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HUMANITIES

Cinderella's Perpetually Well-Earned "Happily Ever After"

Sharonya Battula

Though commonly perceived as a fairy tale for young children, Cinderella represents and reflects universal truths of the human condition. Cinderella embodies the underdog, surrounded by seemingly inescapable circumstances but ultimately successful in finding happiness. In doing so, she becomes a figure onto which we can project our own challenges and fears. Furthermore, we can utilize her narrative to fuel our own hope for a better future. With this in mind, it's no surprise that the tale of Cinderella is ubiquitous. Persisting across time and space, her story has managed to retain its essence while being suitable for different societal landscapes. Despite the continuity of certain plot elements, one could argue that these modifications of Cinderella based on the sociological context drastically alter the identities of the characters between retellings. For instance, in The Classic Fairy Tales, Maria Tatar lends credence to Jane Yolen's assertion that the "shrewd resourceful heroine of folktales from earlier centuries has been supplanted" by weaker women whose happiness is achieved through serendipity or sheer luck (Tater 140). Though at first glance Yolen's claim appears to be true, through further inspection of the Cinderella character in The Three Gowns, Disney's Cinderella, and Once Upon a Song, each version's socio-historical context alternatively suggests that Cinderella's "happily ever after" has always been a product of her own actions and internal strength.

In The Three Gowns, Rosa (an early manifestation of Cinderella) was shown to be overtly clever and independent. In order to deter her father from marrying her, she requested three impossibly extraordinary dresses: "a gown the color of the all the stars in the sky," " a gown the color of all the fish in the sea," and a gown "the color of the all the flowers on the earth" (Tater 163). As noted by Donald Haase in his book The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales, there is a "pronounced identification" and relationship with the natural world prevalent in Latin American folklore: nature is employed in this Puerto Rican story as a means for Rosa to escape the Oedipal desires of her father. When this was unsuccessful, she immediately decided to escape "along with a magic wand she happened to have" (Tater 163). This scene demonstrates Rosa's willpower and initiative, determination to control her own life, and lack of need for divine intervention (in the form of a witch) to resolve her problems. Additionally, the phrase "along with a magic wand she happened to have" appears to be haphazardly thrown in, nearly lost syntactically among a series of commas within a long compound sentence, suggesting that little importance or power should be attributed to this "magical assistant" in relation to the character of Rosa herself. The seemingly nonchalant mention of her killing a lioness only furthers the impression of Rosa as a strong female heroine to the audience. Haase explains this unexpectedly feminist narrative by claiming that the reversal of traditional gender roles was fairly common in folk tales, perhaps stemming from the tendency of female storytellers to inject a stronger female point of view. Regardless of reasoning, ultimately The Three Gowns minimizes or subverts the need for a supernatural entity to rescue Rosa, (as Yolen would emphasize) thereby enabling her own actions and fortitude to dictate her life: she sought out the prince and ultimately revealed herself to him on her own terms, resulting in their marriage.

Disney's 1950 Cinderella is typically characterized similarly to how Yolen views her: a passive protagonist, requiring assistance from her Fairy Godmother in order to escape the oppressive reality of her stepfamily. In fact, in the iconic scene where her Fairy Godmother materialized, Cinderella initially responds with, "The ball...but I'm not going," only to be met with the Godmother's insistent, "Oh, of course you are." This interaction elucidates how the Fairy Godmother is indeed responsible for driving the plot forward as opposed to Cinderella herself, creating the luxurious gown that inevitably captures the Prince's attention. However, Disney's "passive" princess and emphasis on the "superficial" symbolize incredibly important aspects of the cultural landscape of America post World War II. After decades of war and economic depression, forced frugality, and rationing, "audiences of 1950 dreamed of not just postwar recovery, but complete transformation: throwing off the tattered remnants of the past and diving headfirst into a world of long-denied comfort and beauty" (Chrisman-Campbell). The American public, having sacrificed and endured so much for years on end, was left feeling bereft in the aftermath of World War II and in turn sought "luxury and elegance...as if the war hadn't intervened at all" (Chrisman-Campbell). As a result, Cinderella was perceived as a representation of the hardworking American: a message to the masses that years of slaving away had finally paid off and that they deserved to treat themselves. In this way, Cinderella inadvertently became a champion of consumer culture. In fact, Cele Otnes argues that though Cinderella has certainly been "an object of scorn for feminists [like Yolen] who interpreted the 1950 Disney version as a paradigmatic statement of female passivity and the belief that women are in need of male rescue," the story of Cinderella was undeniably instrumental in propagating the advertising and consumer culture rampant in the 1950s, a lifestyle that could finally be supported by the booming US economy and peacetime (Otnes 29). Hence, from this point of view, though Cinderella was relatively passive, her "Disney princess ending" was nonetheless earned; it was the product of Cinderella's years of toil and perseverance in the face of tragedy, mirroring the struggles endured by America through war and poverty, more so than a simple "bippity boppity boo" or handsome prince to the rescue.

However, because Disney's 1950 Cinderella is frequently criticized for its passive princess, 2011's Once Upon a Song noticeably strived to separate itself from its predecessor. The contemporary telling starred a teenage girl determined to leave the confines of the domestic sphere and become a successful musician. Accordingly, the movie contained a few songs, most of which blatantly conveyed ambition, personal strength, and independence. In fact, the movie opened with Katie (the main character)

performing her song "Run This Town" in her dream. This beginning sequence showcased her dressed in all black, singing bold lyrics including the line "I'm gonna rock this town," directly juxtaposing the gentle, hopeful yet docile song that occurred near the start of the 1950s movie about waiting for a dream to fulfill itself. By contrast, Katie took initiative to realize her career aspirations. Surreptitiously slipping her CD demo into the record producer's suitcase in hopes of jump-starting her career, Katie made evident her sense of independence and strong will to the audience, effectively disproving Yolen's statement that more contemporary versions of Cinderella contain weaker females. Throughout the rest of the movie, Once Upon a Song further distinguishes itself from Disney's original characterization of Cinderella. At one point, Katie found herself literally wearing nothing but a doormat, but soon wound up wearing a blazer over the mat, metaphorically asserting her superiority over the complacent Cinderella archetype. Additionally, the movie's last song "Bless Myself" contained the following lyrics: "look inside not around," "there's no need for someone's help," "there's no one to save you but yourself," and "I have blessed myself." These words effectively criticize and undermine the dependence on a Fairy Godmother for success presented in Disney's original, sharing a similar perspective to The Three Gowns. The 2011 narrative more closely aligns with today's perspective on gender equality, a direct contrast to 1950s feminist Betty Friedan's outlook on gender roles. As response to the 1950s cultural landscape, Friedan boldly commented on the state of suburban housewives in America, drawing attention to "a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States" (Friedan 1). With her book The Feminine Mystique, Friedan highlighted an underlying discontent shared by suburban women who wanted a life beyond tending to the family and taking care of the house, thereby galvanizing millions of suburban women to fight for their rights and effectively establishing the second wave feminism in America. Once Upon a Song's emphasis on a woman's professional aspirations, over a high school love interest, reflects and validates the social progress made as a result of Friedan's movement, and in doing so refutes Yolen's claim. Katie's talent, grit, and drive culminated in her getting signed by a famous music producer and ditching her wicked step family for a bright future in the music industry.

