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Blinded by Science: A Comparative Analysis of Modern and Victorian Science Fiction in Regard to Social Class, Economic Status, and Race

The science fiction genre, though often thought of as a form of escapism, can be used as a powerful social tool to highlight a number of topical social issues, in addition to helping to pioneer scientific thought. While gender, ethical, and moral issues are often found in the center of such narratives, class, economic, and racial disparity are also popular themes in science fiction. In short, there is a strong connection between science fiction and the representation of social themes and criticism. The same way that science and technology within science fiction narratives help to inspire scientific thought and progress, the social commentary offered in science fiction helps to highlight the shortcomings of society and illuminate the path forward. It is only through learning how to read this narrative genre that society can address some of the fundamental social problems and create a truly ideal world. Currently there is limited academic research in the humanities delving into the social commentary (racial, class, and economic) found within science fiction from any period. Many articles, like that of "Capitalism and Wasted Lives in *District 9* and *Elysium*" and "Biology and Politics: Defining the Boundaries," are chapters within books and only superficially gloss over the source material. Additionally, these articles do not effectively connect the themes with the overall society that the narrative is critiquing.

Regardless of the limited research, the social commentary offered by science fiction narratives provides not only crucial insight to the social mores of the past but also present societal frictions. Though racial, class, and economic commentary can readily be seen in modern science fiction works like *Star Trek, District 9,* and *Elysium,* these same themes are evident in the science fiction literature produced during the Victorian era. Within *Star Trek* and *District 9* there is a distinct racial undercurrent that is representative of race relations, whereas *Elysium* also elucidates a class divide through the application of healthcare in relation to the upper and lower-classes. What these movies have in common is the shared preconception that they have with the topical social views and commentary of the time.

In a similar manner, books like Wells' *the Time Machine* and *the Invisible Man* as well as Stevenson's *the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* all help to highlight a particular social (both racial and class /economic) commentary that is especially prevalent during the Victorian era. This shared societal criticism helps to cement how Victorian science fiction helped to not only influence the birth of the genre, but also how to address contemporary social concerns within the subject matter. As Menadue and Cheer mention in their article, "Human Culture and Science Fiction: A Review of the Literature, 1980-2016", "the relationship between research, culture, and science fiction is necessary, and the application of science fiction as a tool in the context of research should be encouraged" (Menadue). Within science fiction, the elements of technology, science, and progress help to promote the social disparities of the time period. Menadue's quote enhances this thought as well as highlights the association between social concepts (e.g. race and class) and science fiction. The social themes presented in these narratives are largely concerned in the manner that class structures and oppressive politics recreate themselves, even in the far reaches of space and time. In order to analyze the contemporary

social commentary and the correlation between modern and Victorian science fiction, this paper will be examining the social themes within *the Time Machine, the Invisible Man, the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as representatives of Victorian science fiction while *Star Trek, District 9,* and *Elysium* will be used to highlight the application of social commentary found in modern science fiction.

The world of the Victorian era

Through the Victorian era's passion for discovery, science, and knowledge, the science fiction genre began to truly blossom. As noted by Owen, a prominent Victorian industrialist, "the human mind has made the most rapid and extensive strides in the knowledge of human nature, and in general knowledge" (qtd. Ashley). Many great scientific advances were made in this era, including evolutionary biology, medicine, and developments in communication. This passion for knowledge and science was hence dubbed "the march of intellect" and helped to give rise to the Victorian science fiction novel (qtd. Ashley). Even to this day, one of the most prevailing aspects, books, and genres of this period, can be seen in the emergence of the science fiction novel. The science fiction novels created from this time period remain popular and topical, as can be seen with modern cinematic interpretations of *the Time Machine* and *the Invisible Man. The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has also been very popular in modern western culture, as can be seen with the novel's lead character having a vital role in *the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen,* several classic films based off of the narrative, the book helping to serve as partial inspiration for *the Hulk,* and even the creation of a musical that loosely follows the original story (DeFalco, 200).

The social themes of class and race that are found within these novels are highly representative of the views and contentions of the Victorian era itself. Thus, in order to fully

analyze the social context found within *the Time Machine*, *the Invisible Man*, and *the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* the cultural landscape of the Victorian era must also be examined. While it is impossible to completely cover the intricacies of such a complex and dynamic time period, this paper will endeavor to highlight some of the more influential aspects of class and race during this epoch.

The Victorian era was a time period renowned for a great number of social movements and literary inspirations. Though class structure influenced British culture for many years, this class and economic divide was of particular focus for the Victorian populace. This long-standing tradition and belief of class division is reflected not only in the culture of England, but also the laws. One of the most infamous instances of a law based on class distinction can be seen with the sumptuary laws. These laws, which originated during the 1300s, reinforced class structure by dictating which clothes and attire individuals should wear based on their economic and class status.

Though created in the 1300s, these laws continued to influence British society even during the Victorian era. Whitlock's text, *Crime, Gender and Consumer Culture in Nineteenth-Century England,* delves into the manner in which these fashion laws influenced class structure. Whitlock notes how "[f]ashion was a badge of class status, wealth, and a particularly important starting point to judge character and respectively, those treasured belongings of the Victorian age" (108). Thus, not only were clothes and attire used to denote an individual's characteristics, but also their social status, parish affiliations, and any crimes that they may have committed. *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* further notes the lengths in which fashion marked a significant class and economic division during the Victorian age by highlighting how, "pauper street cleaners [wore] clothing [that] was stamped with the parish to which they

belonged…" (Richmond, 288). In this manner, regardless of their social standing the Victorian people would constantly be reminded of their class standing and economic status every time they dressed for the day. In this fashion, it would be impossible for an individual of a lower or working-class to dress above their station. The clothes of the lower and working-classes served as a noose that kept them from rising to a higher position. Additionally, it led to individuals being judged on their poor status or class due to the way they dressed rather than on merit or character.

Other laws of the Victorian era only helped to exacerbate the situation. During the 1800s, due to harvests failing and the Corn Laws (high taxes on imported food) being passed, economic strife was especially prevalent. As described by Standiford the situation during this time period was a, "severe depression [due to the] bad harvest, [which] led to shortages and high prices..." (52). The passing of the Corn Laws also created tension between the classes with many conservative proponents in parliament supporting it while others, like Dickens, were against the negative ramifications of the law. As mentioned in the 1840s publication "A Plea for the Poor" by Noel, "the want of employment has unquestionably been aggravated by the Corn Laws" (4). As evidenced by the primary evidence above, due to the economic situation already favoring the upper-class and the rich, the passing of the Corn Laws only served to make the working and poor-classes' situation even more dire. The working-class and the poor had little choice to obtain food between the subpar harvests of domestic crops and the high costs of the Corn Laws. Black goes on further to highlight the economic and class disparity during these times and exasperated by the Corn Laws:

> As the powerful and privileged attempted to confront the range of social crises facing a newly industrialized nation, economic depression, unemployment, political instability in

> Europe and a series of crop failures in the 1840s… caused a disproportionate level of suffering for the poor (1420).

These quotes help to illustrate how some Victorians viewed the law's impact on society and how even when they were first passed it was met with a great deal of contention. The negative consequences of these laws have become more transparent as the years have passed.

Other laws, such as the New Poor Law of 1834, allowed the poor and working-classes to receive economic assistance at the cost of working in the infamous workhouses; these workhouses served to, "punish and stigmatize" and had "inadequate housing and slum conditions" (Black, 1417). In Bentley's 1857 testimony regarding child labor, she perfectly highlights how austere the working climate was for workers. Bentley describes the working conditions for laborers as nothing short of brutal with long work hours, dangerous work environments, and little-to-no food ("Contexts" 1-2). As illustrated by Bentley's description, these laws, combined with the heavy emphasis on class structure and economic standing helped to further aggravate the class division of the Victorian age, with the poor and working-classes having to live and work in harsh environments, while the upper and middle-classes were able to live in more ideal conditions. Furthermore, as evidenced by these preoccupations with class, status, and clothing, class consciousness played a major role in the way that Victorians perceived themselves and others. This heavy concentration on class and economic standing not only related to an individual's standing in society, but also bled through to racial relations and views.

This racial-class correlation can especially be seen in regard to how certain ethnic and racial groups lived during the Victorian era. "A Plea for the Poor" notes how the Irish people suffered from the economic constraints of the time. Noel transcribes that, "nearly one-third of the Irish population of Liverpool would be found, at any time, to be starving there in damp, dark,

and pestiferous cellars" (2). However, it was not just the Irish people who suffered from class and economic disparity; other races and ethnicities were looked down upon due to their poverty and physical characteristics including Asians, Africans, and the Jewish people. Famous Victorian journalist and writer Mayhew greatly looked down upon the non-English poor stating that, "[these]...spare, snake-eyed Asiatics...are as cunning as they look and can detect a sympathetic face among a crowd" in his description of Indian beggars (Black,1758-1759). However, when it came to the English, Mayhew was more sympathetic to their plights of poverty (Black, 1758). Other ethnicities, like the Jewish people for example, were often the target of injustice and stereotyping as can be seen in the manner in which they were denied citizenship, education, jobs within politics and the military, and also the negative portrayal within literature (Black, 1432). This overall analogous view concerning poverty, discrimination, and race was not uncommon in the Victorian era, and science was even used to promote such ideologies.

Though the Victorian era was known for a heightened passion concerning progress and science, there was also a heavy emphasis on pseudoscience, especially social Darwinism. With the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* the entire Victorian belief system was called into question regarding matters of faith and science. In addition to this spiritual upheaval and revolutionary thinking regarding scientific thought, Darwin's theories had a major impact on the Victorian social environment, especially concerning evolution and race. Social Darwinism, as championed by Spencer, argued that the racial differences between different cultures and societies was a result of evolutionary growth. Hence, the argument was that one race or society was biologically superior to that of others since it was more cultured and developed. As further described by Black:

> The sort of anthropological theorizing that Adam Smith and other eighteenth-century thinkers had engaged in … and remained popular throughout the nineteen century…[and] according to this way of thinking, other peoples were not inherently inferior; they were simply at a less fully advanced stage of social and economic organization than were European peoples….pseudo-scientific claims of a biological sort...were made (1748).

This above excerpt helps to illustrate how issues of science, race, and class merged together during the Victorian period. The mixture of science and social thought can also be seen in several key science fiction novels, most notably *the Time Machine* where the fusion of class and race is augmented through scientific application. Thus, not only do science fiction novels of the time illustrate how powerful science and progress were for this era, but also how concerns regarding class, economic status, and race were at the forefront of the Victorian populace mindset.

Wells, his works, and Social Criticism

The ideologies of race, class, and economic status are not only seen in the general Victorian outlook, but also that of the authors of the period like Wells and Stevenson. Though often considered one of the founding fathers of the science fiction genre, Wells utilized a great deal of Victorian values and his own ideals within his works. This can especially be seen within *the Invisible Man* and *the Time Machine* where elements of Wells' own beliefs and ideologies can be seen within the text. Cheyett's article, "H. G. Wells and the Jews: Antisemitism, socialism and English culture" goes into detail concerning Wells sociopolitical beliefs and how those concepts impacted the narrative quality of his books. In particular, Cheyett mentions how, "Wells distinguishes himself from both revolutionary Marxism and Fabian reformism and, in

fact, urges his readers to join the Labor Party" (23). Furthermore, as noted in Mankus' article, "Wells was probably the most famous member of the socialistic 'Fabian Society' in the years 1903 [until] 1908" (12). Even without knowing Wells' political beliefs, the Marxist overtones provide a paramount theme within his texts. This socialist aspect combined with Wells' racial ideologies help to form the basis of his narratives, especially within *the Invisible Man* and *the Time Machine* where class and racial divisions merge together to highlight the shortcomings of Victorian society.

The Logic of Fantasy: H.G Wells and Science Fiction goes into further detail regarding race relations and how Wells' views on class are correlated with that of racial divisions. In this text, Huntington notes how, "Wells is less a social Darwinist when it comes to the virtues of the rich whom he sees as complacent and reactionary in a competitive, progressive world, and therefore an 'accidental' class" (181). Thus, the features of the upper-class are more accidental and the biological traits that are attributed based on class can be viewed as superficial; therefore, the only true measure of an individual is not based on race or ethnicity, but rather, the intelligence that comes from being one of the "scientific élite" (Cheyett, 22). This concept seems to specifically target the sumptuary laws, where fashion and clothes are indicators of virtue and class.

While not often considered to be one of Wells' most topical texts, *the Invisible Man* does help to illustrate the class and economic division that was quite prevalent during the Victorian era. Wells' *the Invisible Man* places an emphasis on class and economic structure, especially in regard to science and scientific process. The story centers on Griffin, the titular invisible man and Dr. Kemp, Griffin's old friend from medical school. Compared to Griffon, Dr. Kemp is financially well off and even has servants. This class distinction creates a juxtaposition between

both men. At the start of the narrative, Griffin has already unlocked invisibility and is staying at an inn. As his funds run out, Griffin begins to resort to criminal behavior and descends into madness. Despite Griffin's criminal actions the use of science in this text is used to depict class and economic disparity and relations. In this sense, Griffin becomes a sort of Byronic hero who is misjudged by society due to his own lack of class, race, and value. As articulately noted by Walker's article, "Exchange Short-Circuited: The Isolated Scientist in H. G. Wells's "The Invisible Man"":

> The Scientist is invisible in Wells's novel because he has no social status. And he lacks a social status for two reasons: first, because he refuses it and second, because society denies it to him. On the other hand, his scientific theories, which are his only products are outrageously misunderstood and devalued by innkeepers and policemen and town gossips. Because he cannot exchange his theories for anything, he appears to these people to be a nonentity (156).

Thus, Wells is not only using Griffin to circumvent class, but also to highlight the way science can be used to transcend social and economic status, and race. Since Griffin is invisible, race no longer has any meaning to him, the other characters, or the reader. Though there are some descriptions of Griffin prior to his invisibility as being, "almost an albino, six feet high, and broad, with a pink and white face and red eyes" this description does not play a huge part in the narrative (Wells, 161). Instead, Griffin must be judged on his ambition, intellect, and actions since like his class, his race is no longer a factor. In fact, this description is only mentioned once in passing through the entire narrative. By defying sociopolitical boundaries, Wells helps to highlight how intelligence is the greatest measure of an individual. This trait is not determined by

class, wealth, or race but rather by individual merit, hence illustrating how science defies the social boundaries that are placed by cultural expectations.

Class and economic status are not only relevant to Griffin's character, but also the manner in which conflict is resolved within the text. Instead of the upper-class coming to Kemp's aid or Kemp rescuing himself when Griffin is trying to kill him, Kemp is saved by the villagers. Kemp even runs away from Griffin, highlighting a sort of cowardice that is unbecoming to a protagonist. Not only does this action further juxtapose Griffin's and Kemp's characters, but this resolution represents a Marxist reading as the upper-class and authority represented by the police force and Kemp himself are unable to stop Griffin's violent advances. However, the working and lower-classes as visualized by the villagers are able to save Kemp and put a stop to Griffin's madness. In this sense it is the working and poor-classes that have most of the power within the text; both as the villagers who put a stop to Griffin and Griffin himself for being able to harness his own intellect and propel the narrative forward with his ambition.

The Time Machine is perhaps the most evident of the classic examples listed which demonstrates a clear social and racial divide within the characters. As described in *The Logic of Fantasy*, "*the Time Machine* presents a direct warning about the disastrous potential of class division" (41). This manner of thought is especially evident in the way that the two major races, the Morlocks and the Eloi, interact with each other and when their shared histories are further explored.

