Back Bay Review

"We're critical of everything."

Number 2 *Spring 2007*

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Courtney Futryk

Substance Abuse in *Farewell, My Lovely* and "The Sign of Four"

Readers can follow a drug trail through the history of the detective story all the way back to Edgar Allen Poe's genre-making tales in which the trusted Detective Dupin solves the mystery of the purloined letter while smoking a pipe. Poe sets a precedent for substance abuse in detective literature; his successors Arthur Conan Doyle and Raymond Chandler capitalize on the accepted depiction of substance abuse in order to make a statement regarding the detective and his place in the world of mystery and crime. Both these latter authors portray substance abuse in such a way as to indicate the relationship between the detective and his profession.

Doyle's "The Sign of Four" opens with an explicit description of Holmes' drug abuse. Watson observes Holmes as he "adjust[s] the delicate needle and roll[s] back his left shirtcuff … [and] thrust[s] the sharp point home, press[es] down the piston, and [sinks] back into the velvet-lined chair with a long sigh of satisfaction" (Doyle 123). After this detailed account, Doyle lingers on the topic of Holmes' substance abuse. The author approaches the event with the same attention to detail he would use to unveil a potential case. The explanation of Holmes' "high" replaces a description of the current mystery. He tells Watson: "my mind rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere" (Doyle 124). In the absence of "problems," "cryptograms," and "analysis," Holmes longs for the intoxication that solving mysteries provides. In order to compensate for the absence of "mental exaltation," Holmes turns to substance abuse. Holmes' longing to satisfy his desire for mystery reflects the world of detection in which he operates. Charles Rzepka, author of *Detective Fiction*, explains that "the classical detective's job … [is] to restore order and decorum to a society threatened by the disorder of individual willfulness. This society is worth redeeming" (Rzepka 180). Holmes' existence within classical detection permits him to experience satisfaction in recovering the threatened "order and decorum." Holmes does not face evils that pervade moral order; his challenge rests in re-instating the "commonplace" of everyday "existence" (Doyle 130).

Although Marlowe drinks throughout the opening chapters of *Farewell, My Lovely*, he does not drink alone, a defining characteristic of alcoholics,

until he acquires his first paying client, Marriott. Unlike the relationship portrayed in "The Sign of Four," the presence, not the absence, of a case drives the detective to drink. Marlowe's need to escape the impending mystery possesses larger meaning in relation to Marlowe's world of detection. Dr. Rzepka further explains that Marlowe exists within a world "polluted by self-interest and full of challenges and snares, in which no one is to be trusted and all must be tested" (Rzepka 180). Unlike cases in classical detection, complicated, yet neatly resolved mysteries do not exist within the hardboiled realm. The presence of a case requires that Marlowe confront the "shadowy coercive forces, such as organized crime, ruthless corporations, wealthy families, and corrupt government agencies" that characterize hardboiled mysteries (Rzepka 180-181). Intimate contact with a dark, cynical world of mistrust and corruption might drive any man to drink. Marriott's call represents the unwieldy and unpredictable world Marlowe will face by accepting the case. An immense gap lies between the crime awaiting Marlowe and the mystery Holmes craves.

The setting the authors use to depict the detective's substance abuse also carries significance and reflects their different worlds. Holmes abuses drugs in his living room: "he [takes] his bottle [of cocaine] from the corner of the mantelpiece" (Doyle 123). The image of the mantelpiece and what it represents, the hearth and home, contrasts sharply with the bottle of cocaine. Moreover, Holmes does not require an office because his position as "the only official consulting detective" completes him—brings him the "highest reward" (Doyle 124). Even though he must leave Baker Street in order to solve mysteries, Holmes defines his identity, including his home, in terms of his role as a detective. Holmes eats his breakfast and goes to sleep in the same space in which he greets new clients and listens to various cases. In absence of his defining characteristic, "the professional inquiry," Holmes substitutes cocaine for the feeling of wholeness detection brings. His profession provides such intoxication that merely discussing "the science of deduction" with Watson deters Holmes from taking a second dose of cocaine (Doyle 127-128). On the contrary, Marlowe requires an office, indicating the sharp distinction he feels between his private life and his profession. When Marlowe finds Anne Riordan in his office, she attempts to discuss the details of Marriott's death. Readers observe the opposite response in Marlowe to that of Holmes'. Instead of thwarting his substance abuse, discussion of detection makes Marlowe seek refuge in alcohol. The conversation makes him "feel lousy," and he immediately "open[s] the deep drawer of the desk and [gets] the office bottle out and [pours] himself a drink" (Chandler 91). Marlowe does not achieve the same "mental exal-

tation" Holmes experiences because the clear, definite resolutions fail to exist within the hardboiled realm. Unfortunately, Marlowe cannot restore order in a world where turmoil reigns.