Rosa, Cinderella, and Katie are "Cinderellas" from three different time periods, yet all three successfully earned their "happily ever afters" through their own actions. Rosa escaped her father, killed a lion and adopted it as a disguise, and sought out the prince, eventually revealing herself on her own terms. Cinderella remained kind, tolerant, hardworking, and hopeful (which arguably demands great mental strength) in the midst of domestic abuse until she was ultimately rewarded by her Fairy Godmother. Katie used her talent, drive, and willpower to pursue her career aspirations, resulting in her very own record deal.

Though Yolen dismisses or condescends subsequent Cinderellas after The Three Gowns, particularly the 1950's Cinderella for not actively embarking to win her happiness, this perspective fails to consider the sociological context that differentiates each protagonist's success. The Disney Cinderella, an extension of the American public post 1945, had already chosen to withstand so much misfortune that she was entitled to a Fairy Godmother. Therefore, her passivity should not be disrespected or misunderstood as weakness or lack of action/decision/strength. The salient sense of feminism in Once Upon a Song, expressed through Katie's fierce personality and ambition (in addition to the symbolism of Disney's Cinderella), is yet another counter to Yolen's original claim. All three "Cinderellas" are inspirational in their own right; all three underwent a Hero's Journey (though some journeys look more conventionally "heroic" than others with the idea of strength manifesting itself in different ways) and successfully secured their happiness. Consequently, Rosa, Cinderella, and Katie all represent the type of underdog we can identify with, seek comfort in, and utilize to propel our own dreams of happiness. We aspire to be our own Rosas or Cinderellas or Katies, pushing forward in hopes that our inner strength will earn us a "happily ever after" of our own.

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American Abject: A Psychopolitical Reading of The Comedian

Caleb Wexler

Alan Moore's *Watchmen* uses its characters to present a dark vision of mid-twentieth century America. Of these characters, one of the more memorable is Edward Blake, also known as the Comedian. Indeed, the most recognizable symbol in the graphic novel[1] is Blake's pin. Blake is such a notable and puzzling character because amongst the cast of erstwhile, would-be, and anti-heroes, Blake is almost (if not entirely) villainous. The enigma posed by this character can be reduced to a single question: If all of the Comedian's brutality and cruelty is a joke, what's the punchline? By reading the Comedian in the context of the "abject",[2] we understand that the punchline is America itself.

To understand the function of the Comedian, it is important to also understand the character of the Comedian. The key to this begins with page 69 of *Watchmen.* On this page, Rorschach is visiting the grave of the recently interred Comedian and depicts key scenes from earlier in the chapter, accompanied by Rorschach's journal. In this journal entry Rorschach recalls a dark, but illuminating joke:

Man goes to the doctor. Says he's depressed. Says life seems harsh and cruel./ Says he feels all alone in a threatening world where what lies ahead is vague and uncertain./ Doctor says "Treatment is simple. Great clown Pagliacci is in town tonight. Go and see him. That should pick you up."/Man bursts into tears./Says "But doctor…/"I am Pagliacci."[3]

It is also worth noting the name of the clown in Rorschach's joke. Pagliacci is an Italian opera about Canio, an actor who dresses up as Pagliacci—a Pierrot, or sad clown. At the end of the first Act, Canio is preparing to perform in a comedy when he finds out that his wife has been unfaithful, and despite this news he must still perform, and sings the aria, fittingly titled, ***Vesti la giubba***, "Put on the costume"[4]. Like Pagliacci, Edward Blake saw a harsh, cruel world, and reacted by putting on a costume. However while he jokes about it, he can't unsee it. He is a clown who cannot laugh at his own joke.

However, understanding Blake as the sad clown still leaves us with the question: *what's the joke?* This question is best answered through Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic concept of the abject. In her book, *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva describes something which is not an element of the psyche in the way that the *I,* or the repressed, are integral parts of the self. Rather, the abject is the negative space against which the *I* is drawn. It is all the horrible, unconscionable material which the "I" defines itself against. This is what Kristeva calls the "abject"[5].

Edward Blake is a military agent, and he needs to be understood in relation to the country he serves. Nations, like individuals, form identities, and in doing so, they also engage in abjection. The rhetoric of the American identity, especially in the context of the Cold War, can be understood in opposition to the specter of communism, and the attendant fears of totalitarianism, violence, and inhuman cruelty. All of this is what we might call the abject of the American identity.

While Rorschach's journal delivers Blake's eulogy, Gibbons's illustrations deliver a retrospective, and the scenes chosen for this retrospective guide us towards specific scenes which deepen the analysis of the Comedian. To begin with, the second panel of this page shows Blake's Vietnamese girlfriend cutting his face. Returning to this scene leads us to consider the American abject in relation to the Vietnam War. While America was ostensibly there to "save" the Vietnamese from a communist threat, the American army itself committed brutal acts of violence.

This violence is evoked here by Blake's remorseless killing of his pregnant girlfriend. Michael Prince explains:

His extreme response to his Vietnamese girlfriend's cutting his face exemplifies a knee-jerk, violent reaction symptomatic of the brutal byproducts of intrusive American foreign policy. The cold-blooded murder is positioned as a My Lai massacre in miniature.[6]

Blake's role in the Vietnam War is again explored later in the graphic novel as Dr. Manhattan recalls his time with Blake in Vietnam:

I have never met anyone so deliberately amoral./He suits the climate here: the madness, the pointless butchery…/as I have come to understand Vietnam and what it implies about the human condition, I also realize that few humans will allow themselves such an understanding./Blake's different./He understands perfectly…[7]

The key word is "deliberately." Blake understands the pointless brutality of the war, and he chooses to make himself into a parody of it.

In both of these scenes, Blake appears visually as a symbol of American ideology, a soldier armored in the stars and stripes. However, rather than acting like the idealized American freedom fighter (in the mode of the Marvel hero, Captain America) he embodies the worst, most violent aspects of humanity. Thus, the Comedian operates as an ironic criticism of America, implying that it operates according to its own abject rather than its ideals.

This criticism is applied to America's domestic behavior as well. Another of the images in the Comedian's retrospective comes from the scene where he and Dan are suppressing protests. America is supposed to be the land of freedom and free speech and its oppression is something it ostensibly and constitutionally defines itself against, but in *Watchmen,* when citizens protest against the vigilantes' lack of accountability, they

[1] While the classification of this work as a graphic novel is a matter of debate, this debate falls beyond the scope of this paper. It should be noted that while I will be referring to it as a graphic novel this is not to set this work apart from or above other works of the graphic medium.
[2] Julia Kristeva, Approaching Abjection, Powers of Horror, Columbia University Press, NY, 1982. pp. 1–31.
[3] Moore, Alan. Watchmen. Illus. Dave Gibbons. Burbank: DC Comics, 1986. p. 69.
[4] Wikipedia contributors. "Pagliacci." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 19 Oct. 2018. Web. 2 Nov. 2018.
[5] Kristeva, Powers of Horror.
[6] Prince, Michael J. "Alan Moore's America: The Liberal Individual and American Identities in Watchmen" The Journal of Popular Culture, vol. 44, no. 4, 2011, p. 819.
[7] Moore, Watchmen, p. 129.

are met with violent force. While America is supposed to stand against such oppression, the Comedian happily embraces it. As he tells Dan, "I kinda like it when things get *weird,* y'know? I like it when all the cards are on the table."[8] The Comedian's purpose is to embrace what he sees as the true face of America and reflect it back upon itself, so his ideal situation is one, like this, where the abjection is out in the open. When Dan asks, "What's *happened* to America? What's happened to the American *dream?"*, implying that what is happening is a departure from the "real" America, which the Comedian refutes by answering, "It came ***true.*** You're ***lookin'*** at it,"[9] further emphasizing that these riots and their suppression are America showing its true face.