The Time Machine focuses on a nameless inventor, the Time Traveler, who discovers a way in which to travel through time. Though he goes through a few different eras, the most notable of his adventures is when he meets the Morlocks and the Eloi and forms a friendship with an Eloi, Weena. After the nameless protagonist journeys to the future, he is struck by the

evolutionary differences between the two descendants of humanity. The Morlocks are shown as bestial and monstrous with a deep carnivorous craving for meat, particularly that of the Eloi. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Eloi are depicted as being peace-loving, childlike, and serene. When the Time Traveler first meets the Eloi, he mistakes them for the dominant race on the planet. It is only afterwards that he discovers the dark truth; that it is the Morlocks that are the dominant race and they are farming the Eloi like for food.

Based on these physical descriptions and overall species traits, it is difficult to see how both species originated from the same family. Yet, a shared human ancestor is indeed the common denominator for both the Morlocks and the Eloi. The Morlocks and the Eloi are depicted in the novel are separate races; however, these two races were able to come into existence based upon class divisions. The Time Traveler notes the difference between these two species and how they were able to evolve as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> The Upperworld people might once have been the favored aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants: but that had long since passed away. The two species that had resulted from the evolution of man were sliding down towards, or had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like the Carlovignan kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful futility. They still possessed the earth on sufferance: since the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come at last to find the daylit surface intolerable (Wells, 71).

As highlighted by the example above, the use of science within *the Time Machine* helps to emphasize the evident class distinctions during the Victorian time period. However, in a manner that is analogous to *the Invisible Man* these class divisions are not illustrated in a flattering fashion; Wells uses the races and the class divisions to help highlight the shortcomings of such a

social system. In this manner, class begets race and so these social variances help to promote social Darwinist tendencies, until all that is left of the human race (at this stage of the text) are the monstrous Morlocks or the beautiful but naive Eloi. It is because of this textual preconception with the lower-classes and devolution as well as the growing laziness and ignorance of the upper-classes that Wells can highlight the social distinctions of class and race during the time period.

The overall physical depiction of the Eloi and the Morlocks is not the only textual evidence of class disparity. Not only does the text use science to emphasize how class could impact physical evolution, but by compounding race and class into one social component, it is also able to highlight how fluid both categories are. This aspect is especially shown in the relationship between both the Eloi and the Morlocks and how it remains based on that of shifting class and economic-based associations. In the Time Traveler's original era (The Victorian period) the upper-class would be able to obtain goods and services from the lower and working-classes through payment. A similar sort of relationship still remains. Mankus' article highlights this association perfectly:

> In the year 802,701, the 'Upper Class' or the 'Eloi' remained above ground, and their advanced civilization, full of amenities, has turned them into weak, lazy, and dependent creatures. Like the bourgeoisie in the late nineteenth century, the 'Eloi are living on whatever the workers provide. But unlike the real working-class in Wells' century, the 'Eloi' do not pay with money. They have to pay with their lives, since they are actually the food the carnivorous Morlocks are feeding themselves on (13).

This excerpt is further cemented on how it is now the Eloi who find themselves on the bottom part of the social and food chain since they are being farmed by the Morlocks for food. In

Victorian times, this dynamic would have been reversed. In this manner, though Weena's fate is tragic and the Eloi are depicted as almost child-like in their mannerisms and intelligence, there is very little sympathy that can be summoned for their overall predicament. As the Time Traveler himself notes regarding the Eloi's fate, "it as a rigorous punishment of human selfishness. Man had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labors of his fellow-man, had taken Necessity as his watchword and excuse, and in the fullness of time Necessity had come home to him" (Wells, 13). As evidenced by this quote and by Mankus' excerpt above, due to the upper-class' way of life and standard of living, they have brought about the terms of their own destruction. While the Time Traveler does sympathize with the Eloi's fate, the reader and he know that they are the heralds of their own doom and that they have sealed their own fate through the selfishness and ignorance of their ancestors.

Stevenson, his works, and Social Criticism

In a similar manner to Wells, Stevenson was also influenced by the class and racial discourse of the time. Though Wells' remains one of the great forefathers of the science fiction genre, Stevenson was a bit more interdisciplinary in his writing. He is especially known "as the savior of "masculine romance," [and] his adventure novels [were] for both adults and children" (Norquay). Like Wells, however, Stevenson's own sociopolitical views influenced his writing style and views. As noted by Norquay, Stevenson used his texts "to address larger issues around imperialism and personal, political, and national identities" (Norquay). In fact, for a time in his life, Stevenson was involved with Socialism and had concerns regarding race and imperialism. These ideologies can also be found in one of Stevenson's most famous novels, *the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*

While this text is often viewed as an example of Victorian gothic literature and early psychoanalysis, the use of science and chemical elements within the narrative also help to classify it as a work of science fiction. Through the use of a serum that is created by Dr. Jekyll, the doctor is able to undergo a physical transformation to that of his alter ego, Mr. Hyde. Along with this physical transformation, there is also a major alteration with the duo's behavior and personality. Though this metamorphosis is often used in terms of psychoanalysis (with Jekyll being the ego and Hyde being the id) there is also a social Darwinist and class component within the narrative as well. Using science (i.e. the chemical compound that was created by Dr. Jekyll) Stevenson and the reader explores the devolution of an individual along with providing commentary regarding class and race. As can be seen through the juxtaposition of the description of both Jekyll's and Hyde's features in the following scene there is a sense of biological attributes that are correlated with class:

> I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eyes fell upon my hand. Now the hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size; it was large, firm, white and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bedclothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde (Stevenson, 47).

The excerpt above evokes a sense of social Darwinism, with the description of Jekyll's white and comely hand functioning as the epitome of the upper-class and civilization. In contrast, Hyde's own appendages are illustrated as coarse, dusky, and hairy, hence depicting a correlation between savagery and the lower-class pleasures. While initially such a striking variance between the upper-class Jekyll and the lower-class Hyde would invoke a sense of class superiority, what

Stevenson actually does here is more potent. At the beginning of the narrative Jekyll is set up as the ideal gentleman. However, his delinquent forays are not a result of him simply turning into Hyde. Throughout his life, Jekyll experienced these lower-class pleasures and indulged in them away from society's prying eyes. This is mentioned by Jekyll himself in the final chapter:

> [I] endowed besides with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellowmen, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honorable and distinguished future. And indeed, the worst of my faults was a certain imp...I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame (Stevenson, 42).

Stevenson's narrative provides a social commentary on the hypocrisy of the upper-class and their values and morals. Despite being supposedly superior in terms of morals, intelligence, and physical appearance, Jekyll still succumbs to the desires of the lower-classes. Hyde is thus a reflection of himself as Jekyll with his class status stripped away. Another detail that highlights this class hypocrisy includes Jekyll's and Utterson's drinking habits; the fact that they drink gin over wine highlights their "lower appetites" (Goh, 166). Gin was considered a drink of the lower-classes while wine was viewed as socially acceptable for the upper-classes. The fact that Jekyll and Utterson overtly favor these drinks along with other passions helps to illustrate that despite their high class standing, they have the same passions and vices as an individual from any other class (both higher and lower). Though these criticisms are subtle, they remain a potent piece of social commentary concerning Victorian race and class.

Despite the blending of scientific disciplines, themes, and elements, *the Time Machine*, *the Invisible Man,* and *the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* have a great many similarities. In all three texts, the author uses science and intelligence as the measure of an individual and as a way of subverting or highlighting the social distinctions of race and class. Griffin's studies into invisibility come as a result of his own passion, ambition, and intellect. Likewise, the Time Traveler's forays into the future are a result of his own curiosity and need to explore. Stevenson's Jekyll accurately captures this desire for knowledge and the power of knowledge with Hyde's conversation to Lanyon:

> "And now," said he, "to settle what remains. Will you be wise? will you be guided?...think before you answer, for it shall be done as you decide. As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you" (Stevenson, 50).

This passion and desire for science and knowledge as shown in the above excerpt not only frames each individual novel but also helps to augment the criticism regarding topical Victorian societal concerns. Wells and Stevenson do this by having their narratives address the class and racial dissension that predominated Victorian thought. Though both Wells and Stevenson are known for different writing styles and genres, the use of science, passion, and intellect within their respective texts is used to highlight a striking class and racial commentary at Victorian values.

Within *the Invisible Man,* Griffin uses science and invisibility as a means of defying class order and having individuals judge him solely based on intelligence. Even race has no meaning

as Griffin's invisibility removes any racial traits or marks, forcing the reader and others to appreciate and acknowledge his intellect. Furthermore, instead of the narrative conflict being resolved by the upper-class (as represented by Kemp) or the authoritative police force, it is the villagers that are able to bring a resolution. Through this method Wells highlights the great power of the masses and the lower-class over that of the upper-class.

In a similar manner, *the Time Machine* also helps to highlight a similar class commentary. Within the text, the upper-classes as represented by the Eloi are depicted as being beautiful but effete, child-like, and naive. The lower and working-classes as portrayed by the Morlocks are monstrous and savage; yet despite their evident brutality they are still cunning and intelligent enough to farm their Eloi-human cousins. Due to evolution these two classes of humanity diverged into two separate races. However, instead of being a glowing commentary on the upper-classes or the Eloi, Wells uses this dynamic to illustrate the fragility of a class system. This frailty is depicted in how the upper-classes in the Victorian period utilize and take for granted the lower and working-classes through unfair labor laws, wages, etc. After centuries of this dynamic, the Eloi pay the Morlocks for their utopian world with their lives. Through this relationship the upper-classes and the Eloi brought doom upon themselves and so any sympathy for them through either the reader or the Time Traveler is diminished.

Stevenson's *the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* takes this Marxist relationship a step forward. Stevenson accomplishes this by highlighting the hypocritical manner in which the upper-classes behave. Even though for all his life Jekyll indulges in shameful vices, his appearance, status, and reputation do not suffer because of his class. However, when he dons the personality and appearance of Hyde, the pleasures and vices that Jekyll had partaken in become even more vile. The sins remain the same for each aspect of the character, yet, due to class

inferiority Hyde is demonstrated as a hulking figure while his upper-class counterpart, Jekyll, is shown to be an epitome of a gentleman. Furthermore, by showing a physical difference between both Jekyll and Hyde, Stevenson is providing a commentary on social Darwinism. The vices and pleasures that both characters engage in are construed as analogous; but, due to their social station this results in a notable variance between Jekyll's and Hyde's appearance. Since Jekyll is shown to be Hyde's upper-class counterpart, his features are reflected in classical manner while Hyde because of his own class status is shown to be more haggard and animalistic.

The Modern world of Science Fiction

Despite the passage of time, and changes in technology, culture, and setting, many science fiction narratives still retain the same sort of social commentary that was found within Victorian science fiction. This similarity can be seen in contemporary literature and visual media. Like Victorian science fiction, advances in technology and society (the rise of feminism, the Civil Rights Movement, the economic recession, etc.) can be reflected in the elements of contemporary science fiction. Though the aesthetics, enhanced computer graphics and visuals, methods of storytelling, and character archetypes have shifted so that they are more relevant to a modern audience, at its core, most modern science fiction helps to highlight economic and racial disparity. As highlighted by Menadue, "[s]cience fiction is significant in studies of human culture as it is an ancient and enduring form of literature that has been part of what Brian Aldiss called our "cultural wallpaper" since the origins of recorded history." Some notable examples of contemporary science fiction that fits these criteria are *District 9*, *Elysium*, and arguably one of the most popular and influential, *Star Trek* and its subsequent renditions. Despite being released at different times, taking place in a variety of settings, and being produced by directors of

different nationalities, the aforementioned science fiction examples possess an analogous social commentary.

During the 1960s in America there were a great many cultural changes, especially that of civil rights and liberties for minorities. During this time many public areas and systems were divided based on the color of an individual; for example, African Americans could only ride on the back of a bus or were not allowed to use restrooms meant for Caucasians. America's segregated history between races came to a boil during this age as can notably be seen with the Sit-in movements, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and other nonviolent protests and campaigns. These protests were meant to combat the segregation and discrimination of the time. One especially potent account can be seen with African American comedian, Gregory; when he was just a young child, he was trying to raise money for his poor family by shining shoes for patrons of different races:

> White and brown shoes. I didn't want to get the brown polish on the white part so I put my other hand on the back of the white woman's leg to steady myself...One of the white men, a man who wasn't laughing jumped off his bar stool. "Get your dirty black hands off that white lady, you nigger bastard." He kicked me right in the mouth (Gregory, 10).

This type of violent discrimination against African Americans was common during this era and was one of the many concepts that served as the basis for social and racial reform. Renowned Civil Rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr., tried to fight against this type of aggressive behavior, as well as help provide equal rights for all African Americans. Race and the Civil Rights Movement was not the only point of contention during this era; class and economic status were also major social factors during the 1960s. *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* mentions how:

> even in the go-go years of the 1960s economy 'plenty' was unevenly distributed in the United States...White working-class taxpayers... already fearful about blacks moving in their neighborhoods, resented the war on poverty as a payoff to... 'welfare queens' and 'poverty pimps' (199).

Due to this unequal dispersal of affluence, African Americans were not able to obtain the same sort of economic status that can be seen with Caucasians. This racial and economic correlation is not only evident with 1960s America but also with Apartheid in South Africa.

Apartheid was the term coined for the intense racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa. It was only in the 1990s that this social structure was finally dissipated; however, due to the long period of implementation the lasting cultural effects still ripple into contemporary times. As described by William and Dubow, Apartheid had, "[m]any facilities and services - from education and health to transport and recreation - [that] were progressively restricted and divided on racial basis, more tightly than under the 'Jim Crow' laws in the United States" (4). The lasting impact from such a stringent social system has greatly influenced the economic environment of South Africa and its citizens. This impact can especially be seen with the education system and how the Bantu Education Act only prepared native Africans for jobs in menial or laboring service (Brynes). After decades of such discrimination and treatment, many native Africans now live in urban poverty (Wagner). Further correlation between race and class in South Africa will be explored in the section, "Blomkamp's works and Social Criticism."

Despite the passage of time, class and race still maintain a presence in contemporary American politics and culture. Immigration from Latin American countries, like Cuba and Mexico, are a major point of contention in American politics. Policies, such as the wet-foot dry-foot policy, allowed Cuban immigrants asylum in America. This policy created friction between

both countries, as can be seen with the famous story of Elián González during the late 1990s. While crossing the Atlantic to Florida, González's mother drowned. Though he had extended family in Florida who wanted him to remain, his father wanted him to return to Cuba. In the end, González's father won the custody battle. Even today immigration laws continue to impact society, as can be illustrated by the building of a wall on the American-Mexican border and how its construction has caused tensions between individuals, governments, and political parties.

Healthcare has also become a vital political and economic point in contemporary American culture. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare or Affordable Care Act) was passed in order to ensure that those American citizens who could not otherwise afford healthcare, could be presented with the opportunity. The costs, legal challenges, social impact, and benefits created a political divide with those in support of the federal statute and those against. Regardless, this healthcare act was issued in order to help those of the working and poor-classes to have access to the same sort of healthcare that is provided for those who are more economically stable. Polls also demonstrated a correlation with 61% of Hispanics and 91% of African Americans being in favor of the healthcare act (Dimock 8).

In *District 9, Elysium,* and *Star Trek*, there is a special emphasis upon these racial and economic themes. This social commentary is not only reflective of the respective eras but also demonstrate a striking resemblance to those themes, likeness, and social issues that are found within their Victorian counterparts. The political and social views of the directors, *Elysium's* and *District 9's* Blomkamp, and *Star Trek's* Roddenberry all play an imperative part in their cinematic narratives. Roddenberry said concerning his creation, "[u]nderstand that Star Trek is more than just my political philosophy, my racial philosophy, my [it is my] overview on life and the human condition" (Nichols, 163). These views are evident not only in the way that *Star Trek*

represents Roddenberry's racial and economic themes within the narrative but also how the show was a pioneer in terms of cultural values. Blomkamp's own upbringing and social views also play a vital role in his narrative style.

