TRACKS

Research in the Humanities

Issue V

Kara Speedy
Views from the Amphitheater

Kara Speedy is an interdisciplinary painter based out of the Texas Panhandle that specializes in gouache and acrylic illustrations. She currently attends West Texas A&M University pursuing her Bachelor's of Fine Arts. In 2023 she earned a full time Muralists position at Blank Spaces where she works alongside other local artists painting the culture of Amarillo. As she expands her portfolio and furthers her education, her passion for her community grows. She aspires to give back to her community and to show the youth a fresh perspective of what's exciting in the local art scene.

"Views from the Amphitheater" was my first assignment in my very first painting class. This assignment focused on landscapes so I chose a classic setting that still stands close to my heart, Palo Duro Canyon. The painting depicts a prop that is used every year in the play *Texas*, an ominous tree that had been split down the middle by a lighting strike. I chose to highlight this tree in particular because it stood out so much from the natural canyon setting that surrounds it — a sort of paradoxical balance between the subject matter and it's background. The combination of these aspects creates a scene that pulls the viewer in to the often overlooked beauty of the Texas Panhandle.

TRACKS

Tracks is a student-edited research journal housed in the English, Philosophy, and Modern Language department at West Texas A&M University. Submission is open to all outstanding undergraduate research in the humanities at WTAMU, including literature, the arts, history, social studies, communication and cultural studies. If you are interested in submitting your work for the next edition, or want to discuss joining our editorial staff, please contact Dr. Rebecca Weir at rweir@wtamu.edu.

Website

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FOREWARD

I am sincerely honored to have served as the Editor-in-Chief for this year's edition of *Tracks*. This project holds immense significance for me, not only due to the dedication and hard work invested in it but also because it challenged me as both an editor and a designer. As I approach the conclusion of my last semester here at WT, I am particularly thankful for the opportunity this endeavor has provided me to refine my skills and delve deeper into the field of editing.

The collection of essays published in this edition revolves around the captivating theme of *Identity*. From the timeless works of Shakespeare and Charlotte Brontë to the contemporary insights of Tayeb Salih, these essays traverse the intricate realms of feminism, race, and beyond, offering readers a thought-provoking journey into diverse perspectives.

I want to extend a special thanks to Dr. Rebecca Weir for acting as my mentor and supervisor during this process and beyond. *Tracks* would not be where it is now without your guidance and I am forever grateful for the opportunities, knowledge, and continued support you have freely given me over the last two years.

To our valued readers, thank you for picking up this edition of our journal. I hope you find as much pleasure in reading it as I did in its creation.

Rachael Draper
Editor-in-Chief

On Queer Nature Within William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

By Cooper Segura

James "Cooper" Segura is currently a Senior English undergraduate student, and they are anticipated to graduate in Fall 2024. Cooper has been thinking about gender identity and sexuality since they began college in 2019 at Amarillo College, but it was not until arriving at West Texas A&M that they could delve deeper into queer theory. Coupled with this long-term interest, this adaptation project started as a short Shakespeare essay one semester and grew into a semester-long creative writing project the next. After graduation, Cooper hopes to take a year off from university, then they plan on pursuing their master's degree in English. Eventually, they want to teach English at the university level.

"On Queer Nature Within *The Merchant of Venice*" endeavors to explore the asymmetry found within *The Merchant of Venice* through an alternative lens—gender identity and sexuality rather than religion—and join the conversation regarding the survival of queer people within hostile sociopolitical spheres. This article first close reads Act 1, Scene 3 of *The Merchant of Venice*, then provides an adaptation of the scene where gender and sexuality act as the crux of conflict between Antonio and Shylock (named Antony and Shylah). A justification for the adaptation is included, and Judith Butler's methodology from their work *Gender Trouble* serves as the theoretical backbone of this research.

William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* focuses heavily on the asymmetry between Jewish people and Christian people within Venetian society and law, and we can first see this through Shylock's aside: "How like a fawning publican [Antonio] looks. / I hate him for he is a Christian; / But more,... / He lends out money gratis and brings down / the rate of usance here with us in Venice" (1.3.38-42). While Shakespeare's Shylock despises Antonio for being Christian, he focuses more on Antonio being bad for business. Shylock has a clear allegiance to his faith and his people, and he also looks at things from a business perspective: Antonio is bad for business because he gifts out money rather than lending.

These initial impressions of Shylock and Antonio had an impact on my own iterations of Shylock and Antonio,

but I move their main point of conflict out of religion and into romance. My Shylah holds animosity towards my Antony because they were once in a long-term relationship, and because of Antony's reckless free-spending habits; My Antony, however, has mixed feelings towards Shylah because of their now-squandered love. This aspect is only one of the conflicts that I outline, and I took this further by highlighting the symmetry and asymmetry that they have with one another.

My main goal was to highlight the symmetry and asymmetry that Shylock and Antonio have with one another. First, I made a shortlist of the symmetries and asymmetries that these characters have. Their symmetries are that both men are in positions of power, and we can see them as a physical embodiment of the religions they represent. Shylock embodies the characteristics of the "stage Jew" on the page, and he holds a lot of the stereotypical characteristics of a Jewish person. In a similar sense, Shakespeare uses Antonio as a model of Christian values—especially generosity—and Shakespeare pits these characters against one another throughout the play.

Albert R. Braunmuller outlines this aspect in his introduction to the Pelican version of *The Merchant of Venice*. He writes that "the famous 'trial scene' is of course not a trial, and it is a setup that turns on a technicality (flesh, no blood) and then spitefully turns back on Shylock a legal rigidity he had been duped into demanding" (xlvi). Braunmuller shows how their religions act as a point of asymmetry, especially within the "nonbiased" laws of Venice. Shylock used the law to his advantage up until he went to take his claim from Antonio, then the asymmetry of religion allows Antonio and company to flip the table on Shylock and sweep the "victory" out from under him. Braunmuller describes this as "The Biter Bit," where one seemingly in command of a given situation becomes the victim through the exact same means they once used, and the means in which Shylock demanded the trial (a broken bond necessitating the extraction of a pound of Antonio's flesh) holds biblical precedent, even giving rise to many Judeo-Christian practices (xlvi).

Shakespeare does well to highlight this asymmetry, and I wanted to do something similar with gender identity in modern climates. Unlike Shakespeare, I did not want to demonize Shylah like *The Merchant of Venice* did. Shylock deserved to be a more complex character, and my Shylah embodies that by outwardly fighting for more symmetry for himself through his gender identity and not being villainized because of it. By making him someone affected by these harmful bills, and by making him a character that has been fighting for communities to

accept his identity, I keep the severity of Shakespeare's original conflict while changing the scope from religion. The 2023 special issue of *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* "Trans As Method: The Sociality of Gender and Shakespeare," edited by Alexa Alice Joubin focuses on how "contemporary performance proposes 'trans' as method and as a social practice rather than an immutable identity category" (3). Joubin's introduction provides a genealogy of transgender and Shakespeare studies and the other scholars represent the range of approaches for incorporating 'trans' into Shakespeare studies.

In a similar vein, I wanted to explore this idea that despite perpetuating an overarching homophobia, Antony can still be "saved" like Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*. Unlike Jessica, this isn't discussing how one religion is more virtuous than the other, but discussing the importance of living the most honest version of one's life despite the obstacles that emerge with that. To think about identity, whether sexuality or gender identity, I look towards Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. Butler writes that if identities were no longer entrenched in political syllogism, new cultural configurations of sex and gender would rise and confound the old system of binary sex, exposing how unnatural that is (203). In this sense, the importance would be placed on living honestly, allowing for characters like Shakespeare's Jessica and my Antony to be saved through being allowed to perform the most honest identity for themselves. In the case of both characters, it is the current political syllogisms that force a choice upon them; while new configurations of gender and sex would not completely remove the choices they need to make—Jessica becoming estranged from her father Shylock; Antony becoming estranged from his new, well-paying job—the choices would become more flexible, and that is what I want to highlight with my scene adaptation.