Like the scenes set in Vietnam, this scene is not without its historical context. The details of the scene, especially the use of tear gas on protestors evokes protests and riots of the mid-twentieth century, especially the People's Park Riots when protestors, angry at infringements on their right to organize by Governor Reagan, began throwing debris at police and were met with teargas and shot from behind with buckshot.[10] Except for the absence of Reagan, all these details are replicated in Watchmen.[11] Additionally, many of the police at the People's Park Riots were, like the Comedian, veterans of the Vietnam War.[12] By visually calling back to this event, and pairing it with the Comedian's commentary that this is in fact the true face of America, *Watchmen* deepens its criticism of mid-twentieth century America. Furthermore, the fact that the Comedian embraces this violent oppression so readily deepens his role as the ironic pairing of the American identity and the American abject.

Each of these scenarios can be placed in opposition to the identity of America. The violence of Vietnam exists in opposition to the role of America as a savior and the peacekeeper of the world. The suppression of protests exists in opposition to America as the champion of freedom. These events are so antithetical to their respective ideals that they can have no place with them, either as correlative or as repressed ancillary. They are so starkly opposed that each is defined by being the absence of the other. The savior is the opposite of the killer, and freedom is the opposite of the oppressor. Thus, we can understand these phenomena, concretely now, as elements of the American abject. That America at once believes and disproves of its identity is precisely the farce that the Comedian attempts to expose. However, unlike journalists or whistle blowers, the Comedian sees the situation as inescapable. As he explains to Dr. Manhattan, "Once you figure out what a *joke* everything is, being the *Comedian's* the only thing makes ***sense.***"[13]

The Comedian does this by becoming the violent, grotesque embodiment of everything America believes that it isn't, while proudly serving his country in patriotic garb reminiscent of a more militaristic Captain America. Therefore, he shows that America has abased itself, becoming the very thing it claims opposition to, to a degree that is radically irreconcilable with its identity. That America continues to operate as normal in spite of this radical contradiction is the absurdity that the Comedian is laughing at, and is exactly what the comedian parodies. Thus the role of savior is inverted. America becomes the monster to be saved from. So too is the role of liberator inverted. America becomes the despot whose people need freeing.

This presents a critique of America, not only as violent and oppressive, but as hypocritically so. After all, the Comedian isn't fighting violence, he's laughing at violence that refuses to recognize itself. This critique is lent credence by setting the Comedian against the background of real historic events, such as the Vietnam War and the People's Park Riots (there's even a brief implication that he killed J.F.K.[14]).

Through the character of the Comedian, Moore deconstructs the American identity and represents it as a grand farce. In his journal, Rorschach reflects that "Blake understood. Treated it like a joke, but he understood…He saw the true face of the twentieth century and chose to become a reflection, a parody of it."[15] The Comedian embodies the American abject while proudly wearing the stars and stripes of the American flag on his shoulders. He is at once the champion of the American people and a threat to them. He is at once the hero and the villain. He is an accusation that America is exactly as brutal and self contradictory as he. He represents a vision of reality as something so brutally hypocritical that you can only ignore it, weep, or put on a costume and laugh.

[8] Moore, Watchmen, p. 60.
[9] Ibid.
[10] "Flashback: Ronald Reagan and the Berkeley People's Park Riots". Rolling Stone. www.rollingstone.com May 15, 2017. Web. Nov. 1, 2018.
[11] Moore, Watchmen, pp. 59-60.
[12] Wikipedia contributors. "People's Park (Berkeley)." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 11 Aug. 2018. Web. 2 Nov. 2018.
[13] Moore, Watchmen, p. 55.
[14] Ibid., p. 300.
[15] Ibid., p. 69.

Alban Berg's Piano Sonata, Opus 1

Sophia Zervas

At the turn of the 20th century, Sergei Rachmaninoff was writing his lush 2nd Piano Concerto after therapy in which a hypnotist helped him overcome depression. Meanwhile, his one-time classmate, Alexander Scriabin, was composing transitional piano sonatas that would push him towards emancipated dissonance, the mystic chord, and the abandonment of key signatures by 1911. In France, Claude Debussy established himself as an innovator while Maurice Ravel wrote with meticulous classicism in form and harmony. In Vienna, Gustav Mahler was writing massive symphonies with rich orchestration and "progressive tonality." In the operatic realm, Richard Strauss was working on his groundbreaking modernist operas *Salome* and *Elektra* that combined biblical and mythical themes, eroticism, and violence in a daring new musical language that built on Wagner's legacy.

In this shifting world of musical innovation and tradition, young Alban Berg met Arnold Schoenberg. Reflecting on their first meeting years later, Schoenberg said, "When Alban Berg came to me in 1904, he was a very tall youngster and extremely timid. But when I saw [his] compositions…[songs in a style between Hugo Wolf and Brahms] I recognized at once that he was a real talent" (qtd. in Carner 10). Berg possessed an innate aptitude for lyricism since the beginning of his career, so much so that Schoenberg grumbled that his student "could not work on anything but lieder. Even the piano accompaniments to them were songlike" (Jarman). Prior to studying with Schoenberg, Berg was self-taught and had a background in literature rather than in music. However, three years after beginning his lessons, 25-year-old Berg published his formidable Opus 1 that demonstrated the talent Schoenberg praised. Berg's single-movement piano sonata was his apprentice piece and is a tribute to his mentor in its application of Schoenberg's concepts of *Grundgestalt* and developing variation. At the same time, the early work is not a clean break from late Romanticism and reflects the influence of Wagnerian opera. Berg's natural gift for lyricism, combined with his adoration for Wagner, produced an apprentice piano work that is almost a microcosmic opera in and of itself.

Berg wrote the Piano Sonata during the years leading up to his engagement and marriage to soprano Helene Nahowski. Janet Schmalfeldt points out that the pitch class set of the opening sonority in the Sonata, [0 1 5 7], is the exact same pitch class set that appears in *Wozzeck* to represent Marie's "endless waiting" (93). Alban and Helene met in 1906 and began corresponding by letter in 1907. Their relationship was riddled with difficulties because of their separation, Alban's poor health, and the strong objections of Helene's parents to the marriage. Alban's letters to Helene exude deep longing, as evidenced in this letter excerpt from Autumn 1908 (the very time he was drafting the sonata):

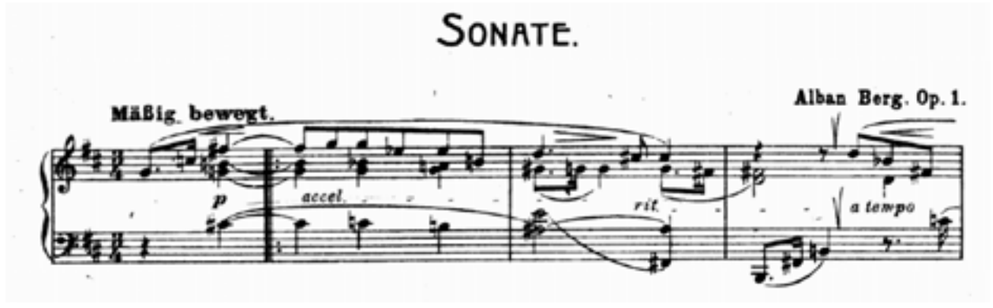
Now everything is working to separate us, I want you to know how this wish has been secretly growing within me…I know better than anyone that my wish is all the more beautiful because like all ideals it is unattainable. But it's a question of whether my love for you is merely the conventional "young love" which stops, because it has to, when it meets an insurmountable obstacle, like your father's will. And now…I [have] to tell you that [my love] is… the highest and holiest anyone can offer to anyone else: no longer just love, but a growing into the other person, beyond all obstacles, beyond space and time. (Berg 51)

The Piano Sonata seems to encapsulate the *Liebesschmerz* ("love pain") expressed in these letters. The anguished lyricism, outbursts of dynamic hysteria, "endless waiting," and spinning out of the *Grundgestalt* head motive through nebulous key areas with no promise of closure, all suggest musical analogies that poignantly reflect the life experience of Alban Berg at the time of its composition.

