possessor*. This sense of removal of active participation from both parties suggests that dystopian economics demand the commodification of bodies via the stripping of their autonomy at whatever cost is necessary.

Through understanding this economic lens, the focus on motivations shifts towards understanding socio-political consequences. The personal consequences of dystopia in contrast to the economic consequences establish the impacts of assimilation and loss of bodily autonomy. Within *Do Android Dream of Electric Sheep?* the body as a commodity becomes degenerated losing all of its reproductive and societal value and becoming fit only for work, which is presented through John Isidore. The bodies of these "specials" have become assimilated into the nuclear landscape of the earth, undergoing a transformative process in which they become grotesque and valueless. Humanity's future is on another clean, *pure* planet after their violence already ruined one. Through enforcing the idea of the future as post-Earth the perspective of those who remain on Earth becomes recentred. Their lives become a question of what value they can provide for those who live on Mars, which happens to be the hunting and execution of their artificial slave race. The earthbound population within *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* have become a commodity because their only purpose is service, like androids; this connects the earthbound humans to the shepherds, who become valueless entities to the giant society unless they can provide them with cake, and furthermore the future production of cake, an object and a service that likens the shepherds, and similarly earthbound humans, to factory lines: that is to say, worthless without a product to create. The reward for the resistance of corporate temptation, to move to a company-owned planet and get an

indentured tireless "body servant", is to become an economic product, and the punishment for rejection is to become waste, the unfortunate by-product of violence.[106] Within this commodification we see another interesting effect of dystopia's influence on bodily autonomy: the division of the working classes by the elite.

This concept is more subtly expanded upon within Tsutomu Nihei's *Blame!*, wherein the elite are replaced by a megastructure, a galaxy spanning venture that inevitably lost control under the unsteady guidance of capitalism. Within *Blame!*, the Netsphere, Nihei's stand-in for the internet, has descended into chaos because of the near loss of the Net Terminal Gene due to disease. Bodies are also seen as economic products, and since the Net Terminal Gene exists as the only form of access to the Netsphere it has become all-important. However, the gene has become rare, making those who have it an essential but exotic product, and forcing them to participate in an unfeasible supply chain. In the first few pages of *Blame!* a young boy asks, "Killee, this one also wanted my cells?" [my translation]. Which expresses how the exotification of these bodies has commodified them and enforced violence upon them.[107] Consequently, the young boy is harpooned and killed. Through this commodification of the Net Terminal Gene, carriers have their bodily autonomy stripped from them by the various competing groups vying either for either their extinction or control over their connection to the Netsphere - and by proxy control over the Megastructure. The grotesque emerges in much the same way as through John Isidore: it is an assimilation into the chaotic Megastructure and Netsphere. This enforced concept of becoming one with the environment inevitably becomes the destruction of the assimilated regardless of whether that assimilation is viewed as a moral descension or ascension. This assimilation within *Blame!*'s environment expands upon the

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[106] Dick, p. 29

[107] Tsutomu Nihei, *Blame!* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1997-2003) p. 9

division of the working classes by Nihei as it divides the different groups who aim to control the gene. This expansion should be understood through a return to the work of Bellegarrigue.

"Who says individual dependency, says class supremacy;

Who says class supremacy, says inequality;

Who says inequality, says antagonism;"[108]

Through these texts the belief that one individual could come above another is a method of division, which consequently maintains the status of those in power. Whilst, Nihei does not deal explicitly with class mechanics, his presentation of *Blame!*'s various factions and their unique motivations and struggle for control over utilisation of the Net Terminal Gene does maintain the expansion of the Megastructure, paralleling political strategies that divide the working class to proportionally boost support for elite-centric power structures to thrive. The grotesque, therefore, emerges through class dynamics as the working classes suffer through being stripped of their bodily autonomy and right to do anything except work. This assimilation into the environment mirrors a merging into the political system, wherein identity is ground down into a flattened shell of what it was and life is cheapened as is seen with Isidore who fails his "minimum mental faculties test" and becomes "in popular parlance a chickenhead".[109]