The Rembrandt calendar that decorates Marlowe's office serves as a metaphor of Marlowe's position in life. Marlowe describes the face of Rembrandt as "full of the disgust of life and the thickening effects of liquor" (Chandler 41). He also appears "as if he might be going to do a little work after a while, if somebody made a down payment" (Chandler 41). Similarly, Marlowe sits at his desk waiting for a client to come along and "make a down payment." Marlowe's reactions and interactions with individuals often reflect a disappointment with the state of mankind. When Nulty, a police detective, contacts Marlowe concerning Moose's visit to Mrs. Florian, Chandler depicts the corruption and conflict Marlowe must constantly face. Nulty relates details of the case and then requests that Marlowe solve it. Instead of thinking for himself and leaving his chair, Nulty expects Marlowe to do the work. Nulty asks if Marlowe is "walking out," and Marlowe responds, "I just don't have time to stooge for you or any other cop" (Chandler 45). Even the police, the expected upholders of civic stability, complicate and corrupt the situation. Marlowe continues to "snarl" into the phone, when Nulty ends the conversation by hanging up. Marlowe cannot depend on the police in this world of mystery; he can only "[take] another drink from the office bottle" (Chandler 45). Marlowe's substance abuse allows him to exist in a society plagued by corruption and uncertainty, not only from criminals but also established institutions.

Despite their individual justifications for substance abuse, Marlowe and Holmes both stand forewarned of the potential damages. Watson tells Holmes "Count the cost! Your brain may, as you say, be roused and excited, but it is a pathological and morbid process which involves increased tissue-changing and may at least leave a permanent weakness" (Doyle 124). Watson refuses to witness Holmes destroy the strong, mental faculties that allow him to engage in the true "exaltation" he craves. Likewise, after Marlowe escapes from the drug den of Dr. Sonderborg, he solicits the help of Anne. She tries to assist in his recovery, but only liquor brings him comfort. Before Marlowe can even respond to Anne, he needs alcohol; he says "I don't know … Can I have one more drink?" (Marlowe 186). Like Watson, Anne refuses to watch Marlowe ruin his mental abilities with substance abuse. She answers, "you know, you'll have to taste water sometime, just for the hell of it" (Chandler 186). Watson and Anne fail to comprehend Holmes and Marlowe's dependency and addiction because they do not continually function within the world of crime and

Photograph: © Alisa Kostenko

mystery.

Chandler and Doyle's depiction of substance abuse suggests that the job of detective cannot be occupied by an individual with little propensity towards the base aspects of life. Throughout the detective genre, authors consistently portray detectives as those who possess an intense understanding of crime and evil. The detective functions within the world of crime, but never completely belongs to that realm. Substance abuse represents the detective's inner struggle to operate in the world of evil, yet maintain a sense of separation. The stakes and demands remain high for the classical and hardboiled detective. Drugs and alcohol, unlike clues and witnesses, always manage to pull them through.

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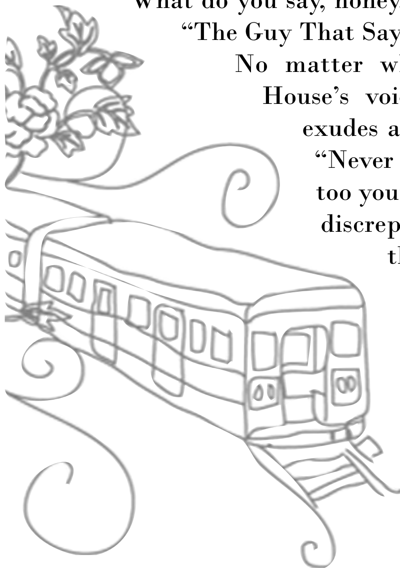
ABOUT THE WRITER

Courtney Futryk, a junior English and Philosophy major, was raised in Las Vegas, Nevada, but has come to love the culture and history of America's Atlantic coast. The oldest of five, she intends to earn a Ph.D. in English literature in hopes of spending a lifetime reading poetry.