One of Arnold Schoenberg's seminal ideas was that of *Grundgestalt* ("basic shape"). While Schoenberg never defined *Grundgestalt* in musical terms, in his paper "Linear Counterpoint" (1931), he describes a closely related idea: "Whatever happens in a piece of music is the endless reshaping of the basic shape…There is nothing in a piece of music but what comes from a theme, springs from it and can be traced back to it; to put it more severely, nothing but the theme itself" (Schoenberg 8). In other words, everything in a piece of music could be extracted from the "basic shape." The *Grundgestalt* was not the same as a motif, which in Schoenberg's definition was "the smallest musical form, consisting of at least one interval and one rhythm" (Caplin Chap. 3). However, *Grundgestalt* was the "next sized form…as a rule 2 to 3 bars long" (Caplin Chap. 3). Further, this cell could be reshaped and varied to avoid the potential monotony of exact repetition. Schoenberg called this "developing variation," and explained that "variation of…a basic unit produces all the thematic formulations which provide for fluency, contrasts, variety… unity… character, mood, expression, and ever needed differentiation—thus elaborating the *idea* of the piece" (qtd. in Thompson). These ideas, while not the same, are indelibly linked. In her essay "Berg's Path to Atonality, The Piano Sonata, Op. 1," Janet Schmalfeldt explains that "for Schoenberg, the technique of developing variation provides the means of realizing a *Grundgestalt.* Thus, neither of these two concepts can be examined without reference to the other" (84). Schoenberg himself acknowledged that these ideas weren't his own; instead, he attempted to give credence to them by linking them back to Bach, Brahms, and other masters.

Steeped in this philosophical and compositional ideology, Alban Berg set to work composing his Opus 1, and both the idea of *Grundgestalt* and developing variation feature heavily in the piano sonata. The opening four-measure phrase contains three motivic ideas from which Berg derives the rest of the sonata. While some scholars view the microcosmic opening gesture as the *Grundgestalt,* given Schoenberg's distinction between the relative size of motif and *Grundgestalt,* I choose to adopt the view that it is the entire opening four-measure phrase. The score below, adapted from Janet Schmalfeldt's essay, provides a visual of the three motivic components. Berg incorporates both melodic

and harmonic elements of the *Grundgestalt* in the piece.

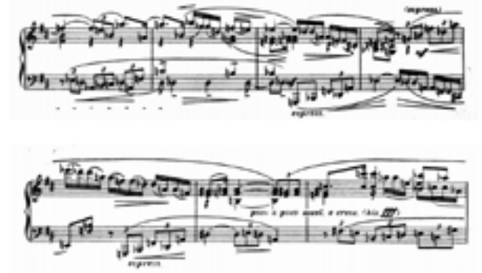


Each of the three motives has salient traits. The incomplete opening measure consists of a dotted rhythm which permeates the movement and the rising 7th, broken into a perfect 4th and a tri-tone. Combined with the C# in the bass, these intervals create a quartal harmony, the so-called "Rite" chord, or atonal triad, that is featured heavily in atonal literature as a substitute for the major and minor triads. While Berg features the major 7th here, both the major and minor 7th play important roles in the piece. The second motivic unit is the descending augmented triad that appears in bar 2. Theodor Adorno explains the augmented triad as "an inversional, or even, if you will, retrograde-like variant of (a)" (42). Berg views the augmented triad as a "self-standing sonority," not requiring resolution, and explores its possibilities in the development with developing variation. Finally, the chromatic descending line is motivically important to Berg and permeates the lower voice of the opening line. In m. 3, it appears in both the soprano and alto line (the dotted rhythm also occurs twice in the alto). In fact, the alto chromatic descent can be traced all the way back to the opening chord (perhaps even the second C, if one considers it as voice leading to both the F# and the B), where the B-natural slithers down by half-steps and ultimately lands on F#. A final appearance of the chromatic descent is in the bass line, which moves from C# to A# in parallel minor 7thswith the alto. The vertical appearance of the interval of a 7th is also notable.

From a harmonic perspective, the opening progression can also act as a *Grundgestalt,* particularly in the ways it foreshadows the harmonic language Berg will use in the rest of the piece. The piece is written in B minor; however, rather than starting in tonic, Berg opens with an altered ii$^{\varnothing 7}$ harmony. The embellishing tone F# resolves up the G in the first measure, giving an incomplete ii$^{\varnothing 7}$ or half a beat. He moves through a series of chromatic chords in m. 1 and then lands on V^{7} before resolving to i with an imperfect authentic cadence. Janet Schmalfeldt explains that, "in the absence of an initiating, tonic-prolonging gesture, the cadential progression of the *Grundgestalt* has the apparent effect of placing this initial phrase outside the movement proper…[it] presents itself as…an epigraph, or 'motto'" (90). The only other authentic cadence that occurs in the sonata is in mm. 175-176, at the end of the piece. Throughout the sonata, Berg wanders chromatically and shifts through many key areas, using recognizable harmonies but not employing them in a functional sense. Thus, on a small scale, the opening progression represents the harmonic arc and language of the piece.

The series of chords that carry the shift from ii$^{\varnothing 7}$ to V are of interest as well. The vertical harmony that appears in the third beat of m. 1 consists of a four-note subset, while the harmony in the first beat of m. 2 is a four-note subset of the complementary whole-tone collection. This is significant because it foreshadows Berg's use of whole-tone collections in key transitional points in the sonata—for example, at the climactic point of the primary theme (mm. 23-26), a whole-tone succession appears in the highest voice in three-fold augmentation (Adorno 44). Additionally, the codetta features alternating whole-tone collections (mm. 48-49). In summary, the unusual harmonic progression, heavy chromaticism and whole tone sets in the opening phrase serve as a kind of harmonic *Grundgestalt* for the rest of the piece.

I would like to highlight examples of developing variation to show how this concept differs from *Grundgestalt*. As mentioned earlier, *Grundgestalt* is the "basic idea" of a piece, whereas developing variation is the elaboration of this idea. Take, for instance, the descending augmented triad. Starting in m. 74 in the development, Berg transforms this structure and then puts two altered versions in dialogue with each other. In measure 76 (see example on the next page), he puts the augmented triad in the right hand. He presents the chord in diminution (16th notes versus 8ths in the first statement) and continues to rotate it down on itself. In the left hand, Berg presents a conglomerate of three motives. This triplet-based motive combines the rising 7th, rearranged augmented triad (now ascending), and augmented 4ths. Placed on top of each other, these developed versions funnel into one another in contrary motion. Berg reuses this figure and presents it in canon throughout the development. While not identical to the original Grundgestalt, its developed form adds interest and builds tension. This is just one example of Berg's use of developing variation in the development.



In a letter to Helene Nahowski, dated 1907 at the beginning of their relationship, Berg began: "Adored Helene, 'High time to tell you again how very much I love you.' That is the beginning of one of Richard Wagner's most beautiful letters…so let me begin the same way. It is a kind of *Leitmotif* which has been sounding all through the turmoil of these past days" (Berg 22-23). The legacy of Wagner loomed over many composers of the early 20th century. Though he was a polarizing figure—some composers revered him, while others deplored the man and his music—his influence, particularly in his innovative work of *Tristan and Isolde,* is uncontested. Wagner was one of Berg's idols, and his importance to Berg can be seen in the Piano Sonata.