In dystopia, there is a continual contrast between the elite and the working classes through the comparison between the physical and moral presentation of the Fremen and Baron Vladimir Harkonnen. The "monster" Harkonnen is "grossly and immensely fat. And with subtle bulges beneath folds of his dark robes to reveal that all this fat was sustained partly by portable suspensors harnessed to his flesh" and embodies how Ken Barris describes the dystopian grotesque: "has become a vastly bloated, diseased, grotesque figure"; this presentation alongside the repetition belies Harkonnen's moral grotesqueness, "as a tactile and

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[108] Bellegarrigue p. 2
[109] Dick, p. 30

visceral symbol of corrosive and self-corroding", by focusing on his dreadful appearance.[110] This grotesqueness emerges through his treatment of his servants, maintaining an iron-fisted rule over his house through a regular exercise of absolute power wherein Lord Acton's dictum that power "tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" acquires grotesque embodiment.[111] These executions manipulate the rest of the servants as Harkonnen gives ridiculous reasons for carrying out these killings - ""I wish you to take three men and go to the slavemaster," the Baron said. "Garrote the slavemaster. Bring his body to me when you've finished that I may see it was done properly. We cannot have such inept chess players in our employ."" - this culture of fear that maintains the Harkonnen hierarchy parallels the ridiculously motivated and exaggerated violence of the shepherds when they are offended by the cake-makers.[112] The innocuity of both catalysts illustrates the grotesque attributes of the elite. Their exaggerated method of doing everything to exercise and maintain their power stands in striking contrast the uncorrupted spirituality of those lower classes in both texts. It also begs the question: why does this moral mismatch occur? The Fremen of Dune are presented to Paul, a Duke's son, as incredibly brave, "They compose poems to their knives. Their women are as fierce as the men. Even Fremen children are violent and dangerous. You'll not be permitted to mingle with them, I daresay".[113] However, it is still from the perspective of the class divide that this perception emerges. Nevertheless, when the Duke's family interact with the Fremen they notice a nobility, "the drive to manage", that is within them. A "deep strength and healthy vitality in them" also emerges, driving the physical contrast between the Fremen and the Baron, and thereby the moral difference, further. Overall, this contrast within *Dune* serves to deepen the dystopian understanding of class dynamics by utilising a social

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[110] Herbert, p. 12, p. 14; Ken Barris, 'Re/membering the Future? Speculative Fiction by Eben Venter and Lauren Beukes', 27 July 2017, < Full article: Re/membering the Future? Speculative Fiction by Eben Venter and Lauren Beukes (lancs.ac.uk)> [1 June 2022]
[111] Ibid.
[112] Herbert, p. 239
[113] Ibid, p. 26

system like the feudal system as Harkonnen becomes a grotesque exaggeration of a petty kingdom's tyrant. By contrast, the Fremen are far more understated and dignified. However, the argument put forth within *Dune* is that this stems from an inability to behave otherwise. There is no choice for the Fremen except for them to be appreciative of their world and to make the choices they make. Their freedom of choice, including their bodily autonomy, is removed by survival. Their reliance on "'stillsuits' -- that reclaim the body's own water" is for the Fremen a cultural decision to respect their environment's water scarcity as much as a survival decision.[114] However, the higher-class characters of *Dune* express the sentiment that "people could want so for water they had to recycle their body moisture struck him with a feeling of desolation". This expresses a sense of entitlement for the ruling classes. Within *Dune*'s feudal system this entitlement, akin to the giants' excessive "intemperancy proceeding from the excessive drinking of strong liquor", simultaneously becomes an issue of bodily autonomy for the citizens of the ruler's kingdom.[115] The houses do not struggle for water on Arrakis whereas the Fremen do, and it further marginalises them and enforces stillsuit use on them. Overall, dystopias can strip bodily autonomy from their characters simply by existing. The maintenance of the social system creates these disparities and enhances them over time within dystopia.