Homecoming: A Sincere Success

Homecoming, Griffin House's second full-length album released with Nettwerk, is a disappointment—not in its content, but in its severe lack of recognition. The album opens gently with the sweet piano patter of "Dance With Me" and then traverses boldly through quicker paced tracks like "Burning Up the Night," and "Live to Be Free." It closes with the quiet strain "I Go Out (On My Own)," in which House declares, "I am wild and free / If you don't believe in me, / then I'm alone." To not believe in Griffin House's potential and talent, though, would be downright madness.

House, a 25-year-old Ohio native, has experienced extensive touring with artists such as Josh Ritter, Teitur, Ari Hest, and Mat Kearney, and has been working on developing his sincere, soulful sound since 2003. *Homecoming*, released late in the summer of 2006, is an absolute triumph on all accounts, and lives up to its title; House sounds completely at home in every song he sings. He deals with an array of topics, like the yearning for love when he begs, "I been lost and I need direction / I could use a little love-protection / What do you say, honey, come to my defense?" in the instant hit, "The Guy That Says Goodbye to You is Out of His Mind."



No matter what theme his songs explore, though, House's voice has a genuine, earnest quality that exudes a sense of experience beyond his years. In "Never Again," he sings, "My body's always been too young for the soul that's trapped inside." This discrepancy isn't reflected in House's music, though; his lyrics speak with a deep conviction which makes you think he's been there, seen and done it all, and he's here to tell you just what to expect.

The album ranges in tone from pleading, to freedom, to contentment. House's influences, namely Bruce Springsteen and Woody Guthrie, are identifiable throughout, especially in the upbeat, twangy melody "'Cause I Miss You."

One track that especially stands out is "If You Need Me," a folksy tune

that showcases House's brilliant lyric-weaving ability. The album's penultimate song is outstanding in its simplicity; the tune itself is straightforward, yet sweet sounding. This allows House's artful lines like "If I can't be what you need / then you need to let me go / but baby if you know that you need me / then you need to let me know," to shine.

As a whole, *Homecoming* is a collection of songs that can be listened to over and over again without end. With every run through new elements reveal themselves, giving reason to love it more and more. The biggest qualm one can have about it is that it doesn't get the publicity and acclaim it deserves.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Kasia Pilat, a sophomore from Milton, Massachusetts, enjoys writing about music. She is currently studying Journalism and English, and loves being involved with Boston University's Community Service Center. In her spare time, she enjoys dinosaurs, especially the triceratops, whose name means "three-horned face."

Artwork on facing page from http://griffinhousemusic.com.

Did You Hear The One About Movie Gossip?

Between the E! Channel, the *National Enquirer*, and PinkIsTheNewBlog.com, I feel like I know more about Mel Gibson than I do about my own father. My dad's birthday is sometime in August, he was not in *Braveheart*, and he is apparently allergic to peanuts. Mel, on the other hand, is an alcoholic—the debilitation *du jour*—and if he's not a full blown anti-Semite, he's at least anti-Semitish. This wealth of information has made watching Gibson's more controversial works, like *The Passion of the Christ* and *Apocalypto*, a backwards exercise in psychological detective work (as well as endurance). "Oh, Mel," you might say while contemplating the Jesus-hating Jews of *Passion*, "How did we not catch on sooner?" Similarly-sourced snickers are also prevalent whenever people watch *Manhattan*, the 1979 movie where Woody Allen dates a 17-year-old girl, and unavoidably think about Woody's Soon Yi affair. The question that arises, then, is one of fairness—not to Mel Gibson or Woody Allen in particular, but to filmmakers and film in general.