A Shakespeare adaptation I read before creating my own was Lynn Butler Knight and Ramon A. Flores's *The Merchant of Santa Fe* (1993). In their retelling, the religious conflict is fleshed out in a way that reveals more than just a simple binary of sides. The conflict within *The Merchant of Santa Fe* exists, but it's more complex than just two sides. This religious conflict is multifaceted, and it is moved between several different levels: personal, familial, community, state government, and federal government. Marissa Greenberg describes this multifaceted conflict specifically through Rebeca, who deals more with traditional gender stereotypes in politics and religion: "When she cross-dresses in order to elope with Lorenzo, however, Rebeca complicates the roles of virginal daughter and Jewish

tradent.... [She] is unashamed of her masculine apparel and actually revels in it as a source of sexual titillation" (21). To Greenberg, this shift from feminine to masculine also signifies her shift from Spanish to English and Jewish to Christian, complexifying religious conflict from a simple binary to multiple levels of change that fluctuate between nationality, gender, and religion.

I wanted to accomplish a somewhat different goal with Shylah—a transgender man who went from living in relative safety to finding himself threatened by harmful anti-trans bills—and Antony—who finds himself struggling with whether he should make the choice to keep his job and completely cut ties with his queer self or to own his queer identity and lose his job, but regain Shylah in the process. The difference in my adaptation stems from these characters being former lovers existing within a system of homophobia, transphobia, and politics. I wanted these characters to have an intimate personal connection with each other while being on opposing sides of a political structure that perpetuates homophobia and transphobia. With that conflict in place, I could explore the tension between personal connection and perceived cultural structures. When the two interact with, and against, each other, the stark differences between traditional norms compared to modern performances of gender identity become clear. To revisit Judith Butler's analysis: the removal of identity from political would allow for new cultural constructions of identity to form, and they also discuss the dependence performative gender identities have on an audience. They write, "Gender is also a norm that can never be fully internalized; 'the internal' is a surface signification, and gender norms are finally phantasmic, impossible to embody" (192). The internal gender surfaces to the audience, leaving it nearly impossible to embody the gender without any kind of audience, and for Shylah and Antony, their audience is the greater state of Texas and the politics that lie within the state. They can perform their identities alone, but the conflict arises when they have to interact with the traditional cultural and political structures in place, making it difficult for my Antony to consolidate both sides of himself.

Ultimately, my adaptation of Act I, Scene 3 seeks to challenge the religious asymmetry presented by Shakespeare. I remove religion from the asymmetry to see how that changes the tensions that emerge between personal connection and political/cultural structure, and I explore the act of "saving" a character despite their inability to perform the identity that truly represents them.

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The following adaptation first came about as a final writing assignment for Dr. Matthew Harrison's Spring 2023 Shakespeare course. I wanted to keep in mind the simultaneous symmetry and asymmetry that Shylock and Antonio have with one another. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock is made to be an unsympathetic character because of the asymmetricity of Jewish people and Christian people, and this asymmetry lends itself to bias against him in a court of law. I wanted to keep that asymmetry, but for this adaptation to address the sense of asymmetry present in current social issues. As a queer scholar, I often find myself wanting to write about gender, sexuality, and identity, and I enjoyed challenging myself by shifting from the religious commentary present in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* to consider what this scene might look like by changing the bias to something akin to the anti-trans bills recently presented in several state legislatures. I started by analyzing the characters in this scene and deciding on what new characteristics to focus on; for Shylah (my Shylock) I put him in the shoes of a gay, transgender businessman. Doing this allowed me to narrow in on the asymmetry that comes from being openly queer in a homophobic, conservative state. In that same sense, my Antonio, Antony's asymmetry comes from being a closeted gay man that finds himself supporting anti-LGBTQ laws thanks to his profitable position at a lobbying group. Antony gets caught in a choice: to be himself and lose his only means of income, or to continue supporting these bills and continue profiting, fracturing himself and his relationships in the process.

Characters

- Antonio – Antony D'aureville (he/him – gay): A prolific businessman that works alongside a large lobbying group that recently pushed for a new bill containing anti-transgender policies. He was largely unaware of the contents of said bill due to his focus on helping his friend Barclay court Portia. Antony attended the same university as Shylah, and the two became fast friends and would enter a relationship with one another. This relationship would end in a terrible fall-out over Antony's lack of frugality with his finances, and the two would not see each other for a year. Antony is somewhat closeted due to the beliefs of the lobbying group he works with; simply put, they're most of the phobics, but they're the only people that would hire him.

- Shylock – Shylah Jasper Celtradat (he/him/they – gay): A successful loan officer that has built his own loan firm since graduating with his MSF. He staunchly opposes any anti-LGBTQ organizations and has been protesting the anti-trans bill while it makes its rounds. Despite their falling out, Shylah still deeply cares for Antony, so seeing Antony's face alongside a lobbying group known for being extremely transphobic and learning of his supposed support of the newest anti-trans bill broke his heart all over again. Shylah has been out as both gay and transgender for several years, and Antony was the first person Shylah came out to as trans. This inner conflict would come to a boiling point after he reads over a loan request by one Barclay Sanders, who has Antony D'aureville listed as a cosigner.

- Bassanio – Barclay Sanders (he/him): Barclay is Antony's friend from the lobbying group. While he doesn't necessarily believe the hateful rhetoric that the lobbying group spouts, he doesn't openly oppose it either. He's young and somewhat naïve when it comes to money, so he gladly accepts Antony's help when it's offered to him. He has yet to realize that Antony has no "h" in it and continues to call him "Anthony."

Scene Adaptation: Act 1, Scene 3

Enter Shylah's office. Shylah sits at his desk and is intently reading something on his desktop monitor. As he reads, his brow furrows in anger before a knock at the door interrupts his train of thought.

Shylah: Yes? Come in.

Barclay: Mr. Celtradat, right? I'm Barclay Sanders.

Shylah: Sanders, right; I was just reading over your loan application. You're in fair standing credit-wise, but I would like to discuss the terms of the loan itself. You're looking to receive five thousand dollars?

Barclay: Yes, and I've agreed to the three-month payment plan.

Shylah: Three months indeed – and Antony D'aureville is listed as your cosigner?

Barclay: Well? Everything looks good, right? Anthony has to have great credit as a businessman.

Shylah: [*With a false smile*] Antony is a good man.

Barclay: Have you heard anything that proves otherwise?

Shylah: Oh, not anything other than public news. I mean that Antony has well enough credit, and despite his sordid past with his finances, he will serve as a sufficient cosigner. Should you, Barclay Sanders, default on the loan, the responsibility falls upon Antony's head. Five thousand dollars, a three-month repayment window, and Antony takes responsibility should you default.

Barclay: That's great news! Where do I sign?

He signs the piece of paper in front of him. Shylah halts him before he can sign anything else.

Shylah: Don't get carried away, Mr. Sanders. Since Antony will cosign this loan, we must wait for his arrival and his own *signature.*

Barclay: Oh, that makes sense. He should be here any second now.

The two are interrupted by a knock at the door.

Shylah: And that must be the man of the hour.

Barclay strides toward the door and opens it, revealing Antony D'aureville.

Barclay: Anthony! Good to see you; we were just talking about you. Mr. Celtradat, this is Anthony D'aureville.

Shylah [*Aside*]: Yes, I'm all too familiar with *Antony* D'aureville. I can't stand the way my heart skips a beat even now, a year later. I still love him, but I can't help but hate him too. He's broken my heart twice: once through his refusal to accept any help from me, and another through his support of the state government's latest anti-trans bill. He has to know that if that bill gets legalized, it will kill me to medically detransition.

Barclay: Mr. Celtradat, you okay?

Shylah: My apologies, I had to take a second to mentally organize my current benefactors. Once Antony signs, the funds will not be available to you until tomorrow morning. [*To Antony*] Hello, Antony. It has been some time, hasn't it?

Antony: Shylah. You're looking well. I apologize for doing this; if I had any other financial avenue to pursue, I would not be bothering you.

A phone alarm sounds: Barclay looks at his phone, then gasps in shock.

Barclay: Shoot! I forgot about my suit fitting. Anthony, I have to go. I think I've signed everything, so can I leave this in your hands?

Antony: Of course, I'll take care of everything. Don't be late to your appointment; you're going to need a stunning suit for this event.

B*arclay hurriedly exits. The atmosphere in the room ices over as the two are left by themselves. Shylah's friendly smile turns into a sneer.*

Shylah: So. Now my money's good enough for you, Antony?