Ultimately, the more nuanced perception of how dystopia creates a social system in which bodily autonomy is not only lost but undergoes a process of commodification that finishes with assimilation into a larger social machine. By understanding Rabelais, satirical work first, a more political mode can be taken within the analysis because, as discussed earlier in this essay, the genre conventions of satire and dystopia dictate that satire is blunter in its criticism of socio-political systems. Thus, by analysing *Gargantua and Pantagruel* through the manifesto of Bellegarrigue a harsher understanding of dystopia's messages can emerge. Thus,

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[114] Herbert, p. 20
[115] Rabelais.

understanding the grotesque and how it parallels class dynamics illustrates how dystopia's approach to painting bodily autonomy is often less about the deliberate stripping of control and more about the passive enforcing of the elite's boundaries, which inevitably push back the boundaries of working-class people. The grotesque becomes almost magnetic with its ability to infinitely pull value out of workers and into positions of power. This removal of bodily autonomy from the citizens of dystopia simultaneously flattens their identities until they become cogs in the grotesque industrial machine that looms over their dystopian realities. This aspect of assimilation negates the personhood of any non-elite person within dystopia. The slavemaster is nothing but an example for Harkonnen, and Michael is an obstacle in *Possessor*. Both are required to do nothing except be used by those who have designated themselves as innately better. This commodification, perhaps even commercialisation, of the body implies that they are there for nothing more than to become produce - you can imagine the possessed of *Possessor* lined up on a shelf ready to be picked or ignored. Overall, the understanding of dystopia garnered through an analysis of Rabelais is one that defines a message of assimilation.

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Mirroring Reality: How the vampire narrative reflects issues of immigration prejudice in 21st century Western culture

Thomas Bailey

Abstract

The concept behind this critical-creative project was, primarily, to raise awareness within the Western hemisphere regarding the plight of immigrants. A symbol, originating in popular fiction, which had enough exposure for most readers to possess some assumptions regarding its nature, was therefore necessary to the success of this piece; namely, that of the vampire.

Being such an iconic literary figure, the way in which this argument was constructed was essential; the vampire as a fundamentally sympathetic – because misunderstood – character, whose evil nature is a result of its being projected onto by those around it, similar to the immigrant. To discuss this idea with any degree of substance, it needed to be broken down into three core themes.

Firstly, the vampire/immigrant as observed versus as the observer. Under the gaze of the West, the vampire/immigrant becomes little more than an object (Nussbaum), utterly stripped of identity. By contrast, when permitted to take on the role of the observer, with the freedom to relate its own narrative, the vampire/immigrant is (even if temporarily) sympathetic.

Secondly, the vampire/immigrant as the displaced traveller; forced to flee its home due to the destructive influence of the West, it takes on the role of perceived invader as it attempts to build a new home. Its life becomes a metaphor for the unending journey it has been compelled to embark upon.

Finally, the vampire/immigrant as 'Other' to the dominant narrative voice of the Western world: a parasitic entity to be cast off, defined by that which it is not; possessing only those qualities which it has gained through deceptive means; and never given independent power over its own narrative.

Thus, the vampire may be seen as a metaphor for immigration prejudice in the 21st century.

<div align="center">*</div>

Not For Us Too

We are not what you think…

Lost children of the night,

Monstrous parasites –

invading your homes

(like a contagion)

draining your lives

(like bloated leeches)

consuming your souls

– like you consume

the rest of the world –

Though we've travelled oceans

of time, seeking a home

in which to weather

the length of eternity

We are not welcome.

Cold light retreats

and we embrace the

obscurity of darkness.

Still we should be grateful;

contented with any blood,

even if it is warmed by a sun

we can never see.

Forced to witness pain

run black over red,

while the mirror no longer reflects us,

but the faceless enemies

that you fear.

Critical Reflection

Discussions around the figure of the vampire are as numerous as its interpretations in literature, film and television. Yet, according to Catherine Spooner, there remains a single continuity across the spectrum; that 'vampires […] reflect the politics of the times that produce them'.[116]

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[116] Catherine Spooner, 'Dracula: free movement of vampires a fitting horror story for the Brexit era', *The Conversation* (2019) <https://theconversation.com/dracula-free-movement-of-vampires-a-fitting-horror-story-for-the-brexit-era-129124> [accessed 16 May 2022].