It's worth examining the logical end point of this trend, and what it means—good and bad—for the movies. The rise of celebrity gossip rags out of the ghetto of supermarket checkout aisles and into cyberspace, and the 24-hour news cycle has provided endless conversational material for any American with a modem, a TV, and a fascination with expensive train wrecks. The problem is not particular to film, but the visual nature of the medium concentrates the effects. We see celebrities in movies, and then we see them in mug shots. There's Nick Nolte in *Hulk*, and there he is in his arrest photo looking a lot like the front man of an all-white Parliament Funkadelic revue. It's not all bad news either—let's not leave out the stories we watch of their breakups and romances, weddings and births, and personal triumphs and losses, to addiction or disease or mortality.

The simple truth is that it is no longer possible for any movie viewers to take filmmakers at face value. When watching films, we inevitably use the outside information—filtered to us by news channels—to fill the interpretive gap between the creators of movies (them, those Hollywood types) and the consumers of movies (us, the ones who can name Angelina Jolie's kids before we could name members of our extended family).

The use of outside information in this way has its risks. It's a far cry from comparing one film out of a long career to others by the same director, because the new rumor mill-centered process dictates a less flexible, more investigatory approach. While it's natural to desire that every question one has about a movie and its creators gets a concrete answer, the tension between a filmmaker's intentions and an audience's interpretations is at the core of what makes great films. When legendary director Robert Altman died on November 21 at age 81, it surprised many to learn that the cause of death was leukemia, a disease he had fought in secret for nearly two years. That Altman knew he was dying is perhaps even more shocking than his admission—during his speech accepting a Lifetime Achievement Oscar earlier in the year—that he'd had a heart transplant a decade earlier. With these revelations as background, Altman's final picture, *A Prairie Home Companion*, has taken on an aura of prescient wisdom that helps critics account for its peculiar *carpe diem* tone. *Prairie* was something of a curveball from a prickly director whose films were known as much for their misanthropic cynicism as for their multiple storylines and overlapping dialogue.

But to view *Prairie* through this lens, as the work of a man who knew his film career was coming to an end, is to miss Altman's point entirely. He was never one to dwell on such things. Once asked if he planned on retiring anytime soon, Altman famously responded, "Retirement? You mean death?" At a press conference promoting *Prairie*, he explained P.T. Anderson's role as standby director by deadpanning that Anderson was the backup, "In case I croaked."

And yet that's not the impression you'd get if you looked at the movie as the last testament of a dying man. If you believed that story, Altman was a kindly sage, and *Prairie* was the closing "show must go on" message of a consummate filmmaker. It was as though the simple act of succumbing to cancer retrospectively transformed the guy whom the late Don Simpson (among many, many others) had called "a true fraud … a pompous, pretentious asshole," into a directorial version of the title character from *Tuesdays with Morrie*.

This conception of Altman adds a glossy layer of sentimentality to his last work that he would have been eager to strip clean. We do him a disservice by making him out to be braver than he was. He was a towering influence in the world of film, but he wasn't a hero. Like the characters in his movies, he was a human figure trying to work out his place in a chaotic world. Death, mortality, philosophy of living are all concepts for which Altman had exactly

zero time. He wasn't a hero or a philosopher king, and he wouldn't want to be portrayed as one. If there is a character that best reflects him in *Prairie*, it is Garrison Keillor's. Asked by a friend, "Don't you want people to remember you?" in response to his unwillingness to organize a public tribute for a recently deceased colleague, Keillor replies, "I don't want them to be told to remember me." Robert Altman would agree, and rather than use his death to write a revisionist interpretation of his last film, we should honor him as he really was.

But the celebrity death tribute story cannot hold a candle (even a memorial candle) to the most popular form of celebrity news—the "break up" and its converse, "the flowering romance." Recently, a headline announcing the split of Vince Vaughn from Jennifer Aniston appeared on the front page of Yahoo.com. It was the only film story placed in that prominent section, which also included news of the war in Iraq, the genocide in Darfur, and other sto-

Photographs: © Alisa Kostenko

ries of equal import. Back in the halcyon days of summer, the high-profile couple (who never failed to fuel rumors by denying that they were a couple), starred in the massively unfunny *The Break-Up*, a tortured romantic comedy that grossed nearly $40 million on its opening weekend and had less laughs than *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Yet, when watching *The Break-Up*, I feel inexplicably drawn in by an emotional undercurrent that may not even really be there. And I have a sneaking suspicion that others who saw the movie felt the same way. Aniston filmed it shortly after her divorce from Brad Pitt; it was on the set where she rebounded to Vaughn, and if the pattern in her height preferences continues, the next co-star she falls for will be a California redwood. I know—that's an irrelevant reference to her personal life that has nothing to do with what I'm talking about. And for that reason, it has everything to do with what I'm talking about.