Blomkamp's works and Social Criticism

The shared narrative values and aesthetics in *District 9* and *Elysium* are exemplified by the similar themes that are presented in the films. Blomkamp's own experience from growing up and living in post-apartheid South Africa has given his films, a common theme based off his own economic and racial views. In fact, Blomkamp notes regarding his film, *District 9* that:

> The film doesn't exist without Jo' burg. It's not like I had a story and then I was trying to pick a city. It's totally the other way around. I actually think Johannesburg represents the future...from a photographic standpoint, there was what I wanted to convey about Johannesburg, which is that it's almost this burnt, nuclear wasteland, at least in winter… Then there's this constant sense of an urban prison, with razor wire and electric fences and armed guards everywhere. It's a very oppressive-feeling city (qtd. Frassinelli 39).

This excerpt helps to illustrate the strong correlation between the directors' personal views, experiences, and social beliefs and how it relates to the narrative that he is telling. The commentary on racial inequality and economic disparity is what creates Blomkamp's narrative; and without Blomkamp's experiences and observations, his work would not possess the same sort of meaning or convey the same message. This correlation is seen especially within his film, *District 9.*

District 9 is a 2009 science fiction film that takes place in South Africa. During the course of the movie the viewer is informed that in the 1980s a race of aliens, known to humans

as the “Prawns” due to their appearance, left their planet to seek refuge. Due to circumstances outside their control they ended up in Johannesburg. Though this race is technologically superior to humans, they are forced to live in penurious slums and are treated as second-class citizens despite their evident sentience and intellect. The film centers on a human official, Wikus van de Merwe, who serves as the main protagonist. At the beginning of the narrative, Merwe confiscates Prawn technology and accidentally ingests some of the fluid from the device. The chemicals slowly end up mutating Merwe’s DNA so that over the course of the movie he transforms into a Prawn himself. Through this transformation, the viewer is able to comprehend the extent of injustice and discrimination that is being directed towards the Prawns by humans.

In this manner, unlike the books covered thus far, *District 9* utilizes aliens to highlight the economic, class, and racial disparity. It is no secret that the events of *District 9* are meant to mirror actual events that happened in Johannesburg and topical racial and economic relations in post-apartheid South Africa. The science aspect of the film is used to create a particular type of social commentary regarding racial and economic disparity. As further noted in *Red Alert: Marxist Approaches to Science Fiction Cinema* in regard to the economic transition from Apartheid to a democracy, “the bulk of the black population remained poor and by the same token marginalized from the more affluent, white citizens, confirming Marx’s diagnosis that political equality not accompanied by economic equality is empty, as it does not lead to true egalitarianism…” (Mazierska, 75). This same theme is the narrative center of *District 9*, but instead of illustrating the black population as the group that is being marginalized, Blomkamp utilizes the Prawns in order to make his message more potent and topical. While Apartheid is over, the economic effects still ripple through society. Thus, even though the government has

changed into a democracy the black population remains at an economic disadvantage due to their impoverished living; hence race, economic status, and class have become tightly correlated.

The Prawns within *District 9* serve a similar role within the narrative; since they too are poor and live in the slums their own species correlate to their own status within society. As mentioned in Wagner's article, "District 9, race and neoliberalism in post-apartheid Johannesburg," "[t]he indifferences by the South Africans in the film carry strong ideological and social signification to the past: the extraterrestrials encode the urban landscape which is then decoded by audiences as they interpret the haunting remnants of segregation and urban poverty now reanimated by immigrant aliens (doubling for Nigerians and Zimbabweans) in the narrative" (Wagner). Furthermore, by replacing humans with aliens, Blomkamp's film can highlight the economic and racial injustice not only in South Africa, but also in other countries and societies. The reason for this narrative fluidity is due to the use of aliens. Aliens can symbolize any race or ethnic group that is undergoing hardship, and thus they can correlate their struggles with that of the Prawns.

Blomkamp's *Elysium's* carries a similar social commentary within its narrative. *Elysium* takes place in 2154; during this time the human race has become stratified, with the lower-classes living on a desolate Earth. Meanwhile, the elite and upper-classes are able to make their homes on Elysium, a space habitat that resides in orbit around Earth. Like its classical namesake suggests, Elysium is a paradise where disease, old age, and strife are virtually unknown elements to the populace. One scene shows a woman with cancer stepping into a device and the machine cleanses her of the disease. This scene is juxtaposed with the gritty, poverty that overruns Earth and the lower-class population that resides on the planet. This cancer curing scene is further contrasted in regard to one of the principal characters, a young girl named Matilda, who is dying

of cancer on Earth. Her mother, Frey, is a nurse and childhood best friend of Max DaCosta the main protagonist of the film.

During the events of the movie, Max receives a lethal dose of radiation poisoning. In order to heal himself and help save Matilda's life, he must find a way to enter Elysium. Elysium however is strictly guarded, and a computer system keeps any non-Elysium individuals out of the space habitat with lethal force. The majority of the main characters, including Max and Frey, are also Hispanic, while those individuals who live on Elysium are primarily Caucasian. This combination of status and race are compounded together in a way that is reminiscent of *District 9* where the lower-classes are forced to live in what essentially amounts to the slums while the upper-class could live in a more privileged environment. However, not only does *Elysium* highlight this economic and racial disparity through living standards, but the movie also depicts topical social commentary regarding American immigration and health care. This correlation between reality and science fiction is further explored within *Red Alert:*

> This brings to mind the growing indifference of rich countries to the plight of the poor, as well as the plight of their "internal aliens," usually consisting of ethnic minorities. Hence, we can argue that *Elysium* offers reenactment of a Mexican American border crisis...because in all these situations poor, unhealthy, and oppressed people put all their hopes in illegal immigration. For the underprivileged the greatest attraction of Elysium is a "med bay." ...it can also be seen as a metaphor of "full treatment" that wealthy people receive these days… The disparity between the residents of Elysium and the Earthlings in their access to healthcare confirms [that] [t]he poor...have neither. (Mazierska, 84).

Though the science demonstrated within *Elysium* is still out of reach, the social themes that are addressed within the film are topics that are still relevant today. *Elysium* was first released in

2013 while the controversial Obamacare was first offered in 2010. The emphasis on the medicine and longevity offered in Elysium makes the correlation between these aspects evident. Furthermore, the immigration from Earth to Elysium bears a striking similarity to the wet-foot dry-foot policy between the United States and Cuba. Thus, not only is *Elysium* offering commentary regarding immigration policy, but also healthcare for the masses at a time when it was still a heated topic.

Star Trek and Social Criticism

Out of the examples listed so far, *Star Trek* is probably one of the best-known examples of science fiction and social criticism. As described in *The Essential Science Fiction Television Reader* "[t]he original *Star Trek* television series, which ran on NBC from 1966 to 1969, is arguably the best-known single work in the history of science fiction" (Telotte, 195). Since its inception, there have been numerous spinoff novelizations, movies, series, video games, toys, comics, etc. *Star Trek* and its many renditions also offer a social commentary on topical conditions of their respective eras. Though compared to the other narratives that have been examined thus far, *Star Trek* offers a more utopian look into the future and into the science and technology that is being utilized by the characters. This aspect is captured in Brooker's commentary concerning the original series:

> [*Star Trek*] often featured thoughtful and thought-provoking subject matter, and, after two cold war decades in which much of American science fiction was dominated by pessimistic postapocalyptic narratives and xenophobic alien invasion tales, it was refreshingly upbeat in its vision of the potential for better living through technological and ethical advancement. (Telotte, 195).

This tactic not only creates an optimistic view of race and social relations, but also offers a subtle commentary indicating that the way to reach such an idealistic future is through a similar social structure. Hence, the most potent aspect of *Star Trek*'s commentary is not what is being said, but rather what is not being articulated and what actions and events are portrayed as conventional. This concept is especially prominent within *the Original Series*. The storyline of the *Star Trek* franchise regardless of iteration follows a similar pattern; within the series there is usually a Federation spaceship that explores the galaxy and along this journey, the crew and captain meet with a diverse range of aliens, planets, cultures, and adventures. However, it is the range of diverse characters and a lack of a working-class population that creates the subtle social criticism within the series.

One of the most prominent characters from the original series is Communications Officer Nyota Uhura. The original series aired during the height of the Civil Rights Movement; hence by having a prominent African American female in a leading role, as well as having her character portray a skilled officer, *Star Trek* enables science to help transcend race, and individual worth is measured based on merit. Uhura is a notable character for a variety of reasons, such as her ability to transcend science fiction and impact reality. This dual nature is especially highlighted with the famous first aired interracial kiss between Uhura and her captain, Kirk. This incident occurred in the episode, "Plato's Stepchildren." During this episode captain Kirk and his crew answer a distress signal from a race of humanoid aliens called the Platonians; upon landing they are soon captured and forced to act for the entertainment of the Platonians. Though Kirk and Uhura were under alien influence during the kiss, outside the world of science fiction and television the kiss shocked the nation. The lack of racial response or racial reaction between Uhura and Kirk after such an incident helped to cement the social commentary within *Star Trek: The Original Series.*

The episode “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield” also exhibits a similar racial commentary with two humanoid aliens who are the last of their respective species continuing to fight against each other. One alien is depicted as being black on his right side and white on his left and the opposing alien is shown with the color scheme reversed. Despite their evident enmity towards each other’s race, Captain Kirk and Spock voiced their confusion about the physical differences and caused both aliens to be greatly offended by their comments. In the end, their feud is demonstrated as being futile. The use of racial commentary in these episodes helps to illustrate that within the world of *Star Trek* race is no longer the sole indicator of merit on Earth. This commentary is juxtaposed with the diverse nature of the cast and crew of *Star Trek*. Not only was Uhura a prominent member of the Enterprise, but Sulu, Chekov, and Scotty all form a deep friendship with each other despite their various ethnicities and races.

Class also plays a vital role within the *Star Trek* franchise despite the social and economic themes not being as overt as those found in *District 9, Elysium,* or *the Time Machine.* In a similar manner to how race is displayed in a subtle and standard fashion, the concepts of class are also depicted comparatively. In order for the Enterprise to be an effective ship that can cross light years, it will need to be completely self-sufficient. Within a spaceship that is comparable in size and function to the Enterprise, it would be necessary to have a sizable working-class to help keep functions and operations going in a fluid manner. However, as can be seen in episodes from the *Original Series,* no such working-class exists due to the prevalence of technology and science taking up this mantle. Brooker further elaborates on this social structure within his text, “there are no real working-class characters (presumably because technology has replaced the working-class with machines, producing an essentially classless society on Earth” (Telotte, 197). This classless society carries a strong echo of Marxism within it. Within Marxist

theory and with the other works presented thus far the major source of conflict is the direct result of interclass struggle. *Star Trek: The Original Series*, however, depicts a classless society where all individuals are equal and important. The major source of conflict within the series instead stems from the way in which this classless society interacts with class saturated cultures. As further expounded by Brooker, "the obsolescence of the working-class (and thus of capitalism itself) in the future...is radical, and at least one episode [t]he Cloud Minders" strongly criticizes a society that is marked by extreme class divisions of the kind that once existed on Earth" (Telotte, 206-207). As illustrated, not only by the way in which technology and science replaces the working-class onboard the Enterprise, but also the conflict that arises from contact with heavily class-stratified alien societies, *Star Trek* emphasizes that having a society with a classless structure will bring about serenity, happiness, and a utopian standard.

Comparisons and Concluding Thoughts

Unlike the science and technology demonstrated in the Victorian science fiction novels, the science within modern science fiction depicts a wider variety of applications, aesthetics, and implementations. Within *Star Trek* and *Elysium*, the science and technology that is used within the narratives are utilized to help emphasize a utopian version of the world. This is seen in how the working-class in the Enterprise is entirely replaced with technology and in the space habitat of Elysium where disease, poverty, and even death are eliminated. However, within many utopias there is a negative dystopian counterpart, depending on which societal side an individual is on. Within *Star Trek* this dystopian counterpart is only seen when the Enterprise encounters planets and alien civilizations that do not hold the same social systems or beliefs. In this sense, the science and technology that is being utilized helps the crew of the Enterprise overcome any dystopian cultures. For *Elysium*, however, this dystopian aspect is found on Earth and thus the

science that is used as a utopian standard also serves as an indicator of class, supremacy, oppression, poverty, and discrimination. The science in *District 9* is noticeably different from *Star Trek* and *Elysium.* In *District 9* there is no utopian standard to the technology or science being used; instead it is used solely in a dystopian context and only to further highlight the racial and class disparity between the humans and the Prawns.

While at first glance, *Elysium, District 9,* and *Star Trek* appear dissimilar to each other in a narrative-sense, the methods in which each visual narrative address topical racial, class, and economic issues are analogous to each other. Within *Elysium* and *District 9* the narrative is used to help highlight how class, economic status, and race are all interconnected with each other. Due to their own racial backgrounds, Frey, Matilda, Max, and the Prawns are regulated to a slum-like environment; thus, with a low economic status or class, the major characters within each respective narrative is forced to assimilate to a lower social standing. In this fashion both race and class become correlated with each other until one fuses with the other. Mazierska highlights this perfectly in the following excerpt:

> this South African director has consistently employed science fictional tropes in his cinematic parables about class struggle in an extrapolated post-industrial, capitalist context. What is of specific interest to him is the erosion of human rights following accumulation of capital through dispossession, technological advancement, growth in population, and migra-tion (121).

Though *Star Trek* utilizes a different tactic to offer a social commentary on race, class, and economic status, the method that is employed is just as effective as the dystopian method that Blomkamp uses. Roddenberry helps to facilitate change by standardizing the racial equality and classless society of the Enterprise and by depicting how those alien cultures that do not adhere to

the same social standards are barbaric. Through this method, Roddenberry helps to show how it is through this same type of social structure that our society will be able to reach a utopian standard.

Despite the time period, medium, or the level of science or technology being utilized within a science fiction narrative, the societal concerns regarding class, race, and economic status remain the forefront of each tale. The social criticism that is found in each science fiction narrative corresponds to the topical issues of their respective time periods. As can be seen within *the Time Machine, the Invisible Man* and *the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* the concepts of social Darwinism, race, and class are in the forefront of the Victorian texts. This is especially seen in the way that human evolution occurs within *the Time Machine* and how class division creates two species of humans, the monstrous but cunning Morlocks and the beautiful but fatally naive Eloi. *The Invisible Man* depicts how an individual should be judged based on merit and intelligence instead of race and class; furthermore, Griffon uses his invisibility to undermine social class. The villagers at the end of the novel help to demonstrate how class and wealth are inconsequential in the way they are able to save Dr. Kemp at the end of the narrative. In a similar manner, *the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* highlights how class is not a reliable indicator of character or morality. Stevenson emphasizes this hypocritical concept due to how Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde enjoy similar pleasures and yet their physical differences are correlated to their class and social status. Mr. Hyde as a symbol of the working-class, is demonstrated as more ape-like and less evolved than his upper-class counterpart. As demonstrated within these three novels, science is used to further emphasize the social problems of the time period.

Though the science and technology that are used in *Elysium, District 9,* and *Star Trek* is framed in a different light than in the Victorian novels, these contemporary visual mediums work in a similar manner. Like their Victorian novel counterparts, the science and themes within these visual science fiction narratives place an emphasis on class, race, and economic status. *District 9* demonstrates how race and class can become correlated to each other. The narrative themes within the story also help to underscore the racial and economic disparity of a post-Apartheid world; this structure was done in the way that the relationship between the Prawns and the humans are meant to mirror that of the native Africans and whites. When compared to the human characters, the areas where the Prawns live are environmentally impoverished and they are treated in a subpar manner. *Elysium* functions in a similar manner with the wealthy elite residing in the utopian space habitat of Elysium while the poor and working-class are forced to live in the slums on Earth. Through these methods Blomkamp is able to create a social commentary, not just on class and race but also healthcare and immigration laws. *Star Trek* creates a utopian world while also providing social commentary on the class, economic, and racial issues of the 1960s. By completely removing the working-class and demonizing alien cultures that adhere to a strong class system, *Star Trek* indicates that the way forward is through a classless system. In addition to this ideology race is also eliminated, thus further cementing a raceless merit structure like the Victorian novels that came before it.