Antony: Please, let's not fight about this. Do you think I'm thrilled to be here, prostrating myself in front of you because I can't lend Barclay the money myself? Just show me where to sign, and we'll go back to our lives.

Shylah: No, see that's not how this works. By being here, by attaching yourself to the hip of your new boy, you've ensured that we will *not* be going back to our lives. At least, not for three months, assuming your boy doesn't default. That's another thing; I cannot believe you're so willing to accept even more debt.

Antony: Excuse you! I fully expect Barclay to be able to pay back his debt in due time. Five thousand dollars in three months will be nothing assuming all goes well. And he is not my boy. He's just a friend of mine. Besides, even if he does default, I'm more than capable of paying back the loan plus interest.

Shylah: Hah. That's funny because I remember hearing you say those exact words not but a year ago. And yet I recall letter after letter, phone call after phone call, and in three months you had more than tripled the original loan you had taken out. Please, Antony. Look me in the eyes and tell me you're not going to do the exact same thing again.

Antony: I don't do that anymore. With Barclay's help, I've got my spending under control, and I have a new job that pays rather well. Thanks to them, I have yet to miss a repayment, and I have a rainy-day fund for occasions like this.

Shylah: Oh yes, your new job seems to do a lot of things rather well, Antony. Especially when it comes to lobbying in new legislation for the state government.

Antony: Shylah, let me explain-

Shylah: No. *No, you don't get to say shit to me Antony*. Why is it that when reading up on the newest batch of anti-queer bills, I find your face and your approval written all over this one?

Shylah spins his monitor around, showing open tabs regarding an anti-trans bill that would force transgender individuals to medically detransition regardless of age. Among these tabs is an update post from Antony's workplace that shows clear approval of the bill from all members.

Antony: Shylah, I can genuinely explain that. Believe you me, this lobbying group would not be my first choice for a job, but like I said they're one of the only reasons I'm on track with my life now. And it's not like they're all bad; Barclay's good people.

Shylah: But how does that explain you -a gay man who dated a trans man- advocating for this bill that could literally kill me. *Kill me,* Antony. You remember how I was before I started transitioning, and you remember how I hated life itself when I was stuck in a body that fought me every day of my life.

Antony: I know and trust me I wouldn't have given them any support if I had known that's what we were lobbying for.

Shylah: How did you not know? Antony, I know you've never closely kept up with politics, but this is something that I figured would have been closer to home for you.

Antony: I've been busy helping Barclay with this intricate proposal. He wants to marry his girlfriend, but her father had set up some kind of trial of courtship to prove the worthiness of whoever she marries. We've been stuck doing research on courtship traditions, setting aside money for the wedding itself, and I don't even want to talk about the ring shopping fiasco.

Shylah: So you've been funding this whole thing?

Antony: More or less. I said I have a rainy-day fund, but it's already allocated towards something. I feel like I have to help him, though. He reminds me too much of myself.

Shylah: He's also horrible with money? How the hell did he help you get things on track for yourself? Wait, let me guess: do as I say and not as I do?

Antony: Yeah, something like that.

The tension in the room settles, and Shylah's shoulders sag.

Shylah: [*He sighs*] I don't like fighting with you, Antony. It feels like we both lose when we do fight.

Antony: I know, and I'm sorry. I didn't want this to start a fight, and I swear to you Shylah I would have never given them my support. This is close to my heart, and so are you. Even now.

Shylah: [*Stunned, then changes the subject*] Anyways, the loan. Antony, if he defaults on this loan, I don't want you to pay me back.

Antony: Shylah, I can't do that, I-

Shylah: I'll change the terms. [*He writes, speaking out loud*] If Barclay defaults on the loan, Antony D'aureville must rescind his support for the Bill Regarding Medically Detransitioning Transgender individuals, regardless of personal consequence.

Antony: I'm- I'm not certain I can do that, Shylah. People already suspect that I'm lying to them about my sexuality. If I do that, not only will I lose my job, but they'll demonize me among every business in a statewide radius. I'll never work

again. Are you certain you don't want to be paid back? That I can do given enough time.

Shylah: Ant, be serious. Do you really think this bill won't harm you too? You may not be trans, but if they pass this, they'll only go further down the line. Are you fully prepared to sell your soul for a group that perpetuates genocide –a group that would burn *me* at the stake because of my gender identity if they thought they could get away with it?

Antony: It's not that simple, Shy. This isn't a black-and-white decision, and I don't have enough capital to fall back on. If I could afford to not work for a year to find a job market that won't lambast me for being queer, I would.

Shylah's jaw clenches; his knuckles whiten as he grips the corners of his desk, leaning towards Antony.

Shylah: I won't go back on this, Ant. But I want to be clear; this isn't a choice between me and them, it's a choice between who you want to be. I've overlooked your unwillingness to get into fights in the past, but you cannot avoid this one.

Antony: [*He sighs*] Alright, fine. I'll sign the bond. Just, please, I can't be outed right now. You're right, these bills are going to affect me; these bills already affect me, but I don't want to be back on the streets.

Shylah silently glares at Antony.

Antony: Don't look at me like that. I already said I'll do it. Really though, are you certain I can't just pay you back if Barclay defaults? I hate being in debt to you.

Shylah: You won't be in debt to me; I would've given you the world, Ant. Surely, I can handle giving you five thousand dollars? [*He smirks*] Now, let's get this to the notary and officiate everything. Your boy will have his money by tomorrow morning.

Antony: [*Reflexively*] He's not my boy. Anyways, thank you, Shylah. [*He meets Shylah's smirk with a grin, extending his hand*] Shall we?

Shylah: [*He hesitates for a moment before taking Antony's hand*] We shall.

End Scene.

Into the Fae: Jane Eyre's Dissociation from Reality

By Cheyenne Ewing

Cheyenne Yvonne Ewing graduated from Texas Tech University in 2020. As an undergraduate student, she earned a BA in English with the magna cum laude distinction. Cheyenne is currently completing her MA in English at WTAMU. She is anticipated to graduate in the summer of 2024. Her primary areas of interest are British literature, feminist rhetoric, and intersectional analysis. After graduation, she hopes to teach in a higher education setting. Outside of school, Cheyenne lives on a small homestead in eastern Oklahoma. On the farm, she enjoys the company of her chickens, horses, dogs, cats, and husband.

"Into the Fae: Jane Eyre's Dissociation from Reality" explores Charlotte Brontë's recurring images of daydreaming. These daydreams center around fantasies of the fae. As Jane accumulates trauma, she escapes into an internal Avalon. These daydreams temporarily alleviate Jane's pain while simultaneously granting her autonomy or power. However, these revelries become maladaptive as reality is purposefully ignored. Looking towards Brontë's tendencies of "making out," daydreaming functions as a catalyst of escape for both author and creation. This piece is an intersectional close reading that encompasses the lenses of feminist rhetoric, trauma studies, and psychoanalysis.

In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the titular character is subjugated to various forms of trauma beginning in her adolescence. Jane's trauma is recursive and accumulative, only subsiding when she flees for nature. Directly following each point of trauma, Brontë uses dissociative language. This language is directly aligned with fairy tales or the world of the fae. As escapist episodes amass, Jane's habitual dissociation from trauma leads to a blurring of what is subjective reality and internal fantasy. This convergence of her internal mind and narrative truth leaves the reader, and Jane herself, with an uncertain sense of what is real. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë alleviates Jane's trauma through dissociation, which leads her to the imaginary world of the fae, where she is welcomed, effectively escapes reality, and is endowed with a temporary sense of power.