In some ways, *Grundgestalt* can be viewed as a familial relation to the *Leitmotif* ("leading motif"), a concept associated with the operas of Richard Wagner, although Wagner

did not coin or use the term himself. In an operatic setting, a particular *Leitmotif*—a short musical idea that can be melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, or all three—represents and is used to identify a character throughout the opera. In terms of the Piano Sonata, motives like the dotted rhythm or the descending augmented triad could be seen as quasi-*leitmotifs.* Although the Opus 1 Sonata is not a programmatic piece, in the famous "Open Letter" to Schoenberg, written in 1925, Berg hinted that he sympathized with program music and spoke of a "Romantic" inclination (Floros 77). Although any programs that were watermarked into his music were left concealed, it would behoove the performer of the Piano Sonata to examine these motivic cells and allow them to guide his performance. Additionally, Berg makes heavy use of the Tristan chord (often spelled enharmonically as a half-diminished 7th chord) in the Piano Sonata, notably in the development section.

Not surprisingly, a Wagnerian sense of lyricism also permeates the development. The extended buildup of the development lasts for two full pages, reaching three progressively higher peaks. Theodor Adorno describes the expansiveness and climactic buildup of the development this way: "the themes, once having passed through the discipline of the exposition, are allowed to breathe and sing out…the expressive gesture of the first bars of the development drifts by with the same deathly sorrow as later in the beginning of the *Wozzeck* interlude, which appears to be dawning here even motivically" (Adorno 45). Alban Berg's Piano Sonata, Opus 1, bears the influence of several figures, most notably his teacher Arnold Schoenberg. In a 1914 letter to Schoenberg, in which Berg dedicates his *Orchestral Pieces,* Opus 6, to his mentor, he says, "For years it has been my secret but persistent wish to dedicate something to you.

The works composed under your supervision, the Sonata, songs and Quartet, do not count for that purpose, having been received directly from you" (Schmalfeldt 80). The compositional tutelage of Schoenberg appears throughout the sonata, most notably in Berg's use of *Grundgestalt* and developing variation. These principles allow him to take a succinct idea that is less than four measures long and compose a dense and deeply emotional Opus 1. The legacy of Wagner, one of Berg's idols, factors heavily into the sonata, as well as in the composer's use of operatic lyricism and Wagnerian harmonies. Finally, while the work is not programmatic, it is of musicological interest to examine a link between the sonata's expressive language and Alban's relationship with his future wife, Helene Nahowski.

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Myth, Power, and the Other: The Shared Rhetoric of Empire Between the Classical Mediterranean and Victorian Britain

Cara Redalen

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/undergraduate_honors_theses/vx021f62v

After the fall of Rome, the next most famed empire to rise in the Western tradition is that of Britain. Britain acculturated the classical tradition and embodied the power rhetoric held through its association to the grandeur of Greece and Rome. The societal pillars of art, literature, and architecture were the platforms on which Britain built its self-image. A careful manipulation of classical rhetoric, stylistic conventions, and forms of political representation in the arts tied Britain to a glorious past, turning it into the natural successor of the next age of empire. Britain wielded this image to define Britishness, bolster its power, legitimize its conquest, demonize the Other to validate subjugation, and perpetuate its political myth. British identity became so fused with the classical tradition that the two became seemingly synonymous in the eyes of its people and much of the world. Therefore, I argue that the classical tradition has given shape to nations, empires, and entire frames of thought, making it a formidable instrument of power over the course of history.

To conduct my study, I broke the thesis into two main areas of focus: The Creation of the Other and Myth. Focusing first on the Creation of the Other, I conduct a thorough examination of literature and art from both the ancient Mediterranean and Victorian Britain to unpack notions of Otherness and its representation in the arts. I begin by looking at small scale group dynamics where I uncover the tendency for human groups to define themselves with reference to the Other while simultaneously distancing themselves from the Other. I then broaden my focus to include discussions of the Other on a societal and national scale, showing the significance of Otherness for the creation of empires. From this, I move to explore concrete examples of the creation of the Other in both ancient Mediterranean and modern British texts. I start by examining ancient Greek conceptions of the Other and its manifestation in ancient epic, then transition into the Roman view. The bulk of this portion of my study focuses on Homer's *Odyssey,* Virgil's *Aeneid,* Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" and J.A. Cramb's historical lectures forming his *Reflections on the Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain.* Within each of these texts I closely investigate the language and imagery used to represent the Other as well as the Self, finding a pervasive commonality of rhetoric between the texts.

My study specifically focuses on theories of myth that unpack the purpose of myth, looking at texts like Bruce Lincoln's *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification and Raphael Patai's Myth and Modern Man.* They expose the pervasive nature of myth and the way metaphors help structure human existence and societies.... From the discussion of ancient myth, I move to Britain, looking at the way Britain mythologized its past, turning the classical Mediterranean into its societal ancestor. Within this discussion I explore how creating a glorious origin myth empowers the present through association with a fantasized past and the way an illustrious heritage can be used to validate claims of superiority. I also look at the way the classical past contributed to the myth of West and East and how this fed into Britain's conception of its Self and the Other. This historical myth and myth of the Other coalesce to form the British imperial myth, a myth that cast Britain as the apex of civilization and the pinnacle of a longstanding tradition of empire.

The Other

This act of creating an Other has a long-standing tradition in human societies, helping to organize group dynamics from those between disparate tribes and hunter-gathering peoples to entire nations. However, the period of classical antiquity has had quite a lasting and influential impact on how Self and Other are defined and conveyed for Western societies up until the present. Classicist Edith Hall studies the creation of the barbarian and cultural Otherness in Greece and notes that in the eighth to sixth centuries, Greece created a new Hellenic consciousness that emphasized a burgeoning sense of a singular Greek ethnicity that went beyond the individual city-states (1989, 6).... However, prior to the fifth century, Greeks were already engaging with notions of the Self versus the Other. During the eighth century, the myths of this early period were concerned with most of the "oppositions later assimilated to the cardinal antagonism of Greek versus barbarian—civilization against primitivism, order against chaos, observance of law and taboo against transgression" (Hall 1989, 51). The abstractions of Greek civilization later considered ethnically Other were often embodied as monstrous or stereotyped, or as entirely barbaric in order to explain the intense sense of difference the Greeks felt between themselves and the Other.[1] This presentation of difference in the form of the monster or savage expressed a sharp divide between the world of the Greeks, making manifest their sense of order versus chaos, civilization versus primitivism and so on. A clear notion of Self and Other was not just the product of their worldview, however, but also came to shape their worldview through the perpetuation of a new rhetoric for describing the Other.

Greek representations of the barbarian have proven to be incredibly influential on conceptions of the Other for centuries, contributing to an enduring rhetoric of Otherness that has helped shape societies that came after Greece. In his book titled *Inventing Western Civilization,* the historian Thomas Patterson examines the notion of civilized and uncivilized and comes to define civilization as "the refined institutions, moral values, and cultures of states and their elites" (1997, 21). He then goes on to suggest that

[1] Mythical beings like the Cyclopes, Harpies, Laestrygonians, and so on embody this sense of the monstrous Other and provide hyperbolic metaphorical representations of the uncivilized from the Greek perspective.