As illustrated by these various examples, regardless of the time period or the medium being utilized, the themes within science fiction mirrors the social issues of their respective epoch. Contemporary science fiction still emphasizes a strong social commentary on the class, economic status, and racial relations within a society in a manner that echoes the themes of the Victorian science fiction which preceded it. Through this method, the science and technology

used within these narratives serves as a criticism on culture and society as well as a herald of social, economic, and racial change. These narratives not only reflect the negative aspects of society, but they also indicate that the true worth of an individual is not based on class, economic status, or race, but rather on inner character. Through this emphasis on character and intelligence, not only does science fiction help to highlight the pitfalls within contemporary society but it also helps pave the way forward so that humanity can continue to progress and reach for the stars.

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Reflection

When I came to Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) to work towards a Masters degree in English, I had one major goal in mind; I wanted to challenge myself in an intellectual capacity. Looking back on the years that I have spent here, I have grown beyond what I thought possible. Not only did I learn how to effectively analyze literature, various literary and teaching theories, and about the characteristics of different literary epochs, but my character, dedication, and determination have developed beyond my expectations. The challenges that came about from learning new material and balancing my responsibilities and duties as both a student and a full-time employee have helped me evolve into a better version of myself.

With this degree, I have developed a better appreciation of the English language and the various forms of literature that utilize English to convey a variety of themes, meanings, and messages. Though my strengths in literature reside with the Victorian and medieval eras, I have gained infinite respect for global literature and pedagogical theories. Despite everything that I have learned during my time here, I understand that there is still a great deal for me to master, especially how to teach English composition and teaching theories in general. Though I do not desire a career in teaching, the applications of pedagogical theory are useful in any environment (especially when writing Technical copy).

Furthermore, during my time at SNHU I have strengthened my ability to analyze and interpret a variety of textual information; this skillset is imperative not only in academia, but also in the workforce. Though I am still working in academic publishing, it is my hope that with this degree and honed skillset that I will be able to move forward with a new career in Technical Writing. Additionally, after spending so much time and dedication on this degree, I look forward to one day continuing my academic career and obtaining additional degrees.

My capstone project was nothing like how I imagined it would be; I thought there would be more stress and anxiety involved. Though there were nights when mental exhaustion would negatively impact my writing and research, with careful planning and dedication I was able to complete my paper. I think, perhaps, the most difficult aspect of writing the capstone paper, was balancing research and writing schedules within such a short amount of time. In other words, I felt my research and planning stages were slightly rushed since the paper would be due in such a short amount of time. While the timespan was short, it helped me to effectively plan and keep to my schedule. Now that my capstone project is complete, however, I do think that I my research strategies could use a bit more finessing.

My capstone and time here at SNHU taught me that English is more than just a well worded sentence; papers and literature are created from the sum of research, dedication, and an understanding of the human condition. My capstone demonstrates that while literature can entertain us, it is also the mirror into our inner depths and the path forward for society.

Though this project was challenging and at times draining, it tested everything I have learned while being a student at SNHU (time management, dedication, perseverance, research, and of course writing in general). These same attributes will be vital as I continue to grow in a professional and academic capacity and as I take the final steps towards graduation, it is with a sense of bittersweet happiness and a sense of achievement.

Essay #1

Jessica Vega

Professor Zimmerman

LIT-510-Q5219

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The Feminine Trinity: How Nature, Animals, and Women intersect in Victorian Literature

The Victorian period was an era of many cultural and cognitive crossroads that wove together to form a kaleidoscope of thoughts and ideas. With influences from the "New Woman," the wave of change that came with the *Fin de siècle,* and the Modernist, and Romantic literary movements, it is no wonder that different areas of the Victorian period bear the mark of these variations in thought. Regardless of the major socio and literary changes, there is one correlation that, for the most part of the Victorian period, remained interrelated with each other. Since civilization arose, women and nature were thought to have a profound association with one another. The multitude of ancient female deities of nature and wildlife, such as Artemis, the goddess of the hunt and wildlife and Gaia, the goddess of the earth, are proof of this correlation. Even today, it is not unusual to refer to the earth as Mother Nature. In modern society and media, there is still a strong interconnection between nature, animals, and women, as can be seen through classic Disney hits such as *Snow White, Cinderella,* and *the Little Mermaid.*

The viewpoints of Victorians towards their animal companions, nature itself, and their regard of women are all correlated. This association is evident not only in the social views of the Victorian era, but also in the literary works produced. Animals, nature, and women were viewed as objects to be used; this can be seen through the act of colonialism, where man forces his will upon nature and others, the buying and selling of exotic animals and the overall treatment of pets, and also the value placed on women for the act of marriage, child-raising, and other

functions associated with femininity. Books, such as, *Oliver Twist*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Alice through the Looking-Glass,* all touch upon the interrelationship between the feminine and nature, as well as how women, nature, and animals were viewed in a similar manner. Through this correlation, one can see how the treatment and views of animals and nature is homogeneous of the treatment and views of Victorian women. In other words, due to the strong connection between the feminine and nature, their depictions within Victorian literature are interconnected with one another.

The concept of animals and nature were of considerable importance during the Romantic period, which ended around 1850. These viewpoints also melded with Victorian ideals, as can be seen with the numerous animal rights laws and reforms that were implemented during the nineteenth century (Blosh). It can also be seen in some of the early narratives of the time. One of the core fundamentals of the Romantic period was that of nature and the sublime and how, "[t]he aesthetics of the sublime revolved around the relationship between human beings and the grand or terrifying aspects of nature," (Shaw). This reverence and almost mystical power can also be seen in early Victorian literature; for example, this romanized version of nature can be seen in the healing aspect of the country within Charles Dickens's narrative, *Oliver Twist,* which was published in 1838. "The Four Stages of Cruelty" by William Hogarth, which depicts the progression of cruelty from harming canines, to hurting equines, to homicide and then finally to the sentencing of the individual behind all of these crimes, can also be seen in early Victorian literature and is especially highlighted in the interactions between Sikes, Bulls-eye, and Nancy. Even today, animal cruelty is seen as an early sign of psychopathic and sociopathic disorders.

Though the *Alice in Wonderland* duology falls under nonsense literature, it too carries the weight of cultural representation of animals of the Victorian time period. The way that animals

and nature are represented in the text is strikingly dissimilar to the depiction in *Oliver Twist.* Catherine Elick notes that the text, "irreverently subvert[s] the authority of humans… and empower normally powerless animals to speak […] for themselves," (Elick 23). This lighting shift is not a momentous surprise, as *Alice in Wonderland* was published in 1865 and Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* was published in 1859. Nature no longer held a romantic sway, instead, there was a general sort of "...ruthlessness [concerning the] struggle for survival in nature…" that was commonly associated with Darwinism (Dungey). Furthermore, Darwin's theories were far reaching as they not only influenced science and literature, but also the way that society viewed nature. Instead of the once romantic ideals that nature was viewed with, Darwin's theories showed a darker side, as they "...shock[ed] many people, and gave rise to some famous public discussions and disputes between scientists and theologians. The theory of evolution affected not just scientific debate but was soon part of the Victorian imagination, shaping the plots, images and metaphors of its literature and culture," (Burdett). The spread of these ideals influenced the depiction of nature and animals, diminishing their once romantic views. This aspect continued to change as the years went on.

The role of women was also one of the major social concepts that stood at the forefront of Victorian thought. As one goes further in the Victorian period, the gender roles of men and women "...became more sharply defined than at any time in history….As the 19th century progressed men increasingly commuted to their place of work – the factory, shop or office. Wives, daughters and sisters were left at home all day" (Hughes). This created a rift of two different, dividing ideologies, one being the belief of women residing primarily over the domestic sphere. This concept was formalized as the "Angel in the Household" which was derived by the famous poem by Coventry Patmore (Romera). This ideal consisted of the thought

that women should be pure, obedient, self-less, and passive, as well as other traditionally feminine traits. The "Angel in the Household" was a pervasive social standard during the Victorian time period; a standard that weaved its way, not only into the social expectations of women, but also their depiction in Victorian literature. Rose, one of the main characters from *Oliver Twist*, exemplifies the core fundamentals of being an "Angel of the Household." Conversely, when women are shown as going against this ideal, they are portrayed as being murderous and monstrous, like the Queen of Hearts, from the *Alice in Wonderland* duology.

Towards the end of the Victorian era, another movement rose to combat the ideology of the "Angel in the Household," this movement was known as the "New Woman." This ideal stood against the unrealistic expectations of the "Angel in the Household" by promoting sexual liberation, independence, and masculine behavior. (Buzwell). Due to the extreme nature and the ideals associated with the "New Woman" there was a large amount of conflict and fear connected with it from both Victorian men and women. Some feminist writers, like Emma Frances Brooke and George Egerton, were not fond of the ideals and methods that the "New Woman" was portraying. Famous books, such as, *Dracula* and *Camilla,* helped to increase the fears of heightened female sexuality and promiscuity. The fates of Lucy Westenra after lusting over multiple men, and Camilla, a lesbian vampire, are sealed in their respective novels. Other works written during this period by male authors "... tended to cast the New Woman as either a sexual predator or as an over-sensitive intellectual unable to accept her nature as a sexual being," (Buzwell). The *Alice in Wonderland* duology highlights the dangers of female autonomy. The large array of dangerous female characters, most notably the Queen of Hearts, within the narrative help to depict the risk of the "New Woman."

Though each movement and concept occurred in different times during the Victorian era, the effects of these ideals often interceded with each other. The concept of the "Angel in the Household" and the ideals about nature and animals during the later half of the Romantic period became intertwined, not only in societal views but also in literature. *Oliver Twist* highlights this association perfectly. The positive effects of nature, and how they are interconnected to the healing aspects of the domestic female figure, are illustrated with the character of Rose. Conversely, Nancy, a female character whose occupation is prostitution, though shown in a sympathetic light, meets a violent end. The same association between the views of femininity and nature can also be seen in the *Alice in Wonderland* dulogy. With the rising influence of Darwin's theories of evolution, nature takes on a more unmerciful role, as demonstrated by the interactions of Alice with the various animals. Nature itself is shown to be antagonistic towards her as demonstrated by the flowers in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Furthermore, the female characters that are shown to desire a life outside of the domestic sphere are depicted as monstrous, like the Queen of Hearts or the Duchess. Both women are shown not abiding by the normal domestic concepts of the time period, and are described as having violent and neglectful tendencies; for the Duchess this translates to her being an unfit mother.

Regardless of the cultural perspective, the objectification of animals, nature, and women can be seen not only in literature, but also was a common social view. As noted by Sarah Amato's *Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture, "*[a] pet, in the nineteenth century, was alternately and sometimes simultaneously perceived as an object and a possession…" (Amato 22). This line of thinking can easily be seen in regards to animals in general, as well as nature, especially when compared to the high influence of Christian values during the time period (Evans). Christianity promoted a sort of stewardship among nature and

animals, and this viewpoint helped to objectify them. However, animals and nature were not the only things that Victorians objectified. Women were also subject to being objectified. As potential wives and mothers, women were meant to find suitable husbands and perform their domestic duties. This was especially true for upper-class women where there was "more...at stake than choosing a man she found physically attractive. Throughout the century, marriage played a central role in mobilizing wealth and power….courtship was carefully controlled and a veto could be imposed…" (Perkin 52).

This interconnection of objectivity helps to add further correlation between the depiction of nature, animals, and women in Victorian literature. Regardless of the manner shown, these depictions are linked to one another. When animals, nature, and women are being objectified, (e.g. the "Angel of the Household" persona, or late Romantic ideals that influenced Victorian concepts of nature and animals) they are shown in a more positive light. Whereas in works where they combat these roles (e.g. the "New Woman", nature as something more untamable), they are shown as antagonistic and dangerous. The two ideologies are interlaced with one another, thus fusing both ideals of nature and of idealized womanhood into one. These books help to illustrate the interwoven outlooks and views of nature, animals, and women not only in a social sense, but in a literary sense as well.

Despite the differing views and representations of animals, nature, and women, the one thing that remains constant in *Oliver Twist* and the *Alice in Wonderland* duology is the strong association between the feminine and nature, including animals. This intimate interrelationship can be seen with Rose and the countryside in *Oliver Twist* and also with Alice and her cats in *Alice in Wonderland.* It can be further seen in the end of *Through the Looking-Glass,* where Alice realizes that Dinah's two female kittens were the Red and White Queens in Wonderland.

These connections further cement the Victorian ideal that the feminine, nature, and animals were all interconnected. As further mentioned by Laurence Mazzeno and Ronald Morrison in *Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture: Contexts for Criticism* "[f]eminist scholarship in particular has been invaluable in establishing helpful parallels between the treatment of women and the treatment of animals," (8). This could explain why when presented in the narratives the representations of women, animals, and nature usually correlate along the same lines depending on the social mores of the moment.

The depiction of both animals and women within *Oliver Twist* are parallel to each other; as demonstrated in the portrayal of nature as a healing factor, Rose being an extension of nature itself, how harmful city life is, and the ultimate fate of Nancy due to her life choices. The use of nature and the "Angel of the Household" mentality are overlayed with each other. The character of Rose is the perfect example of this fusion. Not only does Rose adhere to the very essence of the "Angel of the Household," but her very name is also a name of a flower. This is in connection with the fact that Rose is the one that brought Oliver to the country, where he was able to heal after being shot. During this incident, Oliver was near his deathbed. He was described as not only having been recovering from a gunshot, but also he had a "... broken limb, [and] his exposure to the wet and cold had brought on fever and ague: which hung about him for many weeks, and reduced him sadly," (Dickens Chapter 32). Though he makes a slight improvement while in the city, it is the country and with Rose's help that brings him back to full health. When Oliver reaches the country and stays there to work under Rose, his ailments are quickly dispersed:

> Who can describe the pleasure and delight, the peace of mind and soft tranquillity, the sickly boy felt in the balmy air, and among the green hills and rich

> woods...Who can tell how scenes of peace and quietude sink into the minds of pain-worn dwellers in close and noisy places, and carry their own freshness, deep into their jaded hearts! (Dickens Chapter 32).

The country here is described in glowing terms. It is at this point that the Narrator makes his point further known about his regard for the health benefits of nature; this recovery in connection with the concept of Mother Nature also adds a maternal aesthetic to the narrative. The Narrator, at this point, also states how dying men who have lived all their lives in the city would crave for just a simple glance of nature (Dickens Chapter 32). This statement compounds the concept of nature as a healing factor. Rose's influence in the narrative also further highlights this aspect. It is with her arrival that Oliver is given a chance to not only heal from his injuries, but also completely turn his life around. Though he makes an attempt earlier in the novel with **Mr. Brownlow**, this change is not permanent. With the inclusion of Rose, who embodies both the feminine and nature, Oliver is able to completely adjust his path and successfully remain out of a criminal lifestyle.

The relationships between man and animal, and women and animal, within *Oliver Twist* also heightens the strong bond between the feminine and nature. Sikes, Mr. Gamfield, and Mr. Bumble, all demonstrate a very antagonistic relationship with their animal companions, and even with hypothetical pets. Mr. Gamfield's first introduction is with a scene that shows him physically abusing his donkey. This violent nature is also translated to his relationship with other humans, particularly the boys he takes on to be chimney cleaners. With Mr. Bumble, this relationship is also highlighted briefly. While trying to woo Mrs. Corney he stated that, "... that any cat, or kitten, that could live with you, ma'am, and not be fond of its home, must be a ass, ma'am.' 'It's of no use disguising facts, ma'am,...I would drown it myself, with pleasure.'"