Adolescent Jane is first imprisoned in the crypt-like red room, which leaves her in a state of impassioned psychosis. Only in name does the Reed family adopt Jane. In true experience, she is treated

as a demi-human who is isolated from the family unit. Already in her short life, two families have relinquished Jane. She lost both the departed biological family and the family she hoped to find nestled within the Reeds. Yet, the Reeds do not stop at simple isolation. They erupt into physical violence and emotional abuse. Shortly after a spat with John Reed, Jane is imprisoned in the red room. As the setting sun dances across the tapestry of the red room, she is attacked by thoughts of Mr. Reed and "dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes" (Brontë 31). This horrendous circumstance can certainly be labeled as traumatic. Our heroine is smothered by the trauma of a loved one lost, the betrayal of an almost family, and overwhelming isolation from the confinement of the red room. As muddled thoughts swirl, Jane imagines a frightening "swift-darting beam [that] was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me" (Brontë 31). The red room is the genesis of Jane's patterns of dissociation. A study conducted by McLamb et al. centered around adult adoptees defines dissociation:

> In the trauma model, dissociation is viewed as a psychobiological response to threat or danger to enhance survival during and after the event.... it can take the form of Automatic behaviour, analgesia (feeling numb to pain), depersonalisation (feeling that you are seeing yourself from outside your body and/or that things around you are not real) and the compartmentalisation of memories (forgetting or repressing painful thoughts and memories) ... [it is] the natural psychobiological response to threat or danger experienced. (McLamb et al. 152-153)

Rather than face the shrine of John Reed within the red room, Jane manufactures winged visitors from another world. These artificial light fairies frighten her to the point of "anguish[ed] and wild sobs" (Brontë 32). Yet, it is not the physical red room that petrifies Jane beyond consolation, but the power of her imagination. She escapes the paralyzing red room and John Reed's remembrance by dissociating from reality. Jane's genuine "vision from another world" references the supernatural world of the fae (Brontë 31). Although overwhelmed by the unrefined capacity of her imagination, she is briefly strengthened by her ability to flee the red room into her internal sanctuary. Jane's reaction to the visitors within the red room frames her dissociative behavior for the remaining text.

Surviving the red room leaves Jane anxious for release from the Reed family. Bessie's newly affectionate manner and elaborate fairy tale stories temporarily

console her. Bessie's fantasies and fables provide a conceivable answer to Jane's reliance on the comforting fae. Following the spirited red room scene, Bessie concerningly remarks that "she should have that fit: I wonder if she saw anything" (Brontë 33). This diction insinuates that Bessie believes she witnessed an otherworldly visitor. Jane's knowledge of the fae is delivered, transcribed, and affirmed through Bessie. Searching for a temporary diversion, "Bessie asked if [she] would have a book: the word book acted as a transient stimulus... I turned over its leaves, and sought in its marvellous pictures the charm I had, till now, never failed to find - all was eerie and dreary; the giants were gaunt goblins, the pigmies malevolent and fearful imps" (Brontë 35). Before the red room, books submerged Jane in a pleasant diversion from reality. Following the imaginative awakening of the red room, she transforms even books into dissociative fairy tales. Fairy tales act as the catalyst for dissociation because Jane associates fairy tales with Bessie, escapism, and the more favorable portions of her adolescence. Bessie is the one individual at Gateshead who treats her with behavior reminiscent of kindness. With her departure for Lowood on the horizon, she is overjoyed by Bessie, who "told me some of her most enchanting stories, and sang me some of her sweetest songs" (Brontë 52). Jane chooses to escape reality through fairy tales because these fairy tales ground her in comforting positivity. These positive dissociations allow Jane to trudge through the trauma that follows her.

Despite hopeful desperation, departing the Reed family provides little relief for Jane from the fledgling powers of her mind. At Lowood, she encounters both physical and emotional abuse, malnutrition, tuberculosis, and death. These instances of trauma accumulate and overburden her already fragile identity, self-worth, and spirit. The untimely passing of Helen Burns supplies Jane with her most acute trauma thus far. In a fleeting moment of innocent adolescent love, she mourns: "Helen; she seemed dearer to me than ever; I felt as if I could not let her go... I learned that Miss Temple, on returning to her own room at dawn, had found me laid in a little crib; my face against Helen Burn's shoulder, my arms round her neck. I was asleep, and Helen was - dead" (Brontë 91-92). Regardless of her youth, death has already claimed four souls close to Jane's heart. She lost her parents, her uncle, and now her dearest friend, Helen. Strikingly, Jane does not grieve or even comment on Helen's departure. Almost robotically, she spends "a space of eight years almost in silence... During these eight years my life was uniform: but not unhappy, because it was not inactive" (Brontë 92-93). To all appearances, Jane's choice to focus on her educational career is not inherently damaging to her

psyche. However, she does not confront, digest, or even acknowledge her trauma. She focuses on her education alone, thus placing Jane in the darkest recesses of her mind. During this brief interval, Brontë does not mention the world of the fae; yet Jane still exhibits qualities of dissociation. By living in sustained silence for nearly a decade, she essentially abandons reality. Jane's only comfort during this time is her mentor, Miss Temple.

Jane's phantom-like existence does not carry on forever. The loss of her one coping mechanism, Miss Temple, forces Jane to reflect on her place in the world. Just as the wedding bells cease to chime, she feels the hole left by Miss Temple's matrimonial exit:

> From that day she left I was no longer the same: with her was gone every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in some degree a home to me. I had imbibed from her something of her nature and much of her habits: more harmonious thoughts: what seemed better regulated feelings had become the inmates of my mind. I had given in allegiance to duty and order. (Brontë 93)

Jane used Miss Temple as a guide for her emotional regulation, manner, and mindset. With Miss Temple gone, she can no longer rely on her example to self-manage. She must once again rely on her ability to escape within. Jane loses herself in "reflections…I looked up and found that the afternoon was gone…She had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been breathing in her vicinity - and now that I was left in my natural element; and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions" (Brontë 93-94). Jane's power of the mind is renewed with Miss Temple's exodus. She did not need to escape reality when the reality she lived was not her own. Jane lived through Miss Temple. No longer able to depend on her puppeteer, she must once again self-soothe. No matter the type of dissociation, she repeatedly retreats internally. Once at Thornfield, Jane gains the codependent servitude she lost and now longs for again.

Contrary to Thornfield's barbed exterior, Jane feels peace in the company of Mrs. Fairfax and her blossoming pupil, Adèle Varens. Regardless of the serenity of the manor, she remains unfilled and hollow within. Lacking external stimulation, Jane begins to embellish the outer world with fairy tale images. She recognizes her habitual daydreaming "of fancies bright and dark tenanted my mind: the memories of nursery stories were there amongst other rubbish; and when they recurred, maturing youth added to them a vigour and vividness beyond what childhood could give" (Brontë 120). Jane's tendency to fabricate reality is reminiscent of maladaptive dreaming. As defined by contemporary psychiatric medicine, maladaptive daydreaming falls under the umbrella of

dissociation:

> Maladaptive daydreaming is characterized by extensive daydreaming that occupies many hours per day, causes significant subjective distress and interferes with function, and is accompanied by extensive comorbidity… Clinically it appears that maladaptive daydreaming often provides an escape from life circumstances that are depressing and anxiety-provoking, and the daydreaming is often described as being compulsive in nature. (Ross et al.)

These enchanted daydreams allow Jane to alter her perspective of reality, internal trauma, and even other human beings. She is welcomed into this manufactured world of the fae. Under Bessie's influence, these images echo the same fairy tale world that she composed in her childhood. Brontë uses fairy tales and other supernatural images as an indicator of her daydreaming. Within these sweet reveries, Jane can overlay reality with the fancies and fairy tales of her mind. Therefore, reality becomes more palatable for an understimulated Jane. However, these fairy tale allusions do not cease with inanimate objects. Jane's imagination blushes even the greyest of characters.

Jane's depiction of the fae orbits one character in particular, Edward Fairfax Rochester. Much like the red room incident, her reveries can extend to the physical world. Jane's inaugural meeting with Rochester fractures her concentration on the fae. While rambling along the wooded path to Hay, she envisions a mythical dog-like creature:

> It was exactly one mask of Bessie's Gytrash, - a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head: it passed me, however, quietly enough; not staying to look up, with strange pretercanine eyes, in my face, as I half expected it would. The horse followed, - a tall steed, and on its back a rider. The man, the human being, broke the spell at once. Nothing ever rode the Gytrash. (Brontë 120)

Jane embellishes her woodland walk with images of the supernatural. These images make the unfulfilling pilgrimage more appealing. However, Rochester shatters Jane's self-entrancement. The couple's earliest "incident establishes the pattern for Jane's relationship with Rochester: her connection to the fairy-archetype empowers her" (Sass 21). Diverging from Sass, any power Jane is granted is internal. This world of the fae is objectively non-existent. It is her belief in this world that allows her to dissociate from the disagreeable pieces of reality. It is her mind that endows her with power, not the actual world of the fae. Despite hopes for a better future, Jane continues to accumulate trauma at Thornfield. As her trauma cultivates and expands, Jane continuously escapes internally and

embellishes reality with her fantasies. Concurrently, as her relationship with Rochester strengthens, her grasp on reality weakens.