"uncivilized peoples represent the primary (primitive) or unrefined states of the human condition which, depending on how the civilized (ruling) classes portray their own history, they either avoided altogether or passed through at an earlier time" (1997, 21).

The Odyssey

With the theoretical and historical framework of the creation of the Other now established, I turn to examine concrete examples of the employment of this rhetoric in ancient Mediterranean literature and later 18th and 19th century British literature. Over two millennia ago people began to explore their surroundings, encountering new societies and conveying their experiences in the arts. Homer's *Odyssey,* written some time in the eighth century BCE, stands as the primary example of burgeoning thoughts about new peoples and differing ways of life, as it is one of the first textual sources to engage with notions of exploration and colonialism. Being deeply embedded in the Western canon, arguably the foundation of the entire canon itself, ***The Odyssey*** works to shape texts and contexts that follow, and establish a fundamental language for examining and discussing the Other.

The middle sections of the epic engage most directly with encounters with the Other and the principle of xenia. In Book 6, after being battered by storms and washing ashore on the coast of an unknown land, Odysseus awakes to the land of the Phaeacians. After his years of dangerous wandering through violent seas and lands, Odysseus finally stumbles upon a civil, hospitable community. However, ignorant of the civility of the land at the onset of his encounter with the Phaeacians, Odysseus immediately questions the nature of the land, asking; "What kind of land have I come to now?/ Are the natives wild and lawless savages,/ Or godfearing men who welcome strangers?" (Od. 6.118-120). Though a small moment, it directly points to an "us" versus "them" binary that circles around notions of civilized versus savage. Based on past experiences he is left questioning whether the new land will be one with a recognizable form of civilization, predominantly marked by an adherence to the Greek notion of xenia, or an unrecognizable form of society, viewed as uncivilized due to its uncouth treatment of guests. While Odysseus automatically assumes the role of the civilized, as he comes from a refined Greek origin, those he meets inherently hold the potential of savagery.

Though this is rather ironic given that Odysseus shows up battered and beaten by the storm, looking more like a ragged vagrant than a civilized noble. And yet, because he is Greek and the hero of the tale, his own civilized nature is never questioned. The diction of this moment, particularly the words "native," "wild," "lawless savages," and "godfearing" all point to dominant trends in the rhetoric used in discussions of the Other as they serve to debase and devalue the encountered people. They indicate what Greeks valued as markers of civilization—laws, religion, and a domination of the wild—while typecasting the Other as lacking any of the integral elements of the civilized.

Their lack of progress is emphasized in Odysseus' tale in the way that the Cyclopes do not pursue industry in any form and do not engage in trade. He notes, they "do not sail and have no craftsmen/ To build them benched, red-prowed ships/ That could supply all their wants, crossing the sea/ To other cities, visiting each other as other men do" (Od. 9.120-126). The Cyclopes show interest in neither ship building nor exploring across the sea, or engaging with foreign peoples as other Mediterranean societies were doing during this era. Instead, they choose to remain isolated and developmentally stunted. Being as they do not follow the same arts as the Greeks and illustrate no desire for progress, their society is viewed as inadequate and only through developing the arts of the Greeks could they turn "the island into a good settlement" (Od. 9.127). This definition that focuses strictly on what they lack suggests that there is nothing productive about the society of the Cyclopes. Therefore, they exhibit little to no value in the eyes of the Greeks and are perceived as an inferior and uncivilized group.

Britain

The rhetoric and creation of Otherness thus far explored, crops up much later in history within one of the largest empires the world has ever seen, the British Empire…. With the possession of such a vast empire, the British came into contact with a plethora of peoples and cultures, exerted control over them, and amassed one of the geographically largest empires the world has ever seen. The power they gleaned from this territorial and political dominance led them to see themselves as distinct, special, and greater than the alien peoples they ruled. Because of these encounters with the Other, the British "could contrast their law, their standard of living, their treatment of women, their political stability, and, above all, their collective power against societies that they only imperfectly understood but usually perceived as far less developed" (Colley 1992, 324). Within this discussion of their own superiority, the British often aggrandized themselves while debasing the Other to both legitimize their dominion but also to reflect an inherent belief concerning the nature of their society. They used the dichotomy between "us" and "them" in the service of political power, helping them to conquer territories and opposition. Britain then spread the ideology and rhetoric of it to such a great degree that it turned into an integral element of Britishness, both defining and creating their culture and view of themselves and the world in a self-perpetuating, cyclical process.

This notion of Otherness, supported by the examination of the ancient Mediterranean, does not just reside with theoretical and political thought, but becomes an element of imperial validation and influential on the development of British culture; classical studies therefore became part of the cultural hegemony of Britain, profoundly shaping its culture and approach to imperialism (Larson 1999, 207). Ancient history was deliberately interpreted and used to legitimize the imperial pursuits of Britain and support the claim that they were following the precedent of some of the most studied and glorified empires of the past.

The White Man's Burden

Rudyard Kipling, one of the dominant writers of the Victorian Era, infused many of his works with the theme of Otherness and a similar diction to what is seen in the political discussions examined above. Perhaps one of the most evocative and influential of his works that fully embraces the British imperial ideal and representation of the Other is "The White Man's Burden," published in 1899. This poem, crafted as a response to America assuming control over the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, relates what it is to be

a colonizer from a colonial perspective. Despite not being directed specifically at Britain, the poem nonetheless illustrates British imperial thought by acting as a guideline for other nations to take up the imperial role.

The politically and socially laden rhetoric suffuses the work from start to finish. Titled "The White Man's Burden," this work ties itself to the tradition of imperial rhetoric and literature at the onset, before the body of the poem is read. The inclusion of the notion of the "white man" in the title brings a new element to the discussion of Otherness and imperial power as it highlights a differentiation in race. In the ancient Mediterranean, race was not the defining feature of the Other and therefore not a significant element of their imperial discourse. While the ancients did discuss "savage races," it was more of a discussion of other peoples and their supposed savage customs rather than the color of their skin. Much later in history, however, race does largely figure itself in imperial discussions. The color of one's skin, or more specifically non-white skin, became highly prominent because it served as an emblem of Otherness and the symbol of a people deemed different and lesser than white races, classified as uncivilized within this imperial British mindset.

Reminiscent of previously explored representations of Otherness, both ancient and modern, the conquered peoples deemed "half-devil and half-child" are represented as savage, uneducated individuals, incapable of independent care or success (Kipling 2000, 8). The notion of "half-devil" adds an otherworldly and sinister angle that pulls from the realm of the fantastic evoking a monstrous image much like the monsters of ancient epic. The conquered peoples are not considered entirely human, but rather presented as a semi-monstrous fusion of evil and naivety. Much like a child or wild beast, they are believed to need taming by the guidance of a superior force, here automatically assumed to be the imperializing nation. Through this representation of Other and guidance, Britain assumes the role of the apex empire, coaching other nations how to follow in its path and conquer debased Others. […]

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"If neurotic is wanting two mutually exclusive things at one and the same time, then I'm neurotic as hell": The Fight Against Fragmentation and Reduction in the 1960s Female Bildungsroman: O'Brien, Plath, and Lessing

Lauren Ogg

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit *https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/undergraduate_honors_theses/z603qz316*

Introduction: Literary Context and Definition of Terms

I. The *Bildungsroman* Origins

[…]

Moretti defines the *Bildungsroman* most simply as the "'novel of formation,' 'of initiation,' 'of education'….in all of the major literary traditions."[1]…. [In the *Bildungsroman*,] norms are rebelled against in order to take a stand, but in order to understand such aversion and rebellion, Moretti notes that "the ideal reader of the classical *Bildungsroman* is, in a broad sense, a bourgeois reader."[2] This reader is educated and cultured, giving him or her the education necessary to understand the relevance of the social commentary present in the novel. The bourgeois reader is able to relate to what Moretti defines as the "'bourgeois' dilemma: the clash between individual autonomy and social integration,"[3] which is the conflict at the core of the *Bildungsroman* novel and essential to its purpose.