This was a defining element of the way in which I approached the writing of my poem, 'Not For Us Too'. However, to think of the vampire is to think with the same terminology as that often applied to non-European immigrants and refugees entering the Western (European) space – they are the eternal '[t]hing that looks and acts like us, yet is not one of us.' (Zizek, quoted in Peters).[117] Thus, I consider the ideas and intentions behind the writing of my own work – a work ostensibly concerned with the vampire, yet bringing attention to questions of immigration prejudice – which I have written in the hopes of exposing the highly political nature of the vampire narrative. By drawing on several critical works (primarily in the field of postcolonial studies), I explore my own method of composition through three distinct yet interconnected parts: first, the vampire as both observed and observer, and how this perception impacts on its role as evil or good; second, the vampire as a stateless being searching for a new home, and the accompanying implications of reverse colonialism; third, the vampire as the Eastern (Asian) 'other' to the Western (European) 'one',[118] and the problematic nature of defining it as such. I will break the core elements of this argument into three subsections.

Gaze is defined by the *OED*, sense 1 as '[t]hat which is gazed or stared at', and by sense 3a 'to be a spectator of, look on at'.[119] The disparity between these two definitions is certainly intriguing, and proved to be a core concept when producing this creative work; how the difference between the vampire as the observed versus the observer impacts the way we view it. Beginning with the vampire in the passive role of being 'stared at' I thought then to transition to a discussion of it as being 'a spectator' to its own life – viewing the events of said life as if almost entirely removed from them, and underlining the issuance in other works of not permitting the vampire to relate its own narrative.

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[117] Fiona Peters, 'Looking in the Mirror: Vampires, the Symbolic, and the Thing', in *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. by Peter A. Day (Amsterdam: BRILL, 2006), p. 177.
[118] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters : Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 138.
[119] *Oxford English Dictionary* (2022).

From the very first line of my poem, I hoped to establish that the vampire is seen as part of a (dangerous) collective from the Western viewpoint: 'We are not what you think…' (l. 1). This not only presents the vampire as lacking any sense of individuality, it also defines its entire existence by nothing more than how it is perceived. Martha Nussbaum (1995) refers to this concept of identity-defining gaze in her theory of 'Objectification' as a denial of both autonomy ('the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination') and subjectivity ('the object as something whose experience and feelings […] need not be taken into account').[120] Thus the vampire becomes a thing – further supported by the use of the object determiner 'what' over something more subjective, e.g. the pronoun 'who' – under the dehumanising gaze of another. Ties to the immigration narrative purported by European media, of immigrants as 'unchanging, uniform, and radically peculiar object[s]', is clear.[121]

Continuing this denial of subjectivity, the vampire is made to appear juvenile: 'Lost children of the night' (l. 2). By referring to the vampire in this way, the Western viewpoint not only asserts that it 'views […] them as silly children' (Said, 1994), who are ignorant of the world and thereby incapable of being permitted personal agency (another method of objectification), it suggests that they suffer from an arrested development.[122] Lacan, in discussing child development, posits that '[t]he mirror stage […] manufactures […] the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark […] the subject's entire development' (Lacan, quoted in Peters).[123] Perhaps the most noticeable of all the shortcomings of the vampire is 'when [its] lack of a mirror image is revealed';[124] a subtle metaphor for the immigrant's lack of identity, for just as the vampire has no tangible mirror image through which it can be recognised, both by itself and others, the immigrant is denied autonomy to know their own self. This in turn ties

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[120] Jessica M. LaCroix, Felicia Pratto, 'Instrumentality and the denial of personhood: The social psychology of objectifying others', *Revue internationale de psychologie sociale*, vol. 28 (2015).
[121] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary edn (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 121.
[122] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. xviii.
[123] Peters, p. 179.
[124] Ibid, p. 177.

to the final stanza of my poem – 'the mirror no longer reflects us' (l. 25). That the vampire's 'alienating identity' is never developed indicates that, by being alienated from the West, it is alienated from the independence of selfhood. This dual disaffection echoes the plight of immigrants who, though not being considered civilised until Westernised, in terms of the political subtext, are restricted from entering the West by virtue of their Eastern origins; the cycle of prejudice, much like the vampire's life, is interminable.