The *Break-Up* is the archetypal post-internet gossip picture, one where the story behind the movie is vastly more interesting than the movie itself. Sure, there have been examples of this before—Vic Morrow's accidental death and the lawsuits that followed are about the only things that make *The Twilight Zone: The Movie* more than a footnote—but, to the best of my knowledge, no stuntmen, children, or veteran actors had to be killed for *The Break-Up* to take on this life of its own.

For every joke that doesn't work in the movie, I can't help but wonder if it has less to do with the obviously terrible script and more to do with Aniston's relationship crises. When a scene falls flat, as just about every scene from act one to act three does, I'm not sure I mind, because I'm more concerned with the awkward dilemma that Aniston the newly-divorced actress faces when she is forced to pretend to lose interest in a character played by an actor whom she is just beginning to fall for.

And now that Vaughn and Aniston have broken up for real, the film plays in an even newer new light. The strangely melancholic flavor of lethargy that fills the frames in the places comedic energy should be suggests that perhaps the star-crossed star couple felt the inevitable heartbreak coming just as they were being unavoidably drawn into a romance. Of course, I have no idea if any of this is true, but it doesn't matter. Thanks to celebrity gossip columns, what could have been a bottom-of-the-discount-DVD-heap romantic comedy becomes a bizarre fatalist signpost for the future path of movie watching.

Our constant exposure to the stories of the private lives of celebrities is wrought with danger. We risk getting the wrong impression, as is the case with Altman's *Prairie Home Companion*, when we use personal information about a filmmaker to bolster a shaky, preordained conclusion. This happens all the time. If you want to believe that Mel Gibson is or always was an anti-Semite or that Woody Allen has or always had a thing for teenage girls, you'll find imaginary Freudian slips in all of their work. Movie audiences have to find a way to resist this slippery slope. In an era of unlimited information, the trick is not to be overwhelmed by the irrelevant.

However, we can't be expected to take the Chuck Eddy school of music criticism and apply it to cinema by examining each film as though both the people making it and the people watching it had been born in a vacuum the day before. Doing so would erase the basis that many people have for going to the movies. By adding a story behind a story, Hollywood gossip makes bad movies more interesting in a way totally external to any filmmaking value. Gossip deflates stars and brings them down to our level. Jennifer Aniston just

got divorced, and we know people who get divorced. We know people like Jennifer Aniston. Or, we like to think we do. Gossip humanizes its subjects, even while it offers us a false familiarity with them.

We probably don't know anyone exactly like Aniston, but we're past the point where logic can faze us. That moviegoers gaze at some cinematic disaster unfolding onscreen and wonder, "Is everything okay with them?" or "Are they back on the sauce?" is a testament to this situation. If it allows people to attach a deeper emotional significance to movies that have none, and most of them don't, the rumor mill acts as a substitute for quality, the cinematic equivalent to the Tabasco sauce we use to make up for the blandness of a bad burger. It's tasty, for sure, but the question must be asked: if we need that much sauce to make the meat palatable, just what is it that the movie studios are trying to feed us?

ABOUT THE WRITER

Rob Turbovsky is a junior majoring in film at the College of Communication. Three years into his college career, he's having the horrifying duel realizations that he knows absolutely nothing about film and is just a year away from having to find a real job. He requests that donations be sent in lieu of flowers to him, c/o Boston University

"Her Voice Sounded Exquisitely": Defining the Native in American Literature

Nineteenth-century American artists struggled to create and define a national literary identity. Issues of nationalism, fraught with tension between a European past and a distinctly American future, erupted in an intense dialogue over the relevance of Native American culture. Lydia Sigourney's "Indian Names," Josiah Canning's "The Indian Gone!," and Walt Whitman's 'red squaw' passage in "The Sleepers," explore the moral, social and literary perceptions and implications of a culture and people circumscribed by the law of a white ruling class. Yet the narrative perspectives and language used to observe Native American diction and interaction with the environment reveal disparate consequences of representing the Native voice in American literature. Whitman's focus on the individual 'red squaw' overcomes a potentially compromised racial representation and instead presents a complicated portrait of Native American culture which reflects a humanity largely absent in Sigourney and Canning's stereotyped portrayals of the 'Indian.' The extent to which Whitman recognizes and overcomes the potential failings of representing Native Americans in literature highlights his uneasy creative conflict between being American and being universal.