At Thornfield, Jane is deceived by Rochester disguised as a fortune teller, gaslit into believing Grace Poole is laughing mad, and nearly caught in the crossfire of Bertha's fiery homicidal rampage. Previously, her solitary source of comfort was her ability to escape within her avalon. As her relationship with Rochester solidifies, Jane's fairy tale allusions become less frequent. Jane seeks reassurance from reality, their relationship, and even herself in Rochester. Like Bessie and Miss Temple before him, she comes to codependently rely on Rochester's presence for comfort. After promising her hand to Rochester, Jane truly "could not be certain of the reality till I had seen Mr. Rochester again, and heard him renew his words of love and promise" (Brontë 255). Jane cannot trust her mind to confirm "reality" (Brontë 255). Instead, she looks to Rochester to affirm that what she believes to be true is so. Jane's internal fairy tales have become Rochester's external pledges of divine love. No longer must she pine after "life, fire, feeling, that [she] desired and had not in [her] actual existence" (Brontë 117). Now, Jane has the greater existence she longed for within Rochester. Her language surrounding Rochester is highly reminiscent of the previous language used regarding Miss Temple. Rather than seek self-fulfillment, Jane relies on external validation from those around her. She blindly ignores the red flags Rochester waves directly in front of her eyes. She refuses to recognize Rochester's language as manipulative or coercive. In these blissful moments of blooming love, she does not wish to escape reality. To Jane, reality seems as sweet as her reveries. Yet, when her relationship with Rochester weakens and crumbles, Jane will once again seek internal refuge.

Rochester also aligns Jane with the supernatural. While Jane uses fairy images as an escape, Rochester uses mystical images as a mechanism for control. Rochester regards Jane as an angel in disguise. Rochester hauntingly admired her "as if he spoke to a vision, viewless to any eye but his own; then folding his arms, which he had half extended, on his chest, he seemed to enclose in their embrace the invisible being. 'Now,' he continued, again addressing me, 'I have received the pilgrim - a disguised deity, as I verily believe'" (Brontë 143). Jane and Rochester are connected in their shared daydreams. In Rochester's spoken visions, he places false expectations on Jane. Rochester aligns her with images of supernatural angels and deities. By labeling her as supernatural, Rochester grants her power. Yet this saintly power does not serve Jane. Like a guiding light, she is expected to make Rochester feel

completely "healed and cleansed, with a very angel as my comforter" (Brontë 257). Rochester's relief from his sinful past is Jane. Rather than face the reality of Bertha or his numerous affairs, Rochester chooses to escape reality through his angelic Jane. Like Miss Temple and Bessie before him, Rochester becomes Jane's coping mechanism. In turn, she provides the same solace for Rochester. Jane and Rochester rely on each other to fulfill their emotional needs, lack boundaries, and struggle to establish independent identities. In parasitic codependency, the pair become nearly inseparable as their wedding approaches.

Impending marital bliss leaves Jane in nirvana; yet her reliance on Rochester for self-fulfillment means his betrayal is even more devastating for her psyche. Believing herself unworthy of satisfaction, Jane rejoices that "human beings never enjoy complete happiness in this world. I was not born for a different destiny to the rest of my species: to imagine such a lot befalling me is a fairy tale - a day-dream" (Brontë 256). Through this language, Jane directly addresses Rochester's status as her newfound coping mechanism. She also acknowledges her belief that she is not entirely human. Like the pulling tides, her identity ebbs as her use of fairy tales flows. Rather than take control of her destiny, she chooses to place her fairy tale happiness in Rochester's hands. Jane's merriment wanes as Rochester's unfiltered reality is revealed. At the altar, she is confronted by the shadows and secrets of Bertha Mason. After learning of Rochester's attempted bigamy, Jane's "nerves vibrated to those low-spoken words as they had never vibrated to thunder - my blood felt their subtle violence as it had never felt frost or fire... I looked at Rochester: I made him look at me" (Brontë 285). After years of self-soothing dissociation, she had temporarily abandoned her abstract fairy tales for Rochester's embrace. Jane has survived the Reed family's isolation, Lowood's unlivable conditions, and the deaths of numerous loved ones. These events cannot possibly match the trauma of Rochester's betrayal. Despite her otherworldly love for Rochester, she stands by her decision to leave him. In the fallout of nuptials unsaid, Rochester threatens Jane with unlawful matrimony. Rochester gravely implores, "'Jane! will you hear reason?' (he stooped and approached his lips to my ear) 'because, if you won't, I'll try violence'" (Brontë 297). Rochester's crushing ultimatum "is startlingly at odds with popular views of the novel's romantic discourse" (Cox 337). When his menaces fail, Rochester tries his hand at guilt. Appealing to Jane's spiritual sense of duty, Rochester ruefully questions "'You will not come? - You will not be my comforter, my rescuer?'" (Brontë 312). Repeatedly, Rochester sets manipulative and unrealistic expectations for her.

Rather than seek out self-reformation, Rochester intends for Jane to be his sole salvation. Having lost Rochester and her external coping mechanism, this treachery thrust Jane back into the interior world of the fae. Jane's internal visions and tangible nature converge as the moon takes on a physical form.

Inspired by nature, Jane is called back to the fae and her internal power. In the night, Jane escapes Thornfield with the motherly moon as her attendant:

> I was transported in thought to the scenes of childhood... The light that long ago had snuck me into syncope, recalled in this vision... broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud: a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure... it whispered in my heart - "My daughter, flee temptation"! (Brontë 313)

Jane remembers her first encounter in the red room with the manufactured lights of the fairy world. This call back to the red room reinforces the resurgence of her internal powers. Spawning from the clouds, a physical manifestation of the moon emerges. The moon acts as an extension of Jane's subconscious. In a dream, the moon commands her to leave Thornfield. Immediately vacating the manor, she takes the moon's warning as absolute. Therefore, her dream has power in the waking world of reality. By transcending the confines of Jane's mind, these dreams become momentarily real. Guided by the dream, she finds asylum on the moors amongst the peat moss:

> Nature seemed to me benign and good; I thought she loved me, outcast as I was... To-night, at least, I would be her guest - as I was her child: my mother would lodge me without money and without price... Everywhere sunshine. I wish I could live in it and on it... I might have found fitting nutriment, permanent shelter here. But I was a human being, and had a human being's wants. (Brontë 317-18)

Jane is penniless, homeless, and starving; yet she feels whole amongst nature. Jane's imagination is so powerful that it provides an "escape from the realities of life" (Gribble 280). This euphoria does not last. Jane reminds herself of her human identity. She is not a member of the fae, nor can she survive on the bounty of nature alone. Nonetheless, her internal dissociative imagination gives her adequate power to escape Thornfield and Rochester's damning influence.

At Marsh End, serendipity grants Jane an authentic family, secure wealth, and a fulfilling job at the village school. In theory, she should be satisfied with her new circumstances. Even with worldly comforts, Jane cannot escape the fae, daydreams, or the longing for something greater. In the wild marshes of Whitcross, she searches for charity and shelter. An otherworldly "light

sprang up. 'That is an ignis fatuus,' was my first thought... This light was my forlorn hope: I must gain it... Again a whitish object gleamed before me: it was a gate" (Brontë 323-24). A will-o'-the-wisp guides Jane to Moorhouse, where she is welcomed and healed. Much like the moon prior, Jane's delusions directly affect her reality. Surely, a mere gate would not have the power to beckon her so desperately. Since she imagined the gate to be a supernatural entity, Jane is drawn toward the house of her unexpected family. The warm hearth of the Rivers family renews Jane's body and spirit. In Mary and Diana, Jane finds kinsmanship, a fellowship of mind, and mutual affection. Jane rejoices that the Rivers sisters feel "the pleasure arising from perfect congeniality of tastes, sentiments, and principles... the same attraction as for them - wound round my facilities the same spell that entranced theirs... Thought fitted thought; opinion met opinion: we coincided, in short, perfectly" (Brontë 341). The scales strike the perfect balance between Jane, Mary, and Diana. This balance signals that she has finally reached a state of peace with the external world. Yet, Jane still calls back to her fairy tale origins. Jane believes a bewitching charm has fallen over the three women. Although she is externally content, the fairy world still extends beyond her mind. Jane no longer needs to escape reality. Yet she still adorns the world with language centered around the fae. Marsh End proves that even with a serene life, Jane will still crave the internal dissociation founded in the fairy world.