(Dickens Chapter 23). Though he does not have animals himself, the excerpt above shows that Mr. Bumble is not above murdering kittens in order to achieve his goal. His own relationships with humans, while not as violent as Mr. Gamfield, still leaves much to be desired. He is not above making deals with the criminal, Monks, along with his wife, in order receive monetary gain. His hypocritical treatment of the orphans and less fortunate, also illustrate his shallow morals. Sikes' relationship with his dog, Bull's Eye, is probably the most predominant illustration of the interrelation between human and animal within the text. While both man and dog possess a similar temperament, Sikes' treatment of the animal is considerably violent. Regardless of this aspect, Bull's Eye remains tragically loyal to Sikes in the same manner that Nancy does. Despite the verbal and physical abuse that Sikes lashes out towards woman and dog, they still remain by his side; Nancy, for not abandoning Sikes when given the opportunity, and Bull's Eye killing himself directly after his owner was killed. This strong correlation between their fates and shared treatment by Sikes, helps to fuse this merging between animal and girl. This example also helps to illustrate the shared value of animal and girl in Sikes' eyes; to him, they are both objects to be used as he wills.

Conversely, the only character that is shown to have a positive relationship with animals and a negative one with humans is Mrs. Corney. She states in her dialogue with Mr. Bumble how fond she is of cats, "'I am so fond of them, Mr. Bumble, you can't think,' replied the matron. 'They're so happy, so frolicsome, and so cheerful, that they are quite companions for me.'" (Dickens Chapter 23). However, this aspect of her personality does not transfer over to the humans who are under her care. She still remains neglectful and abusive towards others who are less fortunate than she is, like Oliver and the dying matron. This characterization stands in stark contrast over the male characters' relationships with their animal companions. What this

juxtaposition helps to highlight is how the bond between animal and woman seems to be stronger and not as correlative as that of man and animal. Thus, the depiction of Mrs. Corney and her positive relationship with her cats, and negative one with humans, helps to show the strong bonds and relationship between the feminine and nature.

Alice in Wonderland, starkly contrasts Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* in various ways, from the gender of the protagonist, to the narrative style, and even to the depiction of the animals and portrayal of nature. Regardless of the differences between both novels, there is a shared correlation between the depiction and role of women and that of nature and animals. One of the most important distinctions between the two works is the fact that because of its more realistic setting, the animals in *Oliver Twist* do not speak. Within the *Alice in Wonderland* duology, this aspect of the narrative is highlighted and can be seen as being correlated with the power dynamics of women and men during the Victorian era. However, the animals, though they defy social norms, are not shown in the same helpful or victimized manner as the ones from *Oliver Twist.* Another important aspect of the *Alice in Wonderland* duology is how it highlights the demonization of women outside the domestic sphere in a similar manner to how Nancy was punished for being outside that sphere. The combination of these concepts help to depict the correlation between nature, animals, and women within the text.

The trait of speech also serves to underline the subjectivity and objectivity of the animals, not only within the narrative, but also with other books. As Catherine Elick notes in *Talking Animals in Children's Fiction: a Critical Study,* "...talking animal character struggling to become true subjects, not objects, whose worth and welfare are not entirely dependent upon humans and whose power relations with people are more productively unstable than hierarchical," (1). This helps to highlight how mute the animals in *Oliver Twist* are. Bull's eye,

and the mule cannot speak out against their abuse, however the animals in *Alice in Wonderland* have the power of speech and anthropomorphic traits to help them maintain a semblance of power. Not only is this sort of power dynamic evocative of the relations between Victorian men and women, in which Victorian women were viewed as objects for marriage and childbirth, but it also appears within the animals of the *Alice in Wonderland* duology. Dinah, Alice's cat in the real world, has none of the speech or sass as her Wonderland counterparts. This is especially demonstrated with Dinah's kittens in *Through the Looking-Glass* and how they do not possess the power of speech to stand up for themselves, "[w]hat have you got to say for yourself? Now don't interrupt me!' she went on, holding up one finger. 'I'm going to tell you all your faults," (Carroll Chapter 1). It is only when Alice enters Wonderland that both kittens are able to speak for themselves, by transforming into the Red and White Queens. As mentioned in *Pets and Domesticity in Victorian Literature and Culture,* this muteness can also be seen in actual animals within Victorian society. Monica Flegel explains a social custom in which women would practice their maternal and wifely duties upon the pet; this act enforces the concept that women are mute among their own society. Furthermore, these animals would also be traded back and forth with lovers as a form of mute flirtation. This act is explained in the following quote, "[pets] operate as the means of courtship, as complicate emissaries of affection in a world in which … female relations were strictly controlled. [They use] the animal's muteness to their advantage," (Flegel 12). The social act of trading pets as a form of flirtation and also using them to practice for human affection highlights the silence and objectification of both the women and the animals. In this case, animals are simply a method used to transfer human affection, women are denied speech of their own thus limiting their own autonomy. The rigid nature of Victorian society strips away feminine speech, and by the same extent, diminishes their autonomy and that of

animals. The added fact that the cats themselves are transformed into women while in Wonderland helps to fuse the correlation between the feminine and nature within the text.

The speech that other animals do have in Wonderland is not particularly polite or kind however; nor, do they act in a manner that is as docile as the animals shown in *Oliver Twist.* The power of speech and human attributes with these creatures create, "...clashes with the animals of Wonderland [and] assault Alice's identity as deeply as any other trauma she undergoes in this dreamscape (Elick 23). Though there are several important instances which demonstrate how unhelpful the animals of Wonderland are to Alice, one of the paramount examples is her first exchange with the Caterpillar:

> 'You!' said the Caterpillar contemptuously. 'Who are you?' Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation. Alice felt a little irritated at the Caterpillar's making such very short remarks, and she drew herself up and said, very gravely, 'I think, you ought to tell me who you are, first.' 'Why?' said the Caterpillar. Here was another puzzling question; and as Alice could not think of any good reason, and as the Caterpillar seemed to be in a very unpleasant state of mind, she turned away (Carroll Chapter 5).

This instance shows how contemptuously the creatures view her and her questions. While the Caterpillar can be viewed as symbolic of her growth while in Wonderland, it is difficult to ignore his blatant irritability during the course of their conversation. This dialogue illustrates how antagonistic he is towards Alice initially. Her interactions with the Mouse also highlight this same irritability with her questions, "'Not like cats!' cried the Mouse, in a shrill, passionate voice. 'Would *you* like cats if you were me?' 'Well, perhaps not,' said Alice in a soothing tone: 'don't be angry about it," (Carroll Chapter 2). Though the animals are able to assert their own

authority, it goes against Alice's understanding and expectations of the world, and by extension, those of Victorian society. The White Rabbit, March-Hare, Mice and several other animals are demonstrated as being quite rude, not only to Alice but to each other. Thus, this demonstrates the negative aspects of nature and animals, and how outside of human influence, they revert to being obstinate and unhelpful.

This aspect is not just regulated to *Alice in Wonderland,* or the animals found in Wonderland, but it can also be seen in the sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass* and how that book presents the relationship between humans and nature. Like the anthropomorphic animals, the depiction of nature is vastly different from the helpful, healing force found in *Oliver Twist.* Instead, nature in *Through the Looking-Glass* is shown as being vain, argumentative, and very anti-human. This is especially demonstrated in chapter two, of *Through the Looking-Glass* the flowers accost Alice while she was traveling through a flowerbed:

> 'In most gardens,' the Tiger-lily said, 'they make the beds too soft—so that the flowers are always asleep.'This sounded a very good reason, and Alice was quite pleased to know it. 'I never thought of that before!' she said. 'It's my opinion that you never think at all,' the Rose said in a rather severe tone. 'I never saw anybody that looked stupider,' a Violet said, so suddenly, that Alice quite jumped; for it hadn't spoken before (Carroll Chapter 2).

Their harsh insults and personalities, as shown in the excerpt above, help to illustrate the severe relationship between humans and nature. The flowers, as demonstrated in the excerpt, are depicted as vain, antagonistic, and very rude. These personas, not only depict the tense relationship between man and nature, but it also serves a stark contrast to the healing power found in *Oliver Twist* and the glowing terms which Dickens attributed to nature.

This complete reversal concerning the role of animals, and nature is also depicted with the female characters in the *Alice in Wonderland* duology. Carroll emphasizes how the female characters that do not adhere to the "Angel in the Household" ideology are volatile and dangerous. One of the most predominant of these female characters is the Queen of Hearts from *Alice in Wonderland*. Not only is she demonstrated as being a violent, and mercurial monarch, she undermines the authority of her husband. As noted by Aihong Ren, "[u]nder her tyranny, the King becomes infantile and weak. His masculinity and dominance are gone," (Romera 18). Aside from this characterization, she is also famous for her line of "off with their heads" to any character that upsets her in the smallest manner. These aspects of her personality emphasize the danger of women in power. Thus, it is only fitting that the Queen of Hearts serves as the central antagonist in the narrative. Though she is the most well-known villain of *Alice in Wonderland* there are other female characters who reject the domestic sphere. The Duchess, is another character that depicts the monstrous nature associated with women that defy gender roles. As noted in "Revising Alice in Wonderland: An Analysis of Alice's Female Subjectivity in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" the Duchess, despite having a baby in her arms, is illustrated as being unsatisfied with her role as a mother figure. She is not only rude and blunt towards Alice, but she also shows criminal neglect and abuse towards her own child. The first scene in which the reader sees her, she is shown to be tossing her baby up and down in a careless manner. After the child turns into a pig and runs away while in Alice's care, Sara Bermejo Romera notes that, "...her mood seems to have improved, proving thence that '[t]he baby is a burden to her," (Romera 17). These two prominent female characters help to depict the dangers of women unbound by the domestic sphere, and also correlate with the negative representation of nature and the animals that are found in Wonderland.

Unlike *Oliver Twist*, the *Alice in Wonderland* duology depicts the negative side of women, animals and nature, whereas *Oliver Twist* depicts the idealized versions of these concepts. *Oliver Twist* illustrates the combined healing power of nature and animals. Charles Dickens also negatively depicts individuals who take such concepts for granted; this is especially shown with the relationships between Sikes, Bull's eye, and Nancy, as well as, Mr. Gamfield and his donkey, and Mr. Bumble and the hypothetical drowning of kittens. Each of these men are shown in the literature to be completely irredeemable. In contrast, the *Alice in Wonderland* duology emphasizes the exact opposite. Instead of showing these traits and concepts as beneficial towards mankind, Carroll illustrates how the feminine, nature, and animals actually bring more harm towards society, and how dangerous they inherently can be. This is especially seen in the case of the predominant female characters like the Queen of Hearts and the Duchess; in addition to, the antagonistic flowers and unhelpful, rude anthropomorphic animals that Alice meets along her way.

However, despite these stark differences, there is one important aspect that both narratives have in common; and that is the strong connection between the feminine, nature, and animals. The intense interrelationship between these concepts, particularly between women and animals, were not unusual, even by Victorian social standards. It was not uncommon for women, especially those who were unmarried or elderly, to treat their pets like children. Monica Flegel in *Pets and Domesticity in Victorian Literature and Culture: Animality, Queer Relations and the Victorian Family,* explores the relationship between the (female) spinster and that of her pet. She notes that the common depiction of a spinster was seen as both "...a symbol of excess and of deprivation," (Flegel 12). The excess is in reference to the devotion that the woman lavishes upon the animal, while the deprivation is the lack of affection from her fellow humans.

Regardless, the relationship of the spinster and her pet perfectly highlights the strong interrelationship between the feminine and animals. It is through these relationships that these women were able to explore other facets of their personality that gave them freedom from societal mores. The relationships between spinster and pet "...celebrate a partial separation from familialism in pursuit of womanly pleasures that cannot be accommodated within normative familial culture. Challenging the idea that women must find fulfillment only in love and nurture..." (Flegel 13). This interconnection between the feminine and animals is not only regulated to older women; younger women, especially prospective mothers, had a close relationship with their pets. Flegel further notes that, "[g]iven that romance between members of the opposite sex in the middle classes was often strictly supervised, the pet provided an opportunity for passionate attachment that was meant, particularly for women, as practice for conjugal and maternal love," (Flegel 17). All of these examples help to depict the strong bond between Victorian women and their animals; however, this aspect was not simply regulated towards the relationships between women and animals, but also with plants and women. Beverly Seaton notes that "[f]lowers, in fact, were seen as the most suitable aspect of nature to represent women, or to interact with them…" (Seaton 17). This aspect is especially telling, as the use of flowers to relay secret messages was important for Victorian women. It also further cements the bond of nature and women; this floral and feminine relationship can be seen in both *Oliver Twist* and the *Alice in Wonderland* duology.

Within *Alice in Wonderland*, the relationship between Alice and the various cats within the narrative are some of the strongest bonds that can be found within the book. At the very beginning of the first novel, Alice is seen interacting with her beloved Dinah. Throughout her journey in Wonderland, Alice constantly muses on Dinah's good qualities much to the chargin of

the other Wonderland denizens as illustrated by the following quote, 'I wish I hadn't mentioned Dinah!' she said to herself in a melancholy tone. 'Nobody seems to like her, down here, and I'm sure she's the best cat in the world! Oh, my dear Dinah! I wonder if I shall ever see you any more!' (Carroll Chapter 3). Even while in Wonderland, the relationship between Alice and the Cheshire Cat is demonstrated as one of the most positive ones within the novel. Unlike the other characters from Wonderland, the Cheshire Cat treats Alice with respect and cordality. When Alice requests that he not disappear so suddenly, he responds with, "'All right,' said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone," (Carroll Chapter 6). This quote depicts that he actually takes her request into consideration, rather than outright insulting her like most of the citizens of Wonderland do. In *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice's close relationship continues with Dinah's kittens. What really cements the bond between the feminine and animals within the *Alice in Wonderland* duology, is not only Alice's positive relationship with the various felines in the books; but also how, while in Wonderland, Dinah's kittens are transformed into the Red and White Queens. This association highlights the strong relationship and femininity between women and cats. Flegel notes that, "[k[ittens in particular were often linked to attractive young women, their frolicsome beauty ably capturing all that was beguiling and tempting in a nubile girl," (Flegel 19). Thus, the transformation from felines into women has a double meaning within *Through the Looking-Glass*. Carroll is emphasizing the bond between the feminine and their animal counterparts, in this case, cats.

Oliver Twist also takes note of this bond. As explored earlier within this essay, Dickens illustrates Mrs. Corney as an unpleasant and miserly character, yet even despite her misanthropic deeds and outlooks, she still demonstrates a positive relationship with felines. This virtue places

her higher on the moral scale than her husband, who threatened to drown kittens and illustrates no other redeemable qualities, and Sikes and Mr. Gamfield, who both show no qualms over abusing their animal partners or their fellow humans.

Cats and animals are not the only things that women are associated with. As further demonstrated within *Oliver Twist,* nature and the feminine have a potent bond as well. The character of Rose, as can be demonstrated by her name, has a deep link with nature. This is made even more evident as she takes on the role of healer and guide to the countryside. After Oliver was shot and left behind by his comrades, he was poor in health. Though he was on the road to recovery, his stay in the country helped to significantly improve his health. This trip to the country was thought up and implemented by Rose, with the intention that the atmosphere and serenity would help improve his constitution, as demonstrated by the following quote, "We are going into the country, and my aunt intends that you shall accompany us. The quiet place, the pure air, and all the pleasure and beauties of spring, will restore you in a few days," (Dickens Chapter 32). As shown by Oliver's quick recovery, Rose's estimation of the healing powers of country air proved to be correct. Thus, it is no coincidence that Dickens used 'Rose' for her name. Her name provides a link to nature, and once Oliver and her are in the countryside, this bond becomes more paramount. It is Rose who suggests going to the country and it is also Rose who knows that being among nature would help heal Oliver. Furthermore, her name implies a relationship with nature that is unseen in the other female characters. Nancy, while sympathetic does not show the interconnection that Rose does, nor does Mrs. Lindsay Maylie, or Mrs. Bedwin. While these women are good, Rose's bond with nature along with her beauty, place her on a higher plane than these other female characters. As noted by *The Language of Flowers: A History,* "...Western culture has typically identified women with nature, as opposed to society, or

the world; this has been a subtopic of the country-city opposition, with further subdivision into good women (country) and bad women (society)," (Seaton 17). With this concept in mind, it helps to further juxtapose Rose's position with that of the other female characters. The only other female character that is demonstrated as having a connection outside of Victorian human society is shown to be Mrs.Corney and her cats; however, she is not seen in the same light as Rose or the other female characters. The male characters within *Oliver Twist* are shown to have even less interconnections than the female characters, as they possess solely negative relationships with animals and none with nature. This aspect helps to further highlight how strong and unique Rose's relationship with nature is, and solidifies her position as a "good woman."