Canning's "The Indian Gone!" presents the most conspicuous dismissal of Native American culture. The first-person narrative perspective foregrounds a central contrast between a self-assured speaker and an anonymous, largely dehumanized 'Indian' subject. In the first stanza, the speaker inquisitively gazes at the lustrous moon, contrasting its radiance with the duller sun. The speaker relies on his own guidance, "I asked myself the reason why? / And straightaway came the sad reply" (300-1). He imagines a male Indian stringing his bow before undercutting the Native voice as sexless and anonymous in the second stanza. Canning writes,

> I heard a mournful voice deplore
> The perfidy that slew his race;
> 'T was in a dialect of yore,
> And of a long-departed race.
> It answered me.

Although the abstraction of the Native American voice from the corporeal identity potentially suggests the mythical association of Native American culture with the spirit, Canning's use of the indefinite pronoun "It" also dissociates this voice from its individual masculinity.

By abstracting the Native subject, Canning syntactically emphasizes the recipient, "me,". The work's tragic irony emerges in the chasm between Canning's intention to elegize Native Americans, repeatedly inquiring "where is he?" and depicting the "wailing funeral cry" for nature's children, and the reality that surviving tribes were forced away to accommodate the speaker's plough. The caustic phrase, "dialect of yore" (also employed by Sigourney), implies the archaic culture of an extinct race—yet Canning published "The Indian Gone!" during the year of the Trail of Tears and less than a decade after the Indian Removal Act, hardly in "the misty past" essayed by the speaker.

Meanwhile, Sigourney's "Indian Names" also ironically fails to humanize her Native American subjects. Sigourney's narrative scope broadens from Canning's faceless Indian to Indians in general, indicative of a communal failure to recognize tribal nuances. Yet Sigourney's first-person narrative of an invisible observer establishes the poem's moral intention. The repetition of the accusatory phrase "ye say" intensifies her tone of indictment for Americans who deny Native existence (49-50). In the poem's final stanza, Sigourney directly alludes to a divine justice, "Think ye the Eternal's ear is deaf?"

Sigourney's speaker distinguishes between the social perception that "Ye say they all [Indians] have passed away" and the anti-euphemistic social reality that Native Americans were forced to relinquish their land and herded "on through the trackless desert pass / A caravan of woe." Sigourney anthropomorphizes the American landscape as symbolic of the culture inherent in its "Indian names." She uses imagery suggestive of a Native American spiritual-religious offering in the phrase, "Where red Missouri bringeth rich tribute from the West," in where the river's color parallels Sigourney's "red-browed brethren." However, Sigourney's moral intention is tragically undercut by the ironic granters of "Indian names": settlers whose notion of property and land ownership was antithetical to Native American values. Sigourney also falters in her idealization of Native Americans through pastoral, innocuous imagery such as the Rappahannock River which "sweetly sleeps / on green Virginia's breast."

In contrast to the generic portrayals of Native Americans offered by Sigourney and Canning, Whitman examines a homesteader's interaction with

"Brokedown Palace," photograph: © Beth Stone

a single, living 'red squaw' in "The Sleepers." This raw racial identification suggests the risk of imposing stereotype and perceived cultural inferiority on his Native American subject. Whitman similarly engages racial identification in "Song of Myself," when he glances at the marriage of a white trapper to a "red girl," the trapper's hand clasping her wrist firmly in a gesture of possession (350). This imagery was changed in later editions of *Leaves of Grass* to depict egalitarian hand holding. Whitman's desire to revise his depiction of Native American relations in his epic poem corresponds with the sensitivity expressed in "The Sleepers." In this work, Whitman narrows his focus on an interpersonal relationship between the squaw and a homesteader and navigates the challenge of humanizing the Native American individual as well as honoring her cultural form of dialect.