With the conflict of individual autonomy and social integration at the core of the form, the role of the protagonist is not to be understated. The youth of the protagonist is central to the form, as Moretti defines the bourgeois youth as the following: "Rather than a *preparation for something else,* it [youth] becomes a *value in itself,* and the individual's greatest desire is to *prolong* it, [emphasis original]"[4] thus prompting the creation of the "adolescent" category in the twentieth century and the explosion of the socially rebellious *Bildungsroman*.[5] The novel revolves around this youthful character, but "everything takes place around him, but not *because of him* [emphasis original]."[6] This character's actions and behavior advance the plot, and the text is read from his perspective, but he appears as a passive figure who is facing various trials (that he must see as opportunity)[7] in order to reach full social formation.

A form of relatability, "the *[Bildungsroman]* novel organizes and 'refines' this form of existence, making it ever more

1Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: the Bildungsroman in European Culture.* London: Verso, 1995, 15.
2 Moretti, 65.
3 Moretti, 67.
4 Moretti, 177.
5 I.e., Joyce.
6 Moretti, 20.
7 Moretti, 48.

alive and interesting."[8] The novel's interest in the everyday is complemented by the need for a "happy ending." This happy ending often exists in the form of a social contract and is "why the classical *Bildungsroman* 'must' always conclude with marriages….[it is a] 'pact' between the individual and the world."[9] If not marriage, the character must present as fully socialized and therefore functioning adult, a contributing member to society. Full socialization equates to a proper happy ending.
[…]

Despite the differences in the characters' ages and location, the *Bildungsroman* form ties all three novels in question together. Specifically, each novel is a female *Bildungsroman,* and thus presents an urgent need to break from the traditional, male, conformist, form that is dictated by Moretti. The breakdown of the classic *Bildungsroman* form exists on a continuum, and the experimentation escalates in correspondence with the order in which I have placed the individual chapters relating to each novel. The progression begins with Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* (1960), followed by Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), and culminates with Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962). In a parallel structure, the progression of these novels also corresponds with the age of the protagonists—as the novels become more mature (in both form and content) and experimental, so do the characters.

The Female *Bildungsroman*

Moretti's and Freese's definitions of the *Bildungsroman,* which have influenced my own working definition, are heavily gendered. When one examines the language used in each author's definition, it is evident that the genre has traditionally been male-centric. "Him," "he," and "his" are the preferred pronouns, and the women that are depicted in the form are most often expected to marry… Thus, the traditional *Bildungsroman* form is insufficient in representing the lives of females. Women's struggles do not dissipate upon nuptials, nor does every woman find her problems solved with an abundance of money. Women, as human beings, are far more complicated and deserve their own form that explores the struggle of what it is to exist as a female in a patriarchal world. This lack of a proper female account created the space for the female *Bildungsroman,* a term whose coining coincides with the advent of second-wave feminism: "In the 1970s, feminist critics used the term 'female *Bildungsroman*' to describe coming-of-age stories featuring female protagonists."[10] The cluster of novels in question, published 1960-1963, pioneer a modern movement in creating a female version of the form that properly explores the female experience.
[…]

III. Second-Wave Feminism, Reduction, and Fragmentation
[…]

For the purpose of this project, I have deduced two terms that I believe best describe the status of women in this time period, in all three countries: fragmentation and reduction. The terms are related and work together, but each serve a specific purpose. Fragmentation represents women both individually and collectively. Collectively, women were fragmented in the feminist movement, as supported by research done on both the second-wave feminist movement in both the United States and Britain. This fragmentation acts as a meta-narrative that lends itself to the individual female experience that is represented in the formal elements of each of the novels—fragmentation is at the root of women's struggle for identity. Expected to fit a certain mold, women had to break off parts of themselves that served an extraneous purpose. For a contextual example, consider Esther Greenwood. A character that will be more carefully examined in Chapter Two, it is worth noting that she struggles with having to define herself as either a good girl ***or*** a bad girl, a mother ***or*** a career woman. The "or" is essential to the definition, as it represents a woman's inability to fulfill multiple roles in society. She cannot perform both actions simultaneously or to their full potential, a sort of behavior that is unacceptable and unheard of for a woman of this time period. This fragmentation causes a woman to struggle with defining herself and creating an identity, as she is subject to ignore a part of herself in order to fulfill the single role that society has allowed for her.
[…]

Chapter 1: "I'll drink Lysol or any damn thing to get out of here": Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls*
[…]

Women were seen as symbols rather than functioning members of society. To exist as a woman in the era of "the repressive 1940s"[11] was to exist as mother (both biological and figurehead) for the country of Ireland. In pushing back against these norms, O'Brien's *The Country Girls* (1960) was censored and banned from Ireland, resulting in O'Brien's choice to leave the country… O'Brien's chosen exile represents her unwillingness to be subjected to such controlling structures, an attitude that is expressed in her novel. In opposition to the stifling Irish community, O'Brien's novel offers an alternative: the ability to choose. These liberties concern a woman's sexuality, religion, clothing, education, family structure, body, and mind (a few of many). O'Brien's stance concerning personal liberties was provocative and embraced sexuality—themes which caused the aforementioned censorship.
[…]

Caithleen "Cait" Brady, develops from adolescent to woman within the duration of the novel. Cait's journey to maturity is characteristic of the *Bildungsroman,* and the novel is considered to be one of "the most celebrated *Bildungsromans* of the early 1960s."[12] Within this categorization, O'Brien has changed the form subtly in order to create a proper representation of the female protagonist. This change from the classic form is more apparent in theme than structure, as O'Brien takes a provocative stance concerning women's rights in a genre where "the implications of gender are conveniently ignored."[13] O'Brien refuses to ignore these

8 Moretti, 35.
9 Moretti, 22.
10 Pressman, Laura. "The Frauenroman: a Female Perspective in Coming-of-Age Stories." The Bildungsroman Project. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, April 2013.
11 Cahalan, James M. 1995. "Female and Male Perspectives on Growing Up Irish in Edna O'Brien, John McGahern and Brian Moore," Colby Quarterly: Vol. 31: Iss. 1 , Article 8., 56.
12 Cahalan, 55. The novel takes place in the 1940s but was published in 1960, the beginning of the revolutionary period of women's liberation.

implications, and the consequences of being female are highlighted rather than dismissed. O'Brien's manipulation of the *Bildungsroman* is a way in which she can showcase her demand for women's social liberties in Ireland. Cait's anxieties at the end of the novel are palpable, and her ever-present anxiety contradicts the fully-developed character that one often sees at the end of the classic *Bildungsroman.* To be a functioning member of society a character must experience "development of the whole personality…[and] the conflicts of life [are] seen as necessary growth points on the road to maturity."[14] Cait has many "conflicts of life" throughout the novel, yet she ends the novel no more hopeful than she began it. The last line of the novel is indicative of this lack of change: "I came out to the kitchen and took two aspirins with my tea. It was almost certain I wouldn't sleep that night."[15] At the novel's beginning she is anxious over her father, at the end, Mr. Gentleman. Her anxiety over Mr. Gentleman is quite different, as she desperately wants to run away with him and experience intimacy, actions that have a positive connotation for Cait, yet her state of being still depends on the presence or absence of men. Despite Cait's "conflicts of life" and flirtation with rebellion, she fails to develop in a way that allows her to bypass the need for a domineering male figure and overcome the power that men hold over her, a conditioning that has roots in a convoluted mother/daughter relationship.