Life at Marsh End ceases to be perfect. St. John manipulates Jane's time, threatens God's punishment, and deploys coercive proposals to restrain and control Jane. On the verge of accepting St. John's hand, Jane hears a hysterical calling from beyond. This supernatural voice saves her from the reality of a loveless marriage:

> I had heard it - where, or whence, for ever impossible to know! And it was the voice of a human being - a known, loved, well-remembered voice - that of Edward Fairfax Rochester... "This is not thy deception, nor thy witchcraft: it is the work of nature" She was roused, and did - no miracle - but her best... It was my time to assume ascendancy. My powers were in play, and in force. (Brontë 406)

Forgetting St. John entirely, Jane is summoned by her internal voice back to Thornfield. She muses that "I recalled the voice I had heard; again I questioned whence it came, as vainly as before: it seemed in me - not in the external world" (Brontë 407). This calling is not a daydream. Jane's innermost voice has burst forth into reality, thus altering her path. Jane connects the voice back to divine nature and her fae powers. Much like the moonlit escape from

Thornfield, her reveries have the power to forge reality. This repeated blurring of her internal mind with reality leaves the reader, and Jane herself, with an uncertain sense of what is true.

Previously, Jane's reveries only impacted her own reality. Her inverted pilgrimage back to Thornfield sees her visions become subjective truths. Stumbling upon ruinous Thornfield, Jane anxiously stresses that "the front was, as I had once seen it in a dream, but a shell-like wall, very high and very fragile looking. Perforated with paneless window: no roof, no battlements, no chimney - all had crashed in" (Brontë 411). The nightmarish scene of Thornfield's destruction has befallen. The confirmation of Jane's vision of Thornfield suggests that "she actually does possess supernatural or extrasensory perceptions" (Gribble 286). She continues her frantic search for Rochester. After receiving directions from a long-winded innkeeper, Jane seeks the concealed manor of Ferndean. In thriving nature, she searches for Rochester and shrouded Ferndean:

> I looked round in search of another road. There was none: all was interwoven stem, columnar trunk, dense, summer foliage- no opening anywhere… At last my way opened, the trees thinned a little; presently I beheld a railing, then the house - scarce, by this dim light, distinguishable from the trees; so dank and green were its decaying walls. Entering a portal, fastened only by a latch, I stood amidst a space of enclosed ground, from which the wood swept away in a semi-circle. (Brontë 416)

Jane is transported to Ferndean through a supernatural doorway. This fairy circle leads her to a worn and weary Rochester. The isolating nature of the fairy world and reality coincide at Ferndean. Here, both Jane and Rochester exist in a space based on her delusional vision. Once married, Jane makes the rapturous comment that "I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine… He saw nature - he saw books through me; and never did I weary from gazing for his behalf" (Brontë 435). Rochester serendipitously gains Jane's supernatural sight when blinded. Recollecting his spiritual calling, Rochester remembers, "'Ferndean is buried, as you see, in a heavy wood, where sound falls dull, and dies unreverberating… I could have deemed that in some wild, lone scene, I and Jane were meeting'" (Brontë 432). Rochester's vision mirrors Jane's powers of perception. Borrowing her sight, Rochester seemingly joins the ranks of the fae. With Ferndean as their lushly veiled sanctuary, both Jane and Rochester can transcend their shared trauma. Transported to Ferndean, Jane has finally escaped reality. Able to forge her fairy tale world alongside Rochester, Jane achieves the ultimate form of power

in both external and internal happiness. Concurrently, the improbably happy ending at Ferndean cannot be concretely defined as internal reality or narrative truth. It is Ferndean's ambiguity that leaves Jane and Rochester's fate inconclusive.

Charlotte Brontë concludes Jane Eyre with Jane and Rochester in marital bliss. Jane survives the trauma that began in her childhood. No longer must she relive the memories of the Reeds, Lowood, or even Thornfield. In wild Ferndean, Jane abandons the mortal world for the isolated nature of the fae. Yet, one must theorize why Charlotte Brontë uses dissociative imagination to empower Jane. Brontë's isolated upbringing amongst the rugged English countryside has reached an almost mythic status. The Brontë siblings had to rely on one another, their imaginations, and manufactured fantasy worlds like Gondal for entertainment, camaraderie, and fulfillment. Previous critics have noted Brontë's almost desperate need for daydreaming. Gettelman argues that Brontë's novel plainly addressed her excessive tendency to daydream:

> Charlotte Brontë's potent "making out" provides an important context for understanding her depiction of what she once called "morbidly vivid realization" ... As a way of describing the Brontës' imaginative activity, "making out" signals less an experience of pure invention than one which approximates hallucination: as if one were straining to see an image present before one's eyes, as indeed both Charlotte's and Emily's intensive imagining has been described. (Gettelman 560)

Brontë's "'morbidly vivid realization[s]'" parallel the characteristics associated with maladaptive daydreaming. Without the modern vocabulary of dissociation or maladaptive daydreaming, Brontë created a term that fulfilled her, as well as her sibling's, desperate need to escape reality. Brontë could have centered Jane's reveries around numerous fantasies; yet Brontë chose fairy tales as her primary vehicle of escape. In the world of the fae, there "was the appeal of a poetic system which still believed in magic and which was still centered around the role of women" (Martin 94). Akin to Brontë, Jane's "making out" centers around the feminine-guarded fairy world, which grants her the necessary power to transcend an unfavorable reality, renounce years of accumulated trauma, and forge her own truth (Gettelman 560).

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To Be Two: DuBois's Double Consciousness in Jeffers's *The Age of Phillis*

By Casen Lucas

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In his essay "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," W.E.B. DuBois outlines his awareness of a deeply rooted duality. He argues that the Black struggle is distinct for its twoness, as the African American is conscious of both his African heritage and his American experience with persecution. DuBois's model of double consciousness serves as an apt explanation for many of the internal conflicts in Honorée Fanonne Jeffers's *The Age of Phillis*, where Jeffers imagines the plight of Phillis Wheatley Peters navigating the horrors of the slave trade. Phillis was stolen from her home in West Africa and enslaved by Susannah Wheatley until she gained international prominence as a poet. this essay uses DuBois's framework as a theoretical lens for comparing Phillis and Susannah's vastly different experiences and identities.

As a child growing up in Massachusetts, W.E.B. DuBois excelled in his high school studies and earned several degrees from Harvard University. He went on to be a leader in the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People, and his theory of double consciousness remains one of the most influential American texts on racial disparities ("W.E.B. DuBois"). Phillis Wheatley Peters, another influential Black writer, was born in West Africa and captured by slave traders as a young girl. She was purchased by Susannah Wheatley and was an enslaved person until she gained international prominence as a poet ("Phillis Wheatley"). Though DuBois and Phillis clearly had vastly different upbringings, they both experienced a sort of internal strife as

they navigated life under oppression in America. DuBois's model of double consciousness in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" describes a cognizance of deeply rooted duality, and this framework provides an apt explanation for many of the moments of internal conflict, both Black and white, in Honorée Fanonne Jeffers's *The Age of Phillis*.

DuBois's theory of double consciousness outlines how the Black experience in America is tainted by a conscious understanding of two distinct selves. According to DuBois, the Black struggle is distinct for its twoness; the African American, he says, is conscious of both his African heritage and his American experience with persecution. He argues that the history of Black America is the history of two selves. Despite the horror of racial prejudice, though, DuBois argues that the African American would and should not sacrifice either of his two selves: "He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his [Black] soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that [Black] blood has a message for the world" (DuBois 327).