Through the Looking-Glass also helps to emphasize the relationship between women and nature, as well, by having all the flowers in the flower-bed be female. Unlike Rose, these flowers are shown in a less favorable light. The flowers are depicted as being vain, silly, and at times malicious; however, despite their negative traits the fact that they are all female is an important factor. By having them all share the same gender, Caroll is highlighting the strong association between femininity and nature.

The interrelationship between the feminine, nature, and animals has always been a major cornerstone of Western society. Nature deities, the anthropomorphic personification of Mother Nature, and even Disney princesses all have their ties with nature and animals. This interrelationship is further highlighted and demonstrated. Though the views of nature, women, and animals shifted during the duration of the Victorian era, certain ideologies latched onto each other. Thus, the ideas of pro-nature, animals, and the "Angel of the Household" became interwoven with one another. While some of these concepts, namely the idealization of nature, the sublime, and animal-human relations, originated during the Romantic period, they still

played an influential part in Victorian ideals; as can be seen with the use of the four stages of cruelty and healing aspect of nature within *Oliver Twist*. During the latter half of the Victorian period with the rise of the "New Woman", evolutionary theories, and the realization that nature was not completely benign , the feminine, animals and nature became associated with negative constructs. Though these facets are illustrated in some Victorian novels like *Dracula* and *Camilla,* the *Alice in Wonderland* duology is especially noteworthy in highlighting these negative correlations between animals, women, and nature. The vain, derogatory flowers and unhelpful anthropomorphic animals help to depict the negative aspects of nature, while the Queen of Hearts and the Duchess illustrate the dangers of a woman unshackled from the domestic sphere. Even though *Oliver Twist* and the *Alice in Wonderland* duology have many differences, especially in regards to the protagonist, the narration style, and the depiction of the feminine, nature and animals, they also have an important shared trait. This is demonstrated in the strong interconnection that the female characters have with nature and animals. Within *Oliver Twist* this is demonstrated with Rose; her very name, and her idea to bring Oliver to the country to heal depicts her positive relationship with nature and her overall purity and goodness. This is especially amplified when Rose is examined in contrast with the other characters, both male and female. There is also a strong correlation between women and cats in the three works and the objectification that can be found in the kittens' inability to speak and that of women of the Victorian period. Furthermore, Dinah's kittens become the White Queen and the Red Queen in Wonderland, thus demonstrating the potent interrelation between the feminine and animals. This is also touched upon with Mrs. Corney and her own relationship with cats. It is through this strong bond between women, animals, and nature, in addition, to how society mirrored the these concepts that helped to create a homogeneous view between them within Victorian literature and

society. Regardless of the differing views of the Victorian era, the depiction of the feminine and nature parallel each other.

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Essay #2

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Dr. Amber

LIT 528

Search for Identity: Asian Women in Literature

As renowned politician, B. R. Ambedkar, once noted in regards to immigration and cultural identity, "[u]nlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self" (Gupta 101) Thus, the formation of identity is not something that can be done solely on one's own or by completely integrating within a society. Instead, it is a fusion of an individual's journey of self-discovery, the cultural aspects that come with them to their new home, and the integration of the societal norms of their new home. The combination of all these factors helps in the formation of an individual.

This aspect is especially true of Asians who move to North America. Social identity and how this resonantes or repels an individual plays a significant influence on their development. As noted by, Lisbeth Littrup in *Identity In Asian Literature*, "[i]n modern Asian Literature writers began to discuss a growing split between identification factors and self- or as it has often been termed - the social self where identity is determined by conceives of herself/himself." (Littrip 7) This quote helps to highlight the importance that society plays upon the development of a person and how difficult it could be on a journey of self-discovery with contrasting societal norms or cultural views that do not resonate internally. This search for identity is one of the central factors of Asian literature, particularly Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, *Interpreter of Maladie*s by Jhumpa Lahiri and *The Woman Warrio*r by Maxine Hong Kingston.

At an initial glance, each book is quite distinct from the others. *Obasan* centers on a Japanese-Canadian and her memories of the internment and persecution of Japanese citizens during the Second World War. *The Woman Warrior* centers on Chinese-American identity and culture, while *Interpreter of Maladies* focuses on east Indian-American experiences. Even the

writing styles between these three novels are vastly different; with *Obasan* acting as a full fledged narrative where flashbacks from the past and present intertwine in order to form a coherent narrative. As Helena Grice also notes the protagonist, “Naomi inhabits a semi-dreamworld, a ‘telepathic world’….” (Grice 94) This writing structure helps to emphasize the incorporeal feel that correlates with an internal journey of self discovery and identity. *The Woman Warrior* and *Interpreter of Maladies*, in contrast, both have chapters that can stand alone. While *The Woman Warrior* at times feels dreamlike, both it and *Interpreter of Maladies* are especially straightforward in comparison to *Obasan*. Even though each book focuses on a different cultural background, time period, and North American region each one has strong similarities with one another and are united by the common theme of self-discovery through family and silence within Asian culture.

The most prominent similarity found in these three novels is that each book was written by a woman; this essence of femininity plays an important part, not only with the characters, but also with the shared theme of silence. In addition to this concept, each book also possesses strong themes regarding family. For *Obasan* and *The Woman Warrior* this is shown through maternal and filia relationships, while *Interpreter of Maladies* extends this concept to parental and domestic relationships. The use of these familial roles assist in establishing and anchoring the identities of the characters within these works. The title, *Obasan*, is Japanese for aunt; furthermore, the protagonist's relationship with her family, takes up a large portion of the narrative. *The Woman Warrior* likewise, places a special importance on the relationships of the mother, particularly her interactions with her daughter and her sister. The unnamed aunt from "No Name Woman" also acts as a sort of invisible muse for the duration of the work. The *Interpreter of Maladies* also places significance on the role of parents in a family; as can be seen

in the short stories, “Interpreter of Maladies,” “Mrs Sen,” and “The Third and Final Continent.” By placing importance on family, the intersection of cultural and familial values, and the interrelations between family members, each work helps the protagonist in anchoring their own ideals; thus, further helping to center them on their journey of self discovery, identity, and acceptance.

Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* takes place in the 1980’s and centers on its female protagonist, Naomi Nakane, a Japanese-Canadian school teacher who is coming to grips with living life after being in one of the Canadian internment camps during World War II. This aspect is what really sets the narrative of *Obasan* apart from *The Woman Warrior* and *Interpreter of Maladies.* Naomi not only has to discover what it means to be a Japanese-Canadian woman, but also what it means to have her own country turn against her, while struggling to come to terms with her identity as both Japanese and Canadian. Throughout the novel, Naomi has to deal not only with racism from her neighbors and students as an adult, but also has to come to terms with the horrors she faced as a child; some of the most traumatic memories include being sexually molested by an elderly neighbor and the sudden disappearance of her mother when she goes to visit Naomi’s grandmother in Japan during the bombings. The harsh events of her childhood helped to emphasize the importance that Naomi places on family.

After Naomi’s mother disappeared in Japan while visiting Naomi’s grandmother, Naomi’s aunt undertook the task of raising her and her brother. The titlar *Obasan* is a potent character and helps to illustrate the importance of family, and identity to Naomi. Her presence has a profound impact on Naomi’s character and thought processes, as she’s the one that teaches her how to “...not be *wagamama* by always heeding everyone’s needs” and helps her on her journey to discovering her identity. (Kogawa 151) She does not do this in a manner that is

particularly flamboyant or loud. Rather, her quiet, selfless presence, is just as piercing and potent; especially when compared to the louder characters of the novel like Stephen, Naomi's brother. Obasan's quiet, self-sacrificing, and stoic nature can also be seen in Naomi's own character, especially in the way that she reacts to the racism and injustice she faces on a daily basis. This similarity between Obasan and Naomi helps to show a connection between the familial relationships and self and cultural identity. As Grice further notes:

> Naomi alone of Obasan's relatives is able to dive deep enough into this 'sensate sea.' And as she says of their relationship in *Itsuka:* 'Out languages is gestures, the nodding and shaking of heads, the shrugging of shoulders. A pat on the side of the bed is a request for me to sit.' (Grice 94)

This quote not only helps to demonstrate the connection between the two characters, but it also helps to emphasize how much of an impact Obasan had on Naomi growing up. Obasan, thus serves, not only as a mentor, but her home; her aunt's old letters also serve as a cultural connection to Japan for Naomi. It is through these letters that Naomi finds in Obasan's home that enables her to discover what truly happened to her mother. She also gains further insight into the events of her childhood (i.e. the constant moving from house to house, the bombing of Japan, etc.) and because of her deep connection with her aunt she is able to overcome these events and move on with her life. Naomi's observations of gender and family, due to her connection to Obasan, are also of considerable importance, not only to *Obasan*, but also to *The Woman Warrior* and *Interpreter of Maladies.* She notes that, "[o]f course, the fathers are worried but it's the women who are burdened with all the responsibility of keeping what's left of a family together." (Kogawa 120) It is not her older brother or father that keeps the family together, it is

Obasan who takes up that role. She is the one that keeps everyone together, and helps to formulate Naomi's own cultural identity and personality.

Silence is another potent theme that can be found in *Obasan.* As Grice notes, "[m]uch critical attention has been accorded to *Obasan*, and a lot of it has focused upon the strangely silent nature of the text." (Grice 93) The scenes where Naomi speaks with Obasan are usually shown as being completely nonverbal, in addition to being quite powerful. One particular scene is where Naomi is describing the grief that her Obasan is going through at the death of her uncle:

> 'Here' she says, 'medicine was put in, but -oso katta- it was too late'... She opens her mouth to say more, but there is no further sound from her dry lips. The language of her grief is silence. She has learned it well, its idioms, its nuances. Over the years, silence within her small body has grown large and powerful (Kogawa 17)

This excerpt not only highlights the powerful, silent nature of Obasan, but it also demonstrates the sort nonverbal communication that is prevalent within the text. Silence adds to the internalized struggle for identity that Naomi is going through, in addition to giving the narrative a hushed, timeless feel. Furthermore, as noted by Ruth Jenkins "[a]rticulating the 'silences' of these culturally muted women...subvert[s] the patriarchal social and literary scripts." (Jenkins 64) Through this method, Kogawa helps to heighten the cultural feminine power within the text, and show how Obasan's and Naomi's silence and stoicism is a form of strength, as is their ability to try to keep their family together even after all the hardships that they experienced. It also grants added weight to the letters that Naomi finds in the text, as the silence makes their words even more profound.

This aspect of family and silence as a feminine power is not only regulated to *Obasan*. *The Woman Warrior* also highlights the importance of women in terms of family. *The Woman*

Warrior was written in the 70's and serves as a memoir for Kingston; thus, the stories that are told have an echo of being autobiographical. While each of the five stories can be read separately, and are quite distinct from one another, there is an overarching theme of femininity, family and silence and how this relates to being Chinese and American. The concept of family, both in terms of a maternal and filial relationship and soral relationships are also strong concepts within the text; especially in the chapters, "No Name Woman," and "At the Western Palace." Kingston states in her text that, "[m]y aunt haunts me- her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her, though not origami into houses and clothes…." (Kingston 16) This quote helps to depict that even though her aunt has been dead for many years, she maintains a strong, spiritual connection to her. Kingston's mother also plays an important part in her childhood development and growing identity as a Chinese-American woman. Kingston notes that her mother, Brave Orchid, "...said I would grow up a wife and slave, but she taught me the song of a warrior woman, Fa Mu Lan. I would have to grow up a warrior woman." (Kingston 20) Even as an adult those words and those stories have stayed with her. These stories serve as a connection to her cultural identity, such as the case with "White Tigers" where Kingston recounts the story of Mu Lan. They also serve as a connection to her family, as demonstrated in the chapters "No Name Woman," and "At the Western Palace" that both deal with her paternal and maternal aunts and how their deaths have impacted Kingston's idea of self.

Unlike *Obasan,* where Naomi is trying to come to terms with her identity in an area that is hostile to her and her family, Kingston experiences alienation from her Chinese identity as she struggles to come to terms with both her American and Chinese self. As LeiLani Nishime notes, "[i]n the book, the narrator's isolation from other members of her community does not allow her

to hear the stories of others to provide a scale by which to measure her own experiences." (Nishime 72) In this case, she only has her immediate family to draw experiences from; and while she wants to delve deeper into that community, it also goes against her American notions of social conduct. This friction is especially shown when the pharmaceutical druggist gives them the medication that was meant for another family. In order to ward off any potential evil, Kingston's mother order her to demand free tribute in the form of candy.

> '"Aha!" she yelled. 'You! The biggest." She was pointing at me. "You go to the drugstore." What do you want me to buy, Mother?" I said "Buy nothing. Don't bring one cent. Go and make them stop the curse." "I don't want to go. I don't know how to do that. There are no such things as curses. They'll think I'm crazy"… "They understand. You kids just aren't very brave." But I knew they did not understand. They thought we were beggars without a home who lived in the back of the laundry. They felt sorry for us... (Kingston 170-171)

Regardless of the contention between both identities, her Chinese self is just as important to Kingston as her American self, as shown by the weight she places upon the tales her mother told her, as well as, her mother's own forceful presence in her life. As Bobby Fong notes, "[i]ndvidual identity cannot be achieved at the expense of group norms; that would threaten the cohesion of the society, upon which individual life itself depends. Personal growth should not be innovative, but directed towards niches that the group has given to occupy." (Fong 118) Through this analysis, Obasan, Kingston's aunt, and mother all provide a vital service. They serve as a source of familial and cultural correspondence. Even through her internal journey and experience of growing up in America, the stories of her family and her cultural home resounds strongly within Kingston. These stories stay with her because of her familial bond with her mother and

her spiritual bond with her aunt. Fong notes this strong connection when Kingston leaves home, "[s]he leaves home to find a voice. But what she doesn't do is abandon her past. Not at all." (Fong 122)

The surplus of female characters in both novels, *Obasan* and *The Woman Warrior,* help to highlight the lack of significant male characters. Similarly to *Obasan* the men are mostly absent, thus leaving the stage open for the women to discover their own place in society and their own identities; it is the female characters that have the power of keeping a family united and helping the protagonists on their own journeys of self-discovery.Throughout the short stories, a special emphasis is placed on female bonds, such as the relationship between Kingston's mother and herself, and her mother and aunt. As Nishime further notes in "Engendering Genre: Gender and Nationalism in China Men and *The Woman Warrior*" the role of these potent female characters and the female protagonists, especially in *The Woman Warrior* is not to promote individualism, but rather, "..details her search for place within the community and her family and the meaning of her identity as a Chinese-American. The story of the protagonist is intertwined with her relationship with her mother…" (Nishime 73) This is especially ironic, given the way the text highlights the disparity of power between men and women. In "No Name Woman" Kingston's paternal aunt is cast off after an adulterous (but not necessarily consensual) relationship leaves her pregnant, while her husband is off in America. In order to avoid stigma and the harsh life associated with such an affair, she kills herself. She also takes her child with her, so that the baby could be spared such adversity in life. Kingston muses that the baby was probably female as "..there is some hope of forgiveness for boys." (Kingston 15) The concept of gender and cultural norms are so tightly interwoven in *The Woman Warrior*, that it is almost impossible to separate them; this same concept can also be seen with Naomi and her aunts in

Obasan. Their sense of womanhood, the cultural feminine virtues found in their respective societies, and their sense of cultural identity are bound together.Nishime further highlights the importance of this role and the influence that gender, genre and social identity can play in the novel through the following quote; "[b]y locating gender in Kingston's manipulations of genre and mythology and looking at the gendered categorization of generic forms, we can also locate the place of Chinese-American identity in her conception of gender and genre." (Nishime 67) The depiction of gender disparity helps to promote the overarching theme of silence in both narratives.