Thus, it is evident that the Western perspective has dominated the majority of my poem, as it does other narratives, with the vampiric/Eastern voice (despite being the narrator) all but silenced. However, a moment of temporal resistance can be found: '– *like you consume/the rest of the world –*' (ll. 9 – 10). The use of hyphenation at the beginning and end of the lines is intended to indicate the interjectory nature of these words; the vampire attempts to break the popular narrative setting them in the role of the villain. This somewhat parallels (limited) Western attempts to generate stories that cast immigrants in a more sympathetic light, yet the attempted coup fails. The vampire is once more relegated back to being '[…] a parasite that feeds off its host',[125] as the Western narrative takes hold once more; a narrative that 'implicates *definition* of the object with the *identity* of the person defining'.[126]

No longer actively fighting against the account set down by the West, the vampire is forced to subscribe to this role in an attempt to become more sympathetic: 'seeking a home' (l. 12). The concept of 'home', and all the evocations of safety and familiarity that accompany it, both subverts the presupposed, otherworldly nature of the vampire, and provides grounds for a relatability that would be otherwise lacking. In contrast to the 'invading', 'draining', 'consuming' (ll. 4 – 8) monsters that are prevalent in the Western mindset, the domestic focus of my poem's narrator diverts from this, calling into question the assumptions of the Western

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[125] Spooner (2019).
[126] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 267.

audience. Similar suppositions about the immigrant may, likewise, be called into question, bringing to public consciousness a more multifaceted understanding of the West's problematic response to the East. What we therefore see with 'Not For Us Too' is the beginning of a fractured 'convergence of […] idea and […] actuality' (Al-Hayyat, 2014).[127]

As may be clear from the discussion of this section, there is an obvious discrepancy between the observed vampire and the vampire observer, and how these two things inform our understanding of, and reaction to, them. In the passive role, subject to the gaze and opinions of others, the vampire becomes a child, a parasite, and an invader. By taking on the active voice and reversing this biased gaze, the vampire becomes far more humane, relatable, even sympathetic. The reason for these various characteristics is due to the fact that the vampire is a different race, and, according to Bennett and Royle 'representations of race […] repeatedly return in disguised form'.[128] From this conclusion, I attempt to demonstrate in my work that the vampire is made monstrous through the fears that are projected upon it by Western audiences, much like the immigrant. Given no personal agency and no way to alter this viewpoint, both must submit to the foreign role assigned them.

For the second component of this reflection, I will be considering the vampire as a traveller; the permanently uprooted, unsettled, unwelcome pilgrim, on a journey to return to (and, by necessity, to find) a home. Much like the immigrant, who, even when occupying a space, is never truly home (whether due to the foreign nature of their surroundings or the '"alienating" society' into which they have arrived), the vampire is forced to wander the earth in a state of perpetual displacement.[129]

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[127] Maya A. Al-Hayyat, Liz Lochhead, 'Forewords', in *A Bird Is Not A Stone*, ed. by Henry Bell, Sarah Irving (Glasgow: Freight Books, 2014), p. ii.
[128] Andrew Bennett, Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 4th edn (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2009), p. 235.
[129] Williams, p. 36.

In 'Not For Us Too', I attempt some allusion to the concept of the vampire as being trapped within its own journey: 'Lost children of the night' (l. 2). Not only does the adjective '[l]ost' connote movement without a true purpose (beyond becoming un-lost), it also indicates that there is no clear destination (outside returning to a point of familiarity). Furthermore, the use of such an adjective would traditionally imply that because the vampire is '[l]ost' then it must be missed; yet the fact that the vampire is established from the opening line as being part of a wider group from which it is indistinguishable, as stated earlier in this essay, suggests that not only is no one searching for it, but even if it were found it would possess no discernible qualities that would mark it out as different. As a result of this, it may be seen that the vampire's (and, thus, the immigrant's) journey is more than just a physical movement from one place to another, it is a 'state of estrangement', as its very nature alienates it from the world it inhabits.[130]