As part of his theory of double consciousness, DuBois argues that people of color are forced to view themselves at least partially through the lens of the white person in power: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (327). DuBois explains double consciousness as a sensation felt due to societal pressure; because of powerful people in oppressive systems, Black citizens must place their entire identity— "one's soul," as DuBois puts it—in the hands of the oppressor. As she imagines the plight of Phillis Wheatley Peters navigating the horrors of the slave trade, Jeffers elaborates on the placement of the Black identity. Like DuBois, she writes about what it means for the oppressor to control one's identity when Susannah Wheatley buys Phillis from the slave trade: "And so, / because the little girl was bony and frail, / Mistress Wheatley gained her for a trifling, / passing by the other slaves from the brig called Phillis" (Jeffers 41). When she purchases Phillis, Susannah solidifies the child's reduction to an identity—a "slave," purchased for a trifling—imagined by white people with inherent, systemic power.

Unlike DuBois, however, Jeffers reckons with the emotional perspective of the oppressor. She invites readers to consider Susannah's complicated, turbulent emotional state as she purchases Phillis. She compares the binary nature of Susannah's feelings to the mixed emotions she felt as she mourned a loved one: "I'm trying to both see and discard that day, / as when I stood over the open casket / of an old man,

counting the lines on his face, / grieving yet perverse" (Jeffers 41). By applying the concept to Susannah, a white woman with dangerous power over Phillis, Jeffers develops DuBois's double consciousness into a universal sense of twoness. DuBois refers to "the veil" as specific to Black life, saying that the African American is "born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world" (327). In DuBois's essay, then, both the veil and the double consciousness it engenders are distinctly Black burdens imposed by white oppressors. Jeffers develops this tradition in *The Age of Phillis* by proposing a conversation about Susannah's emotional duality. When Phillis suffers from asthma, Susannah says, "This is a complicated space. / There is slavery here. / There is maternity here" (51). The woman is torn between her genuine affection for Phillis and her societal position that allows her to purchase another human being. Despite her reprehensible ownership of a child, Susannah does have love for Phillis. Still, if Susannah does possess a double consciousness of sorts, it is certainly different from the one DuBois describes. In fact, it might be the opposite of the double consciousness DuBois recognizes from his position of violent disenfranchisement. As a white slave owner, Susannah is certainly not reduced to an assigned identity from a white oppressor; nonetheless, like DuBois, she demonstrates a cognizance of her own internal duality.

Jeffers also emphasizes Phillis's double consciousness, perhaps a more obvious example of double consciousness as DuBois initially described it. She details Phillis's complicated relationship with her purchaser, saying:

> She took the child into her home,
> fed and bathed her, deciphered
> the naps on her head.
> Dressed her in strange garments:
> gratitude and slavery. (42)

Phillis's double consciousness is comprised of gratitude for her maternal figure and horror toward her purchaser, both of whom are the same person. Unlike Susannah (and much like DuBois), Phillis's double consciousness is entirely the result of an oppressive, racially violent system. She is not facing a complicated emotional binary; rather, a complicated emotional binary was forced onto her when she was stolen from her family and subjected to the violence of the slave trade. Like DuBois, Phillis exemplifies a clear longing to "escape both death and isolation" and return to a life of comfort and safety (DuBois 327). Unlike DuBois, though, Phillis shows no desire to cling to her two selves; she would prefer to dwell only in the kingdom of freedom, leaving behind her life of slavery. While DuBois longs to "merge his double self into a better and truer self," Phillis has endured a violent life as an enslaved person and is not necessarily fond of her double self (DuBois 327). In

"Fragment #3: First Draft of an Extant Letter, Phillis Wheatley, Providence, to General George Washington, Cambridge Headquarters," Phillis makes clear her frustration with Washington, Susannah, and the slave trade at large. "Sir, I have taken the freedom ~~which if my master hadn't given me would have been my own anyway~~ to address your Excellency ~~who I heard behaves like either a gentleman or a tyrant depending on his moods or his money~~" (Jeffers 139). In her honest remarks to Washington, Phillis demonstrates her frustration, making it unlikely that she would choose to merge her double selves. Although DuBois also resisted slavery and racial violence, he felt proud of both his African heritage and his American lifestyle. Phillis, on the other hand, was stolen from home at a young age, so her experience with her American self seems overshadowed by her longing to return home to Africa.

Though they experienced vastly different childhoods, both DuBois and Phillis—and Susannah, though in the opposite way—dealt with the emotional turmoil of the slave trade. Each of them was conscious of two selves, and each attempted to move forward from their twoness in order to obtain peace. Though DuBois longed to merge his two selves and Phillis longed to break free from her American self, both epitomize the way in which double consciousness can manifest differently. Jeffers develops DuBois's tradition by challenging readers to grapple with Susannah's duality; likewise, as Phillis grows weary of life in the violent American slave trade, Jeffers makes evident that the theory of double consciousness is applicable yet distinct for DuBois, Susannah, and Phillis.

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The Subject and the Nile: A Vision of Emancipatory Possibility in *Season of Migration to the North*

By Charles Pearson

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This essay looks at postcolonial experience, as treated in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. Through a focused analysis on the character of Mustafa Sa'eed and the Nile River, I explore the way in which the narrator depicts a possibility for freedom in the protagonist's suicide attempt. In particular, the paper looks to Sa'eed's relation to Europe, and his use of personal narrative and sexual violence (and personal narrative *within* sexual violence) as a reaction to colonial subjugation. The paper concludes with a comparative analysis of Sa'eed and the protagonist through their respective portrayals of the Nile River, contrasting the former's admiration with the river's destructive properties with the latter's view of its liminality.

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* presents a world in the midst of confusion. The work's fictionalization of Sudan—never explicitly named, though Khartoum is mentioned—exemplifies the shattered experience of the postcolonial crisis, the aftermath of Europe's invasion, and "gift" of emancipation. The text begins with the return of the narrator, who studied poetry in England and attempts to make a permanent home in the village of his birth, and his encounter with Mustafa Sa'eed, a new resident of the village that initially refuses to reveal anything of his past. The novel follows the narrator's growing familiarity with Sa'eed, alongside his determination to help rebuild his country—and an eventual disillusion with both. Following the attempt to locate identity in the aftermath of imperialist rule, the setting shifts between the narrator's own experiences and the stories of Sa'eed he learns from the new resident's own retelling. Sa'eed's self-description—recalled by the narrator—focuses on his time in England and particularly on

his sexual experiences with European women, often leading to violent ends—three suicides and a murder—for his partners. During the process of seduction, the character creates narratives of an overly exotic and often primitive Africa, alongside viewing the sexual act as a sort of political vengeance. Depicting the violence of Sa'eed's fatalism and the narrator's reaction, Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* explores possibilities of rejecting—or creating—identity for the postcolonial subject. The novel envisions, through the narrator's own attempt at suicide by drowning in the Nile (an act committed previously by Sa'eed), a possibility for emancipation in a space of hopelessness.

Sa'eed's relation to Europe appears to stem from a total lack of relation toward his homeland, or a lack of attraction to it. In the beginning of an extended oration to the narrator, Sa'eed describes himself as a child who "wasn't affected by anything" (Salih 18). While living alone with his mother, he explains his relationship to her as one of acting "as relatives to each other" (Salih 18). He places an emotional distance between them, more as extended family than mother and son. Sa'eed remembers her as similar to a natural phenomenon, her "thick mask" like "the surface of the sea"; he furthers the simile in describing her face as containing "not a single colour but a multitude," with the colors "appearing and disappearing and intermingling" (Salih 18). The comparison creates an image of his mother as something both in constant flux—the visible surface ever shifting—and also so stable in its presence as to remain unnoticeable. The disassociated acceptance toward his mother manifests in all his actions: his reading, play, school, and fights with other children. His mother embodies what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls in her essay "Diasporas old and new: women in the transnational world" the "homeworking," a class of women lowered to ignorable by turning "unpaid domestic labour ('nurturing')" into "feminine ethics" (246). By turning the labor of homeworking women into an ethical expectation, their place in political struggle and social life as whole becomes silent, creating Sa'eed's apathy to his own homeworking mother. He returns to the aquatic image, describing his childhood self as "made of rubber: you throw it in water and it doesn't get wet" (Salih 19). A waterproof existence seems to encompass the memories of his youth, with the young Sa'eed viewing the world as he views his mother—an ever-moving surface that even in its changes fails to attract him.