[…]

To be forced to conform to such a role takes away a woman's sense of identity and autonomy, and in a world with limited options, Cait chooses to reclaim her identity and autonomy through the act of impulsive, abortive decision making. However, these decisions are not without consequences. The ability to make autonomous decisions would seem to give Cait a sense of identity, but her lack of life experience, i.e, her youth (a traditional component of the *Bildungsroman)* coupled with a limited amount of societal support instead leaves her without foresight and overwhelmingly anxious at the novel's end. Her attempt to create a self that is more than a fragment results in instability of mind, an unfortunate situation that reaches its peak in Cait's suicide at the end of the trilogy. However, the decisions that Cait and Baba make in the first novel, the focus of this chapter, are not without a glimmer of hope.

[…]

O'Brien's text gives young girls the opportunity to explore their sexuality in a way that was independent of men, provocative, and empowering: "Baba and I sat there and shared secrets, and once we took off our knickers…. and tickled one another. The greatest secret of all. Baba used to say she would tell….[so] I [would give] her a silk hankie….or something."[16] What has been denounced as explicit content is merely sexual exploration, yet the shame that accompanies the girls' actions is as an inherent barrier to accepting this exploration. Lazzaro-Weis writes that "indeterminacy is part of the genre's *[Bildungsroman]* theme and purpose, which is the representation of conscious human self-formation."[17] In terms of sexual exploration, the privilege of confusion and lack of clarity is imperative to discovering one's personal and sexual identity, and this is a practice that Irish society castigates. Cait's increasing worry that the "secret" will be exposed presents a stringent social conditioning that has resulted in shame surrounding sexual exploration, a natural process in one's adolescent development.

[…]

There are various instances through the novel where Cait's body is scrutinized by Baba or other women. When at the dressmaker, Cait is told that she "ha[s] a bit of pot belly," and Cait's automatic reaction is that the woman "wanted to get some dig at me."[18] Despite Cait's distaste towards the woman's comments on her body, she feels confident because she has Mr. Gentleman's approval: "he took his hand down from his eyes and looked shyly at my stomach and thighs….he kissed me all over."[19] Cait is concerned with the opinion of men, not the opinion of women, an idea that has been ingrained in her mind from the beginning of her adolescence due to the ogling boys in the town hall.

[…]

Cait's lack of growth and ever-increasing anxiety contradicts the traditional *Bildungsroman* form and reminds the reader that gender cannot be ignored. However, O'Brien's novel plays an imperative role in liberating Irish women, because it provides potential. She embodies rebellion and harnesses its power, qualities that are invaluable in liberation and serve as an example.

Chapter 2: "A girl who was crazy enough to kill herself": Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*

Critics have often discussed Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) in the context of its apparent autobiographical influence. While there are many similarities between Sylvia Plath and protagonist Esther Greenwood, I would argue the text was not created to be merely an autobiographical account; the novel's larger purpose is to draw attention to the various social and cultural epidemics that plagued women of the time period. The connection between Sylvia Path and Esther is well-established and has an abundance of commentary, but it is overstated and will not be analyzed in this chapter. Instead, the arguably more important, pervasive, problems of women's reduction and fragmentation will be discussed in the context of protagonist Esther Greenwood's struggle with mental health.

[…]

Defined as a *Bildungsroman*, it is reasonable to suggest that *The Bell Jar* does in fact offer the basic tenets one often expects when reading literature from this particular genre: "Both the aim and the object of the search are moved from the outer to the inner world, and a chronologically unfolding teleological plot with one strand depicts a young man's gradual growth into a well educated…and functioning member of society."[20] However, as one may notice in the language used, the *Bildungsroman* is traditionally a male dominated genre, a form that does not accurately depict a woman's journey from adolescence to adulthood,

13 Brown, Penny. The Poison at the Source: the Female Novel of Self-Development in the Early Twentieth Century. St. Martin's, 1992, 2.
14 Brown, 1.
15 O'Brien, 175.
16 O'Brien, 8.
17 Lazzaro-Weis, Carol. "The Female 'Bildungsroman': Calling It into Question." NWSA Journal, vol. 2, no. 1, 1990, 26.
18 O'Brien, 113.
19 O'Brien, 164.
20 Freese, Peter. 2013. "The 'Journey of Life' in American Fiction." Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)

innocence to maturity.... The scholarship on the *Bildungsroman* seems muddled, as Freese's analysis centers around mid-twentieth century novels. Regardless, for Esther Greenwood, the presence of social cohesion is in question by the end of the novel. The novel instead presents "a woman struggling to become whole, not a woman who ha[s] reached some sense of stable self,"[21] and one may suggest that to be a stable self was a privilege afforded to men, as Freese proposes in his definition. To mitigate the traditional sexism of the form itself, as it has been traditionally male-centric, and to draw attention to its limitations, *The Bell Jar's* narrative is fragmented in order to represent women's struggle in society.

[...]

Traditionally, most women were expected to be mothers and only mothers. Motherhood is a fate that Esther despises. Her introduction to the process of human birth is alarming, as she is forced to observe a live birth with her boyfriend, Buddy, a medical student. Her sole focus during the ordeal revolves around the mother's pain during labor and delivery, and she becomes fixated on the morphine that is used to assuage the pain. She remarks on the patriarchal conditioning of the drug, stating that it "sounded just like the sort of drug a man would invent....[the woman] would go straight home and start another baby, because the drug would make her forget how bad the pain had been."[22] The birth scene forces Esther to recognize the reproductive priority of a woman's role in society and she is repulsed by the inherent fragmentation of the role.

[...]

More than half a century has passed since the publication of *The Bell Jar,* but it remains a novel that is both relevant and unconventional. Breaking the *Bildungsroman* form and challenging the realist representation of women was revolutionary at the time of publication, and the novel is still a jarring text that engenders valuable discussion about gender normativity and the slowness of historical change. Plath's prose is provocative and meaningful, giving it staying power and resonance with a twenty-first century audience. Esther Greenwood would be delighted to know that today she could be both a mother and successful career woman but holding both of those demanding jobs does not come without biases and judgements.

[...]

Conclusion: The Intersection of Culture and History

[...]

The novels are categorized as feminist, and with that, the expectation is that men are depicted as the source of evil and corruption, while women are perfect and the solution to the world's problems. This hyperbolic formula is problematic in itself, and the novels in discussion recognize that assumption. This is not to say the men are depicted in a flattering light—the majority of them are not. However, neither are the women. Cait's character frustrates the reader when she succumbs to Mr. Gentleman's desires, Esther's behavior is immature and problematic at the end of her novel, and Anna's consciousness is so blurred that she allows parts of Paul, Ella, Molly, Tommy, and Saul to influence her decisions and thinking, behavior that is troublesome and should not be emulated. Yet, I would venture to say that is the purpose of challenging the typical *Bildungsroman f*orm. The simplistic nature is not representative of the reality of human existence. It is not a straightforward trajectory from A to B, but rather a journey that goes from A to D to Z and back to A again. The account is often messy and not easily categorized, but it represents reality—an accessible narrative that provides a worthy addition to the complicated nature of social theory.

21 Wagner, Linda W. 1986. "Plath's The Bell Jar as Female Bildungsroman," Women's Studies, 12:1, 55-68, 59.
22 Plath, Sylvia. 2013. The Bell Jar: a Novel. Harper, 66.