This alienation is what prompts the vampire to search for a new home, away from the prejudices that it has been heretofore subject to. Yet this attempt is not only flawed, due to the fact that the society that is isolating the vampire exists everywhere around it ('you consume/the rest of the world', ll. 9 – 10), but also because it becomes seen as an act of conquest, of 'reverse colonisation' (Arata, quoted in Spooner).[131] In other words, the vampire being the colonised must, in the mindset of the West, attempt to become a coloniser itself, for its own preservation. This is apparent from the accusations levelled at it in the earlier lines of my poem; the vampire 'invad[es]', 'drain[s]', 'consum[es]' (ll. 4 – 8) the Western world, seemingly provoking an attack by the latter. In so doing, the West becomes 'the creation of the Third World' (Fanon, quoted in Said) through its fear, and consequent subjugation, of poorer nations in the East. Thus the vampire/immigrant, unable to return to their home or find a new one, must find solace in – or, at the very least, embark upon for survival – an endless journey.[132]

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[130] Ibid., p. 33.
[131] Spooner (2019).
[132] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 197.

The second half of my poem addresses both this journey, as well as its end result: 'Though we've travelled oceans/of time […]/We are not welcome' (ll. 11 – 15). These 'oceans' can be seen as possessing a dual meaning – in one vein, they offer a literal rendering of the journey of the immigrant, who must cross physical oceans to escape their old home, and, by extension, the life they previously led; and, in the other, they offer a conceptualising metaphor: the ocean, vast and untamed, exceeds the understanding of humanity in terms of its size and the mysteries it veils. That the vampire must cross an uncountable number of these in 'time' would indicate a longevity of life and experience. Not only does this contrast the long-lived mind of the (Eastern) vampire with that of the comparably-young Occident, but it throws into stark contrast the narrative perpetuated by the West of the East as 'need[ing[first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created' (Said, 1979).[133] What can be understood from this is that the vampire, having lived for, and through, more than the West is capable of comprehending, is suffering from the weight of its lifespan – analogous to the popular representation of vampires in media, such as Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2019). The phrase 'oceans/of time' also echoes Gary Oldman's words as the titular character of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). The vampire, in all its incarnations, whether in film or literature, is constantly journeying against the gradient of life; coincidence is far too broad a word to apply to this. Logical argument dictates that it must come from some unconscious, shared understanding of the vampire's nature; I argue that this is the unanimous, if unspoken, decision by audiences to offer the vampire as metaphorical for the journey of the immigrant. This journey is exhaustive and without limit, and the result is that the vampire becomes 'external to [it]self', arguably causing a form of depression that is seemingly-assuaged only in pursuit of death, domination, or love – all common tropes of the vampire narrative.[134] It is in fear of this

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[133] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 114.
[134] Williams, p. 35.

narrative that the West applies 'a spatial function [to the vampire], establishing relations of proximity and distance'[135] that include 'the transfer of rights';[136] simply put, the vampire/immigrant is excluded, socially and legally-speaking, and treated like an 'outsider', because it comes from without 'the [Western] home(land)'.[137]

As this section has demonstrated, the vampire is confined to a fixed motion – a journey that has no end goal but is incapable of coming to a close due to the obligatory nature with which it is begun. Both the vampire and immigrant undergo congruent experiences: estrangement from their birthplace due to the Western sphere of influence (whether directly or indirectly), the need to find a new home and the hostility with which they are met by the Occident, and the increasingly unbearable weight of life and/as the journey. Thus it can be found that the vampire and the immigrant are once more two sides of the same coin, forever cut-off from their home and compelled to suffer the trials of searching for a new one, without ever fully finding closure.