Within the childhood of Sa'eed, a break in the character's disassociation occurs in the encounter with Mrs. Robinson. Instead of creating an Oedipal relation to Sa'eed's actual mother, the text turns to "a surrogate mother," connecting his first memory of desire, or feeling in general, with the foreign (John

and Tarawneh 331). Instead of the sea in the face of his birth mother, he imagines Mrs. Robinson as Cairo, the city where Sa'eed met the Robinson's, which in turn he imagines as a "large mountain" (Salih 23). Cairo, however, holds little importance as a particular place; Egypt in itself fails to make an impression, except within a larger whole. The city, with its European influence, introduces Sa'eed to foreign cities, a sort of stepping stone on his path to London: "another mountain, larger than Cairo" (Salih 24). The encounter with Mrs. Robinson functions similarly, inspiring the desire for European women. While Cairo embodies a sample of the Western polis, Mrs. Robinson serves as an exemplar of the Western woman—demonstrating the features that Sa'eed searches for in his sexual conquests.

Although typically read as less important to the novel than other instances of Sa'eed's conquests, the initial seduction of Isabella Seymour exemplifies his Oedipal desire for the European woman and the multi-dimensional function of his fantasies. Sa'eed's narration leaves little room for speculation in the connection between Isabella Seymour and Mrs. Robinson, revealing that in approaching her, he smelled "that odour with which Mrs. Robinson had met me on the platform of Cairo's railway station" (Salih 32). Opposed to Mrs. Robinson, Sa'eed refers to Seymour as one of "many of her type in Europe," denying any particularity and reinforcing the Oedipal attraction he finds in her qualities (Salih 32). The scene also introduces the narrativization of Africa in the seduction of European women and the explicitly political imagining of sexual violence in the "complex staging of intercultural encounters" (Friedman 435).

In the seduction of Seymour, Sa'eed begins his imagining his sexual acts as revenge against imperial Europe. He relates "fabricated stories" with "golden sands and jungles" containing "non-existent animals" (Salih 32-33). Through his narratives of Africa, he transforms himself "into a naked primitive creature," in order to turn the pitying sentiments of Seymour to his own advantage (Salih 33). Calling back to his initial encounter with Mrs. Robinson, Sa'eed once again pulls from the metaphors of the city and the mountain in reference to desire. Whereas the comparison of Mrs. Robinson relates her to Cairo, while relating the city itself to a mountain, the character depicts Seymour as London "changed into a woman" and the predicted conquest as a "tent peg" driven "into the mountain summit" (Salih 34). He makes the metaphor more directly political in a rewording: instead of setting up a tent, he plants a "banner" on the mountain, declaring the act "an ecstasy greater to me than love" (Salih 35). Sa'eed's imagination of the connection between imperialism and sexual conquest is not limited to his

own acts. The confluence of sexuality and political power seems to inspire the acts more than arise as consequence of them. Through Sa'eed, "colonialism is reconfigured as a sexual encounter," a metaphor of conquest that he literalizes with Seymour (Parry 81). For both Sa'eed and the colonizer, sexual attraction is driven by conquest, the drive itself aims toward the subjugation of the Other. Here, drive refers to the Lacanian sense, the sexual yearning for the "aim" (Lacan 165). While the aim of both the Sa'eed and the colonizer is thwarted, both received the "satisfaction of the drive" through "sublimation," a missing of the aim that nonetheless fulfills the drive. Despite the impossibility of Sa'eed's aim to the conquest of the European Woman—and imperial England's attempt at the thorough conquest of Africa—both figures satisfy the drive in another, only slightly less violent manner.

Within the seduction of Seymour, Sa'eed persistently refers to the Nile and reveals a preoccupation with simplicity, woven into his narratives of Africa, that serves to inform his own desires, not only directing those of his victim. The first mention of the Nile in the scene elicits a reaction of fascination from Seymour, who "cried out ecstatically," inspiring Sa'eed's continued talk of the river. The more obvious function of the Nile is one of signaling and justifying the exoticism of Sa'eed, with his intimate talk about the river helping to bring a geographical feature familiar to his audience into the more outrageously fictional of his stories of an unknown, and moreover non-existent, setting. However, the function of the reference shifts when Sa'eed begins talking to himself, in congratulations of finding such an effective cultural signifier. He addresses himself as "Mr. Mustafa" and declares that the "Nile, that snake god, has gained a new victim," playing with the river as signaling a natural phenomenon—behaving with disregard to human sentiment—and identifying it and himself with a non-European, non-Christian Otherness. The portrayal of the indifference of the river is a method found in the justification of himself and a fantasy of a natural simplicity that feeds his actions. He attempts to present himself as a non-agent, relinquishing to the "secret" of a natural order through which a "tree grows simply" and, he imagines to the narrator, "your grandfather has lived and will die simply" (Salih 35). However, the Nile also moves beyond the fatalistic vision of Sa'eed, signifying a more radical place of decision for the narrator.

In "Reflections on the Excess of Empire in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*," Benita Parry studies the novel as representative of a modernity outside of the European tradition, claiming that the repercussions of the postcolonial crisis within the novel resemble those of the modernism in the West. The author uses literary theorist Frederic

Jameson's definition of modernity as "the coexistence of realities from radically different moments in history" (James, qtd. in Parry at 73). Among a passage on the significance of geographical features in the novel, Parry explores the "multiple functions" of the Nile: as "a real river" and necessary "source of life for the villages," "a metaphor for an indifferent universe," and a transitional area "from equatorial Africa to England" (Parry 78). While the article claims to analyze the image in relation to both Sa'eed and the narrator, its short exploration tends to focus more on the relation of the river to the former. The preference for exploring the river in relation to Sa'eed certainly makes sense, given his interest in the river as both a geographical place and signifier of his own self-perception as an actor of indifferent simplicity. Parry acknowledges a significance of the river for the narrator, in relation to "the torsions of its course" and eventual "northwards" direction (Parry 78). In this way, the article posits the function of the Nile as one held in common for both Sa'eed and the narrator, avoiding exploring a significance it holds for the narrator alone. However, the latter's attempted suicide gives it another dimension of meaning, which the text never reveals in relation to Sa'eed.

In the last scene of the novel, the text uses the river as space in which the narrator deals with and ultimately rejects the fatalism of Sa'eed. For Sa'eed, the Nile represents an inevitability, an un-choosing part of a larger deterministic structure, a partial explanation for his choosing it for the mechanism of his own suicide. The narrator enters the water for reasons similar to those of Sa'eed and the transitionary function described by Parry. The initial attraction to the river stems from a feeling of needing "to do something," and he intends to swim to "the northern shore" (Salih 137). Furthering the resignation to fate, the narrator describes a "restful harmony," a simplicity of a "no longer thinking" existence recalling that which Sa'eed attributes to his grandfather (Salih 137). When the swimmer tires himself, however, the river becomes a space for decision. In the middle of the Nile, "half-way between north and south," the narrator finds himself unable to accept "the river's destructive forces," Sa'eed's vision of admirable indifference (Salih 138). The moment of incoming death inspires in the narrator a feeling of not only separation from the water, but a desire to act against it, throwing off the cynicism of his predecessor. Instead of dying "without any volition of mine," the narrator gestures, however hopelessly, for help—comparing himself to "a comic actor shouting on stage" (Salih 139). For the narrator, the Nile's indifference, or connection of North and South ultimately hold little value. Instead, the very indifference of the river allows him to express his own difference,

an expression of freedom despite the overwhelmingly chance of its futility.

In Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, the crisis of the postcolonial becomes a stage both for fatalism—expressed through Sa'eed's sexual violence—and for the emancipatory possibilities within hopelessness. The work posits the narrator, particularly in the last scene, as a character attempting to assert the human subject, despite the temptation to renounce it. Demonstrating the dangers of succumbing to fatalism and the fantasies of a pre-colonial simplicity, Salih presents a possibility for growth in the postcolonial world, an acceptance of the both the value of life and the attempt to better it.

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