Like Naomi and Obasan, *The Woman Warrior's* Kingston is a silent and reserved character. This likely draws comparisons to the author herself, as the text is a memoir. Regardless, there is a profound significance given to silence in the text. Like Naomi, this silence helps to highlight Kingston's internalized struggle for identity. Even the opening lines of the book is of Kingston's mother telling her that she must not repeat the story of her aunt that committed suicide. This aspect of silence and story-telling pervades the text and at one point in the chapter, "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" Kingston states, "[t]here were other quiet Chinese girls not of our family, but most of them got over it sooner than we did. I enjoyed the silence. At first it did not occur to me I was supposed to talk or to pass kindergarten." (Kingston 166) For Kingston, silence grants her peace and solitude. Additionally, this sense of silence does exhibit power, like in *Obasan*; however, *The Woman Warrior* also shows that this trait can be considered a double edged sword. While silence helps to make Naomi and her Obasan seem more powerful and strong in the face of injustice, "[m]uteness [in *The Woman Warrior]* has served as a protective shield, but it turns into a stress factor the moment the narrator realizes that mutenes is frowned upon by her teachers." (Lim 52) This negative aspect is especially seen

when Kingston's mother orders her to go get candy as reparation for the druggist's oversight. It takes Kingston several tries to relay her message to the pharmacist, as she was speaking too softly and too swiftly for him to understand. "At the Western Palace" also highlights the negative consequences of silence when Kingston's aunt, Moon Orchid, is unable to even speak to her wayward husband. He admonishes her presence in America and denies continuing their relationship as husband and wife by illustrating she cannot help him with his medical practice as she cannot communicate with his clients or business partners. He notes during this confrontation, "[y]ou can't talk to them. You can barely talk to me." (Kingston 153) This leads to Kingston's aunt and her husband to go their separate ways, and for her aunt to eventually suffer a mental breakdown and die in an asylum. In this aspect, her silence condemned Moon Orchid to her fate. Kingston herself states that, "[w]e American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine. Apparently we whispered even more softly than the Americans." (Kingston 172) It is because of this double-edged nature that the use of the supernatural is thus able to make up for the loss of power. As silence fills the text, Kingston finds other ways to supplement the power of the female characters. In this case the supernatural helps to give voice to the characters in a similar manner that in *Obasan* the letters give voice to the past. In Jenkins' "Authorizing Female Voice and Experience: Ghosts and Spirits in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Allende's "The House of the Spirits" she alludes to this correlation, stating that "...the supernatural is closely linked to female voice; in both, ghosts and spirits provide authority for articulation and identity." (Jenkins 69) Kingston's deceased aunts thus have twofold the power within them; in other words, they possess both the power of silence and of the supernatural.

In a similar manner to Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* or Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, family remains a potent theme within Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*. *Interpreter of Maladies* consists of a collection of short stories that showcases everyday moments in the lives of Indians and and Indian-Americans. While each story centers on different characters, problems, and relationships, there is an overarching theme of familial connections. This is especially evident in the short story, "The Third and Final Continent." One particular scene within showcases the strength of familial, and by extension cultural ties. Mala, the newly wedded wife of the narrator, is too heartbroken to have sexual intercourse with her husband because she misses her parents too much. Her husband is also illustrated as being deeply impacted by the death of his own mother. Both connections are depicted in the following excerpt:

> Five nights we shared a bed. Each of those nights, after applying cold cream and braiding her hair, which she tied up a the end with a black cotton string, she turned from me and wept; she missed her parents...At times I thought of the tiny room on the other side of the wall which had belonged to my mother...I had watched her die on that bed...because my brother could not bear it, I had assumed the role of eldest son… (Lahiri 181-182)

This excerpt not only shows the strength of the filial bond with the characters' parents, but it also shows the devotion and duty that lies between siblings as well; as demonstrated in the way the narrator steps in to fulfill his brother's duty, when it becomes evident that he is too grief stricken to undertake this task.

"Mrs Sen" also highlights the importance of family. Elliot, the boy that Mrs. Sen is caring for while his mother is at work notes that, "[t]wo things...made Mrs Sen happy. One was the arrival of a letter from her family." (Lahiri 121) Mrs. Sen's homesickness and desire to be with

her family pervades her very persona. At one point in the short story, she expresses a wish to drive back to her family in Calcutta. Her desire for her family, and the culture that her family represents is one of the main focal points of the narrative. Her family in Calcutta is what centers her and gives her peace. The relationship of family is not only restricted to blood relatives or marriage, as during the course of the story, Elliot becomes fond of Mrs. Sen maternal ways. This is noted in Rehnuma Sazzad's"The Extraordinariness of Ordinary Immigrant Mothers in Jhumpa Lahiri's Writings." Sazzad states that, "'Mrs. Sen's' is a story in the collection that effectively echoes the pressure of isolation for an immigrant woman...the … author… suggests through her details that Mrs. Sen is more nurturing than usual in an American context" (Sazzad 211-212) It is thus through Mrs. Sen that Elliot can experience and appreciate Indian culture.

Mrs. Das' from "Interpreter of Maladies," reluctance to even be considerate or fond of her children is a shocking contrast the maternal figures from *Obasan* and *The Woman Warrior*. When juxtaposed with "Interpreter of Maladies" the parental devotion and duty shown in the previously aforementioned short stories help to enforce how unusual Mrs. Das' behavior is. Unlike the characters from "The Third and Final Continent's" relationship with their parents, or Mrs. Sen's overall warmth, the parents and children of "Interpreter of Maladies" are depicted as spoiled and immature. Mrs. Das and her husband constantly bicker with one another in a manner that is reminiscent of children. Though appealing, Mrs Das is described as, "...a woman not yet thirty, who loved neither her husband nor her children." (Lahiri 66) Her self-absorbed nature shows itself, time and again within the short story, like how she argues over whether she or her husband should take their daughter to the restroom. Mr. Das is not significantly better; when his son is being accosted by monkeys instead of rushing out to help him, Mr. Das ends up accidentally taking pictures. (Lahiri 68) However, rather than enforcing this ideal, "Interpreter of

Maladies" illustrates how odd this parental concept is. As expounded by Sazzad, "...Mrs. Das's failure to be a caring mother according to Indian tradition...performing as a good mother in Indian culture involves constantly keeping a watchful eye on and ensuring a warm presence around the child." (Sazzad 215) Thus, Mr. and Mrs. Das' shortcomings help to illustrate the importance of family within East Indian culture.

Silence and secrets also play a large role in "Interpreter of Maladies." Mrs. Das confides to Mr. Kapasi that she had an affair with one of her husband's friends and that the second son is not actually related to Mr. Das. By keeping this fact a secret, the silence builds and slowly transforms into resentment and anger. "A Temporary Matter" also depicts the dangers of remaining silent too long. The married couple, Shoba and Shukumar, have reached a point in their relationship where they no longer speak to one another. While the reader can assume that their relationship decay is the direct result of their stillborn child, that does not seem to be the case. The truth regarding the birth of their stillborn son is just one of the many secrets that Shoba and Shukumar kept from each other. They have harbored secrets for so long and have remained silent on various unintended slights, that their relationship has been poisoned; "[s]omehow, without saying anything, it had turned into this. Into an exchange of confessions- the little ways they'd hurt or disappointed each other…" (Lahiri 18) Only when the lights go off during the night for construction purposes can they break their self-imposed silence and take the first steps towards self-healing. In this manner, Lahiri illustrates one of the negative aspects of remaining silent.

Within all three texts, the authors stress an importance on family; especially the importance of parental and child bonds. It is from this bond that the characters are able to establish a relationship with their cultures, as evidenced of the relationship between Obasan and

Naomi, Kingston and Brave Orchid, and Mala, and Mrs. Sen to their own families. The stories that are passed down from adult to child help enable the protagonist connect with their cultural heritage. Obasan's letters and stories help Naomi connect to the past, and to uncover the truth of what happened to her mother. Brace Orchid uses the tale of Mu Lan to help Kingston connect culturally to China, and the family stories of herself and Kingston's aunts to help establish familial and cultural ties. Mrs. Sen's own tales and letters help to establish a relationship with Elliot and India through herself. Silence is another important theme that can be found in all three works. The silence found within the narrative are the result of cultural gender roles; however each book highlights the significance of silence in a different way. Within *Obasan*, this concept of silence of a mark of power. By highlighting the silent nature of the text and characters, Kogawa brings focus on the power of will that Naomi and her aunt possess in the face of adversity. *The Woman Warrior* depicts silence as both a source of power and a source of potential self-harm. Within both of these works, silence helps to augment the role and potency of the supernatural (within *The Woman Warrior*) and the letters (*Obasan*). *Interpreter of Maladies*, however, illustrates the negative consequences of silence and secrets, through the destruction of a marriage in the short story, "Interpreter of Maladies" and the healing that can only be obtained when silence is broken in "A Temporary Matter." While each text focuses on a different cultural region and various characters, the overarching themes of family and silence connect them all and more importantly, they connect them with their respective cultures. The cultural concepts of family and silence thus help center the characters on their own journeys of understanding and self-discovery.

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Essay #3

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The Fusion of Gothicism and Romanticism

There are numerous literary movements, and each one is unique and insightful in their own manner. Naturalism, Postmodernism, and Romanticism are examples of such movements that are not only aesthetically distinct, but also fundamentally different in their core values. Each of these movements were formed in response to each other. Where Romanticism promotes the concepts of nature, human's relationship with each other and nature, the sublime and the supernatural, Naturalism is focused more on the reality of human suffering and determinism. Some narrative examples of Naturalism include Stephen Crane's *Maggie; Girl of the Streets* or Jack London's *Call of the Wild.* Postmodernism, contrarily, "...maintains that frameworks and systems, for example the structuralist systems explained in the structuralist area, are merely fictitious constructs and that they cannot be trusted to develop meaning or to give order….[as] there exists no unified truth" (Allen J., et al.).

Not all literary movements are so divergent in their ideologies however. While there are a great many distinctions between literary movements, especially with the aforementioned ones That does not necessarily mean that there are no similarities to be found in all literary

movements. Oftentimes, works and authors found in many movements do not adhere to a specific timeline; instead, multiple movements can lay claim to a specific author or work as a representative of that particular school of thought. The Romantic and Gothic movements are two such examples that help to illustrate the fusion of ideologies, aesthetics, and even in some cases, authors. The Romantic movement, as previously mentioned, focused on nature, humanity's relationship with nature and each other, the supernatural, and the sublime. The Gothic movement, on the other hand, "... came to designate the macabre, mysterious, fantastic, supernatural, and, again, the terrifying, especially the *pleasurably* terrifying..." ("The Gothic: Overview"). While at first glance both movements appear distinct, in reality they share many of the same qualities, particularly in regards to the elaborate depiction of the supernatural and nature. Due to the tightly interwoven nature of the Gothic and the Romantic, it is even possible to interpret them as two parts of a whole.

In order better appreciate how both movements intersect with each other, it is imperative that their ideologies are properly defined and representative works help to depict their literary fundamentals. For that purpose, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey,* and *Mansfield Park* will be utilized in order to illustrate the differences and similarities between the Romantic and the Gothic, while Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" will be used in order to depict how one work depicts a fusion of both movements.

Despite the initial inclination, the term Gothic is not so easy to define, especially in today's age. This could be because of the broad influence and evolution of the genre from classic novels like *Jane Eyre* to the more modern thoughts where the term is often equated with vampires and ghosts. Regardless, "*Gothic* is a complex cultural, term and its meanings have varied greatly across the 400 years of its persistence...its visions of the past were frequently

displacements of the present, and its depictions of superstition embodied the tensions of an age supposedly rendered ordered..." (Hughes 1). The term originated from a group of Germanic warrior tribesmen who gained power after the fall of Rome. Later it was also applied to a form of architecture and literary movement. Each of these concepts are a primsic angle to the term Gothic, and makes the exact definition nebulous. This aspect is further referenced in Michael Gamer's *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*:

> "..Both the generic multiplicity of the Gothic and what one might call its discursive primacy, effectively detach the Gothic from the tidy simplicity of thinking it as so many predictable, fictional conventions. This may end up making "Gothic" a more ambiguous, shifting term…" (Gamer 9).

Despite the fluidity of the term and the style, the importance of the Gothic genre can still be felt today as can be seen from the popularity of authors (like Stephen King) and vampire narratives, (like *Interview with the Vampire)*. Given the expansive scope and evolution of the movement, this paper will concentrate on the Gothic movement that arose after and during the 1700-1800's.

In a modern sense, the Gothic tends to relate to horror and suspense, however, this is only the tip of the iceberg. The term "Gothic" was actually coined in a literary sense in 1765 with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*; though it wasn't until the latter portions of the eighteenth century that the Gothic movement began in earnest and gained notable traction in Victorian literature. These dates coincide with the dates of the Romantic Literary era, which was potent during the 1800's; the close proximity in dates could help explain why both movements are so heavily intertwined with each other. Gothic elements of setting description and narrative detail can even be seen in Romantic works such as John Keats'"The Eve of St. Agnes" and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" ("The Gothic: Overview"). While the Gothic does

address the macabre and terror, it is imperative to note that the elements of nature and the supernatural are just as vital to the genre as the aspects of horror.

The strong correlation between nature and the sublime has always been potent and tightly interwoven, even in Romantic literature. This interrelationship can also be seen in the Gothic portrayal of nature and the sublime. As professor John Bowen notes, the sublime and nature are "...often terrifying and awesome and overwhelming and Gothic is absolutely at the centre of that move to the sublime and sublimity in understanding the world" (Bowen). This sense of the terrifying, overwhelming, and the awesome are translated into the environments of the Gothic atmosphere, thus helping to create a sense of primal perturbation. Unlike Romanticism, the portrayal of nature is not as benign in Gothic literature. There is still an element of wonder and power when the environment is described, but there is also a sharp edge of danger, darkness, and primal forces. Nature helps to convey this particular sort of mood and the aesthetics of the Gothic style. Professor Bowen expounds upon that concept, stating that, "Gothic fiction is fascinated by strange places. On the one hand, very wild and remote landscapes, and on the other, to very imprisoning places" (Bowen). This wild aspect of nature is often seen in the description of raging storms, wild seas, and dark, foreboding mountains. The mere sense of solitude found in such natural settings also weigh heavily upon both characters and readers, especially when they are confronted with the supernatural.