Finally, I will evaluate the single notion that ties the rest of my poem together; the idea of the vampire as alien, as the fundamental 'other' to the Western norm.[138] My meaning, in using this term ('other'), is the (often unspoken) set of social/cultural rules and expectations that are so engrained in the Occident as to have formed a standard, and the accompanying expulsion – both metaphorical and literal – for those who transgress them. In this way, the vampire may be understood to be aligned with the immigrant insomuch as both exist outside of these rules, and, upon coming to the West, both must attempt to adjust to them in the hopes of gaining acceptance. I maintain, nevertheless, that even merging seamlessly into them does not achieve acceptance, for the prejudice of the 'other' is founded at a racial level; those who

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[135] Ahmed, p. 3.
[136] Williams, p. 33.
[137] Ahmed, p. 3.
[138] Williams, p. 33.

come from outside 'the home(land)' cannot ever become part of it, in the mindset of the native inhabitants, and thus such personages are effectively exiled.[139]

In 'Not For Us Too', the vampire is characterised as being less a creature in its own right than an extension of the West, to which it represents an unnecessary burden that must be removed: 'Monstrous parasites' (l. 3). In the first instance, the use of the adjective '[m]onstrous' immediately sets the vampire apart, as evidenced by the *OED*, sense 1a definition: 'Of a thing […] deviating from the natural or conventional order'.[140] Not only is the vampire now made into 'a thing', linking once again to Nussbaum's (1995) theory of 'Objectification', but it is also deviant and otherworldly. In addition, that it is mockingly called a 'parasite' is significant; its entire purpose and self comes from feeding on others to survive, of taking from them to sustain itself, and thereby robbing it of any independence, as it is identified only by its relation to the Occident. This also brings into focus the title of my poem – 'Not For Us Too'. Although a clear indictment of the Western marginalisation of the East, as well as again defining the vampire by what it lacks, it is a bastardisation of the Romanian word for vampire and the name of the first feature-length vampire film: *Nosferatu* (1922). The muddled background of my poem's title mirrors the indistinct identity of the vampire, simultaneously hinting at its lacking nature: 'a vampire is a Thing that looks and acts like us, yet is not one of us' (Zizek, quoted in Peters).[141] Consequently, it stands in for the immigrant, in that both are – from a Western standpoint – treated as though lacking in individuality, and are ostracised as a result.

Conversely, whatever qualities of value the West does depict the vampire as possessing are acquired through deceitful means: 'invading your homes', 'draining your lives', 'consuming your souls' (ll. 4 – 8). Again, we see the metaphor of the vampire as a parasite

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[139] Ahmed, p. 3.
[140] *Oxford English Dictionary* (2022).
[141] Peters, p. 177.

coming into play; it must feed off others in order to survive – '*your* homes', '*your* lives', '*your* souls' [emphasis added] – just as the Eastern immigrant is seen to play parasite to the Western host. It is especially noteworthy that the three things the vampire takes are considered the building blocks of a person's humanity, and are, furthermore, often associated with immigrants: that they supposedly-take homes in the West away from Western people, that they bring poverty and ruin, that they somehow infect the Western world with their religions and thereby threaten the 'souls' of Western people. Moreover, the fact that the vampire/immigrant is regarded as having none of these prior to arriving in the West, and even then only claims them through theft and other illegitimate means, utterly dehumanises it.

This is then furthered by the use of similes; the vampire/immigrant is 'like a contagion', 'like [a] bloated leech' (ll. 5 – 7). Aside from the obvious negative connotations of such comparisons (which the critical reflection essay has already discussed in part), it again strips the subject of any individual identity by presenting it in relation to a considerable but unspecified threat. This casts the vampire/immigrant in the role of the other; the 'alien stranger', to use Ahmed's terminology, who is 'but a mechanism *for allowing us to face that which we have already designated as the beyond*' – as beyond our understanding.[142]

In line with the abovementioned concept of the vampire as existing in a sphere beyond – that is, outside – the Western world, my poem demonstrates this clearly through its use of imagery: 'Cold light retreats/and we embrace the/obscurity of darkness' (ll. 16 – 18). While the West exists for all to see, in its '[c]old light', the vampire is not welcome there; it may find comfort only in 'obscurity', in 'darkness' on the fringes of Western society. This, once again, shows the vampire and immigrant as being one and the same, for they represent 'the identities of different 'others', whether they be outsiders [or] refugees'.[143]

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[142] Ahmed, p. 3.
[143] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 352.