The impact of nature has a profound influence on the representation of the supernatural in Gothic literature. The natural environment helps to heighten the sense and foreboding of the supernatural. While there are a great many elements that help to compose the framework of the Gothic, this supernatural aspect is especially vital for the genre. These supernatural elements are oftentimes represented by ghosts, demons, or vampires. The use of these figures is two-fold. Not

only does it help convey a sense of terror, but it also helps to depict the anachronism element that is a staple of the Gothic. The past and the modern are often heavily considered in the Gothic and are represented by supernatural figures that occupy both spaces of time. These supernatural elements offer "[d]iscrepancies between registers, 'ancient' versus 'modern'...The Gothic reinforces the distance between its figures and their possible points of reference to that point..." (Faflak 201). Thus, the supernatural element, even if there is a naturalistic explanation for the events, depict a fusion of the past and present. The most profound of these elements is the depiction of the ghost in the Gothic genre, "[t]he thing that you think is dead but comes back vividly alive in the present" (Bowen). The added weight of the juxtaposition of the past and the modern, in addition, to providing a sense of foreboding make the characteristics of the supernatural especially vital in its representation in the Gothic. Professor Bown observes that there are two types of supernatural representation in Gothic literature. He states that the, "Gothic is fascinated by the supernatural… So, there are two different kinds of Gothic – one that uses the supernatural, as it were, and expects us to believe in it – and the other that gives a natural or realistic explanation of it" (Bowen**).**

Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* helps to depict these Gothic elements. While often thought as satirizing the genre, *Northanger Abbey* does represent traditional Gothic elements in an ideal fashion. This, of course, extends to the depiction of nature and the setting, as well as the supernatural, or rather the lack of the supernatural. As noted by John Mullan, "... Catherine Morland, imposes on reality the Gothic plots with which she is familiar...Yet she had made a discovery: 'gothic' truly came alive in the thoughts and anxieties of her characters. Gothic has always been more about fear of the supernatural than the supernatural itself" (Mullan). Even without the aid of supernatural, the Gothic elements of *Northanger Abbey* are still potent.

While the supernatural in *Northanger Abbey* does not exist in the fashion of ghosts or ghouls, the descriptions found in the novel are still indicative of a haunting atmosphere. The most illustrative of these portrayals can be seen when Catherine Morland arrives at Northanger Abbey. Her own preconceptions of the place color her observations of the environment:

> "As they drew near the end of their journey, her impatience for a sight of the abbey...
>
> returned in full force, and every bend in the road was expected with solemn awe to afford a glimpse of its massy walls of grey stone, rising amidst a grove of ancient oaks, with the last beams of the sun playing in beautiful splendour on its high Gothic windows. But so low did the building stand, that she found herself passing through the great gates of the lodge…a sudden scud of rain driving full in her face made it impossible for her to observe any further..." (Austen 151).

The description above makes grants the estate a haunting atmosphere that helps to intensify the protagonist's suspicion about General Tinley. By placing a special emphasis on the ancient oaks, the passage helps to ignite a feeling of history and nostalgia, in addition to something that is untamed and feral. At the same time, the beauty placed upon the setting sun helps to convey a feeling of elegance and wonder; however, this serenity is quickly replaced with foreboding as the rain forces Catherine to cease further observation. Thus, the depiction of this stately gray manor, surrounded by ancient oaks and rain, helps to enforce the vision of nature as being solitary, and oppressive that is often found within the Gothic. Catherine's own initial prejudice against the General and the influence from the environment's ambience also impacts her observations when describing the inside of the house as evidenced by the following quote, "...one moment's suspicion of any past scenes of horror being acted within the solemn edifice. The breeze had not seemed to waft the sight of the murdered to her; it had wafted nothing worse than a thick

mizzling rain" (Austen 151). The fact that the way that nature is described here is not indicative of past, macabre events makes Catherine confused, as she no doubt thought that such an event would leave a permanent scar upon the Abbey.

Unlike Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" does have a significant supernatural presence and the elements of nature are exceptionally potent. While Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" does fall under the Romantic movement, these supernatural and natural aspects are also indicative of the Gothic movement; the most evident of these concepts is the fact that the entire poem is essentially a ghost story. As noted by the Norton's overview of the Gothic, "[m]ore pervasive signs of Gothic influence show up in some of the most frequently read Romantic poems — for example, the account of the skeleton ship and the crew's reaction ("A flash of joy . . . And horror follows") in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"("The Gothic: Overview"). These supernatural occurrences, especially in regards to the terrifying constructs of Death and Torment, are both concepts that exist in the past and the present. As the crewmembers die, and then rise again towards the end of the poem, it demonstrates a sort of existence that is above time; as though they are no longer affected by mortality. In a way, their fickle existence also is indicative of the crewmembers fickle nature, as at first they were outraged by the Mariner shooting the albatross, then accepting of it, and then enraged once more. What is interesting about this poem is how the supernatural and nature are conjoined, since the supernatural occurrences are the result of nature avenging itself against the Mariner for shooting the albatross.

Nature itself shows its full might within the poem and helps to intensify the atmosphere and the threat of the supernatural (i.e. the skeletal ship and the wrathful spirits). This correlation

makes it seem as though the supernatural and nature share a potent bond with one another. One excerpt describes the weather:

> "And now the Storm-Blast came, and he
> Was tyrannous and strong:
> He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
> And chased south along.
> With sloping masts and dipping prow,
> As who pursued with yell and blow
> Still treads the shadow of his foe
> And forward bends his head,
> The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
> And southward aye we fled" (Coleridge 41-50).

With the appearance of the albatross, events become slightly better and the sailors are gifted with good weather for a time. But as events become more dire the weather and the supernatural reflect this state; thus, creating a sense of overwhelming foreboding and terror that is reflective of the Gothic. This can especially be seen post-albatross death, and how nature is described in darker terms such as the ocean being depicted as, "...water, like a witch's oils,/ Burnt green, and blue and white" (Coleridge 129-130). These terms and passages help to portray the might and power of nature, making the Mariner and his fellow crewman afraid for their lives as they realized how little power they have relative to the might of nature and the supernatural elements that are correlated with it.

Like the Gothic movement, Romanticism is not easily defined, as it possesses a great many ideologies concerning such concepts like, human liberty, animal cruelty reform, sexual

liberation, etc. Unlike the Gothic Romanticism does not possess the same form of anachronism, where time seems to be disjointed. This correlation with time, the Gothic, and the Romantic is expounded upon in Joel Faflak's discussion of the relationship between the two literary movements.

> "The Romantic relationship to the Gothic, then, connects the effort of imagination to close all gaps between figures and objects through imaginative syntheses with the underlying awareness… [the] 'Gothic' itself, can drift across multiple reference points. They can suggest meanings tied to past realities yet obscure, or even...more recent perceptions and associations that those same figures represent" (Faflak 220).

This aspect helps to illustrate why ghosts, vampires, and other such undying figures are commonplace within the Gothic genre, while Romanticism is associated more with aesthetics. Oftentimes, Gothicism is even considered a subset of the Romantic movement. (Marshall). Marie Mulvey-Roberts states that, "[r]omanticism and Gothicism are inter-related in many ways…" and this is especially evident in the many shared literary traits within both movements have (Mulvey-Roberts 196). Both movements were a response against Enlightenment, and the ideals of order, propriety, and rational control that were associated with it ("The Romantic Period: Introduction."). Romanticism's focus on nature, man, aesthetics, and liberty can be considered homologous to many of the traits and beliefs that are found in Gothicism. The literary response against Enlightenment and their shared values help to explain why both the Gothic and the Romantic have a predisposition with feelings of wonder, nature, the supernatural, and concepts beyond human control or understanding. Both movements not only share this passionate ideal, but they also interconnect in a variety of other different ways, including how they view nature and the supernatural as a source of power, awe, and inspiration.

While the Gothic focuses on creating a foreboding atmosphere with the use of nature and the supernatural, the Romantic also shares a similar sense of wonder of the same elements though with a different resolution in mind. The sublime helps in the illustration of these natural wonders, especially those aspects of nature that are free from human intervention and invoke potent feeling of wonder and fear (Black, et al. 358). Dr. Stephanie Forward expounds upon this subject of Romanticism and nature, stating that:

> "Romantic verse was suffused with reverence for the natural world…. The Romantics were inspired by the environment, and encouraged people to venture into new territories – both literally and metaphorically. In their writings they made the world seem a place with infinite, unlimited potential....A key idea in Romantic poetry is the concept of the sublime. This term conveys the feelings people experience when they see awesome landscapes, or find themselves in extreme situations which elicit both fear and admiration" (Forward).

The definition above detailing how Romanticism viewed the traits of the natural world and the sublime possesses many similarities to the definition of the Gothic. Both explanations mention a wondrous state brought on by nature to elicit awe and fear in the viewer. Furthermore, they both utilize the same key languages of nature, the sublime and powerful emotion. While the Gothic is mostly concerned with the aspect of horror, the Romantic finds value in both states, particularly the grandeur and empirical beauty of nature (Black, et al. 358). To Romantics, nature has the power to "...restore peace to the mind and soul" (Tichelaar 117). Regardless of the minute differences between both movements, the emotions gained from the deep appreciation of nature were thought to help bring about enlightenment, whether through fear or awe.

The similar depiction of the supernatural is another concept that both Romanticism and Gothicism have in common. Both movements utilize ghosts, spirits, and occasionally angels and demons in order to convey their meanings and thoughts. While the threat of the supernatural (whether actual events or events that can be explained in a realistic manner) are imperative to the drive of the Gothic, the Romantic is not limited as such. However, it is not unusual to see Romantic poets employ elements of the Gothic and vice versa. This is especially evident in the earlier analysis of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" where spirits, Death, and a skeletal ship make their appearance within the poem. The use of supernatural elements in Romanticism also includes beings like ghosts, as well as, spirits of nature and figures from Greek mythology. The use of mythological figures, such as fauns from John Keats' "Lamia" and pagan gods from Lord Byron's "Prometheus" are correlated with the with the revival of classical romance and Greek literature during this time period. Furthermore, the reference and use of this sort of imagery was indicative of an individual's education.

Like *Northanger Abbey,* Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* does not possess a supernatural element. However, the depiction of nature, especially in correlation with Mansfield Park has a profound presence in the novel in a similar manner that the natural settings of Northanger Abbey help to heighten the Gothic atmosphere. Mansfield Park is a representative of a country home and as such is, "well-proportioned, unpretending, as taking its forms, quite properly, from nature… as a reward for this imitation of nature, the house is surrounded by an unnatural abundance" (Claybaugh xviii). Only when the protagonist, Fanny Price, is relocated to her birth home and faces the misery there does she begin to miss Mansfield Park. While some readers and critics suggest that this homesickness could arise from her materialistic and superficial nature, the text suggests otherwise as illustrated by the following quote, "[t]he elegance, proprietary,

regularity, harmony, and perhaps above all the peace and tranquility, of Mansfield were brought to her remembrance every hour of the day, by the prevalence of everything opposite to them here" (Austen 340-341). The house in the country is where Fanny finds peace and happiness as opposed to the tight and dirty living conditions of town life. In the city, Fanny is completely out of place, having been used to the grandeur of the estate's grounds and connection with nature. She gets frequent headaches and weakens physically when she is away from Mansfield Park. This action helps to elevate the status of nature within the text, and also to facilitate the ideal of nature as a healing source for both the physical and mental state of an individual. It is not only nature's presence or lack of presence within the novel that defines it, but also how the characters interact with nature that define them and heighten nature's role within the text. Professor Amanda Claybaugh observes that, "[i]t is only in the context of country-house writing that we can recognize the danger [Mary and Henry Crawford] represent. For Mary is not only contemptuous of religion, but also indifferent to nature, and she refuses to honor the seasonal rhythms of rural life" (Claybaugh xxiii). The distinction between Mary and Fanny as foils are thus heightened due to their regard of nature; it also helps to further justify how attuned Fanny and Edmund are to each other, as opposed to Edmund and Mary. Mary's and Henry's ideas concerning Thornton Lacey, as a symbol of the country home and nature, help to distinguish the protagonists from the antagonists. While Mary wants to change the land and Henry wanted to rent it for his own means, both Fanny and Edmund express a fondness for the land and feel that the true worth of a home comes from the occupant.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is one of the most iconic romantic poems. In addition to possessing traditional gothic elements, the depiction of both nature and the supernatural strongly resonate with Romantic ideals. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is the perfect

example of the fusion between Romantic and Gothic traits. Nature plays a significant role within the tale. It is due to the Albatross' assistance that the Mariner and his fellow shipmates were able to free their ship from being overcome by ice. The appearance of the albatross is a sign of not only nature's good-will, but also the benign, healing power that can come from nature itself. This is illustrated in the following passage, with the Mariner's observation of the arrival of the albatross and the subsequent good weather that came with it:

> "The ice was here, the ice was there,
>
> The ice was all around…
>
> At length did cross an Albatross:
>
> Thorough the fog it came...
>
> The ice did split with a thunder-fit...
>
> And a good south wind sprung up behind;
>
> The Albatross did follow,
>
> And every day, for food or play,
>
> Came to the mariners' hollo!
>
> In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
>
> It perched for vespers nine;
>
> Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
>
> Glimmered the white Moon-shine" (Coleridge 69-78).

Nature here, as represented by the albatross, is a force of goodwill. The fair weather and the illustration of the glimmering moonlight that comes with the albatross' appearance is described in a whimsical, almost magical way. This sort of quiet awe and wonder is in tuned with how Romantic poets viewed the beauty and vigor of nature. This excerpt, with the added benefit of

showing a remedious aspect of nature, also depicts a correlation between nature and the power of the supernatural. As opposed to its use in the Gothic, this supernatural presence is helpful and benign, as it leads the sailors out of trouble; that is, until the mariner shoots the albatross with a crossbow. From that point, elements of the Gothic become a potent force within the narrative.

As depicted by Austen's *Northanger Abbey, Mansfield Park,* and Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" the Gothic and Romantic movements are tightly interwoven with each other. The shared elements that are found in them at times make it difficult to differentiate a Romantic piece from a Gothic one, or as can be seen in "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" there is a fusion of styles. Nature in both genres is described with a sense of wonder and awe. The potent emotions that emerge from this reverence are the same in both the Gothic and the Romantic; and in both movements the use of the sublime is used to increase this emotion inspired by nature. The major difference between the two is that while the Gothic tries to evoke a more foreboding atmosphere, the Romantics tried to use the same aspect to invoke any sort of powerful emotion. In both *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park* nature was used in similar methods. In *Northanger Abbey* the description of nature helped to heighten the tense atmosphere, while in *Mansfield Park* the use of nature was used not only to illustrate the healing factors, but also to help separate the protagonists from the antagonists. "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" uses nature in both fashions, as an agent of healing and wonder, but also one that can strike terror and unease. This fusion of the Gothic and the Romantic is also seen again in "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" through depiction of the supernatural. The albatross can be seen as an initial benign supernatural force, that can be associated with the Romantic; the skeletal ship and Death itself can not only be considered part of the Romantic's supernatural, but they're also heavily Gothic it their portrayal.

The Gothic and Romantic movements are tightly interwoven with one another. Their shared values and traits are represented in the similar ways that nature and the supernatural are depicted in their works. Furthermore, as demonstrated with the “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” it is not unusual to see Romantic works utilize Gothic elements and vice versa. Robert Hume mentions that:

> “That Gothicism is closely related to Romanticism is perfectly clear, but it is easier to state the fact than to prove it tidily and convincingly. There is a persistent suspicion that Gothicism is a poor and probably illegitimate relation of Romanticism, and a consequent tendency to treat it that way. There are those, indeed, who would like to deny the relationship altogether" (Hume 282).

However, such a viewpoint is a disservice to both movements. Rather than viewing the movements as distinct, it would be more beneficial to see how they are conjoined with each other, and how Romantic works and Gothic works, such as *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park*, parallel each other in the depiction of nature or how “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” used both Romantic and Gothic elements. The Romantic and Gothic movement are so tightly interwoven with each other, it is almost impossible to separate them. John Keats, a highly influential Romantic poet, even called Ann Radcliffe, one of the founders of the Gothic Romance novel, “‘Mother Radcliffe’ ... because she had such an influence on Romantic poets.” (Forward). At the same extension, Radcliffe utilized numerous references from Romantic poets, like Coleridge. These influences between the writers of both movements and the movement’s shared values regarding nature and the supernatural have helped to make both the Gothic and the Romantic two sides of the same coin.

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