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To conclude, it may be observed from this final section of argument that the vampire is the undeniable 'other'. The West, holding '[t]he power to narrate', places it into the role of the opposite, and permits it no existence beyond how it is viewed from without; a view that very often comes with the stigma of expectation, and condemnation should what is expected be lacking.[144] Yet again, the vampire and immigrant are definitively placed on the outside, treated as threats or enemies that must be dealt with from a distance. However, that the narrator is itself the vampire offers a moment of rebellion; the Occidental classification of the vampire/immigrant as 'other' may remain, yet their power to narrate is subverted by the voice of the one they have tried so desperately to silence. In the words of Edward Said: 'The new situation [is] a sustained confrontation of, and systematic resistance to, the Empire *as West*'.[145]

In conclusion, although written from the viewpoint of one who has observed this prejudice rather than being subjected to it, my poem, 'Not For Us Too', does not pretend to encapsulate a grand theory of the immigrant experience – no such thing exists. Instead, I hope to offer a window through which the Occident mind may be able to come to an understanding of these prejudices, and why they need to be fought against. Subsequently, this reflection has attempted to demonstrate three basic ways in which the narratives of the vampire and the immigrant run parallel to one another.

Firstly, in the role of the observed, the vampire becomes a representation of terror, being but a blank canvas for the fears of the onlookers to be projected on to it. There is a clear similarity between this and the immigrant, whose humanity is also foregone in being viewed as little more than a parasite. However, in the role of the observer, the vampire takes on a much more sympathetic position, becoming – instead of the assailant, the aggressor, the invader – the quintessential, victim-blamed victim. Again, the relationship to the immigrant is obvious.

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[144] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xiii.
[145] Ibid, p. 196.

Moreover, not a fixed being, the vampire is in an eternal state of motion – of travelling from one location to another. Thus, the need to find stability and to end the (unending) journey, necessitates even further travel; this time into the heart of the power that dislodged it from its home in the first place. Though nothing more than an attempt to find a safe place in which to put down roots, this becomes viewed through the lens of the colonial power as an attempted reverse colonisation. As a result, the vampire – and, by extension of their related narrative, the immigrant – takes on a negativity due to the connotations attached to it, rather than due to its own inherent value.

Finally, the vampire, the manifestation of the Eastern being in a Western culture, is repeatedly, and often even unintentionally, othered. Never provided 'a space'[146] in which to narrate its own journey by virtue of the dominance of the Western voice, the vampire becomes defined by what it lacks; as with the non-existence of its reflection, so too with its morals. It can therefore be seen that the vampire serves primarily to emphasise the successes of Western normativity in the face of a foreign entity, even when those supposed-successes are exclusive and borne of ignorance.

Overall, the aim of this work has been to highlight, through means of the vampire narrative, current issues of immigration prejudice in 21st century Western (European) culture.

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[146] Kabbani, p. 67.

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Afterword

When I agreed to take on the Executive Editor role for LUX for 2022-2023, I must admit I did not fully know what to expect. For the previous couple of years, all activity on campus had been stunted by COVID-19, and getting together in any sort of group still seemed alien. LUX, like many projects, journals, and other activities, had been hit quite hard by the effects of the pandemic, and I was a little concerned that it would be difficult to recover.

As it turns out, all of my worries were utterly unfounded. Not only was I pleasantly surprised by the dedication of my small team of editors, but we were also treated to excellent submissions tackling a variety of topics. From immortality to Shakespeare, from horror to dystopia, this issue of LUX has a wide-ranging scope that really showcases what Lancaster University's students are capable of. I am pleased to be able to reward the students' hard work with the publication of this issue.

I must also personally thank the team I have had the pleasure of working with this year. Amy Dixon, Hannah Clery, Beyla Carys and Sana Lokhat have gone the extra mile with every task assigned to them, which has honestly made my job much easier this year! They, too, deserve praise for their work ethic, their positive attitudes, and their overall professionality when creating this issue. I also thank Anubhuti Sharma for her help in organising the first ever LUX event, which was held in June 2023 and was a huge success.

It is with great pride that I present this issue of LUX, and I look forward to seeing where the journal goes in the future.

- Sarah Wagstaffe, Executive Editor 2022-2023