The red squaw narrative, derived from a childhood experience of the speaker's mother, associates Native American vibrancy with the past, much like Sigourney and Canning's portrayals. Nevertheless, Whitman's verse aspires to establish a closer temporal relationship with Native American existence than his contemporaries—merely one generation removed from his speaker. Whitman replaces Sigourney and Canning's perceived "dialect of yore" with the squaw's " … voice [which] sounded exquisitely as she spoke" (409). The speaker's mother revels in the vivacity of her Native American guest whose "step was free and elastic," a stark contrast to Sigourney's weary caravan (409). Yet there persists a suggestion of the irrelevancy of Native American culture to homesteaders. The squaw carried "a bundle of rushes for rushbottoming chairs" on her back, which goes unused, for the speaker's mother "had no work to give her but she gave her remembrance and fondness" (409). This nostalgic diction suggests more personal relevancy than Canning's elegiac tone. The disappearance of the squaw suggests a common stereotype: the Native American as a fleeting spirit. Similar to the voice in "The Indian Gone!," except that the speaker's mother reacts tenderly,

> All the week she thought of her … .she watched for her
> Many a month,
> She remembered her many a winter and many a summer,
> But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again (410).

The repetition of the "many a … " construction creates a mock-epic tone, simulating a folkloric dialect of oral storytelling, while the notion of memorializing the individual squaw resonates more personal authenticity than Sigourney's claim that "their memory liveth on your hills" (49).

Although the red squaw vanishes mysteriously, Whitman's interest transcends the question of where the Indian has gone. The literary context of this episode within "The Sleepers" permits the inclusion of Native Americans in the narrative's expansive representation of the leveling effects of sleep and death. Whitman catalogs the agents of "The Sleepers," including "the red squaw" and insists, "I swear they are averaged now … .one is no better than the other" (411). Whitman believes that "elements merge in the night," including cultural-historical identities (410). This aspect of Whitman's dialectic suggests a moment in "Song of Myself" when Whitman asks, "Who need be afraid of the merge?" (348). In his treatment of Native American culture, Whitman applies his democratic approach to celebrating America and engaging its diversity.

Whitman successfully fulfills his poetic project's purpose, outlined in the preface to L*eaves of Grass*, to reflect on "the essences of the real things and past and present events," including "the tribes of red aborigines" (3). As an astute observer of human experience, Whitman formally frames his poetic project with boundary-blurring catalogs and magnifications of seemingly isolated occurrences. His approach to portraying Native American culture within broader narratives, exploring human interrelations, resists an overtly moralistic or dismissive tone. The portrait of American life that emerges from his verse recognizes the lasting influence of Native Americans on society rather than simply on geographical inheritance. In his accounts of both the red squaw and the trapper's marriage, Whitman fulfills his democratic and artistic obligation to empathize, precariously balancing a desire to project a fresh voice and understand the continuities of human experience across generations and cultures. An unstable universality infuses his writing, reflective of the arduous task of imbuing literature with a sense of nationhood which defies homogeneity. Ultimately, Whitman's success as an artist is defined by his willingness to engage politically fraught issues such as dispossession without artifice. As a truly American poet, Whitman's "spirit responds to his country's spirit" with audacity (*Preface* 2).

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Artwork and Interpretation in "The Figure in the Carpet" and *The Renaissance*

Nineteenth-century American artists struggled to create and define a John Ruskin states in his essay "Modern Painters" that "it is in this power of saying everything, and yet saying nothing too plainly, that the perfection of art here, as in all other cases, consists" (Ruskin 8). Although this statement applies to a Turner painting, its sentiment resonates throughout the aesthetic movement and in works of the period. Ruskin addresses the artist's struggle to make art more than a beautiful object but also an object that holds meaning and implications. Ruskin's comment about putting everything on the canvas and at the same time permitting the viewer to make an interpretation foregrounds a concern of authors Henry James and Walter Pater. In James' "The Figure in the Carpet" and Pater's *The Renaissance*, an emphasis also exists between completely revealing what is aesthetically pleasing and permitting a reader to find it on his or her own. The premium the authors place on arts' ability to engage the reader, to essentially create something of his or her own with art, emerges as a defining quality of artwork. Furthermore, although the texts feature different artistic genres, each author's conception of what artwork "is" overlaps within the literary realm and its ability to elicit a response or "interpretation" from the reader. In Pater's interpretation of Pico Della Mirandola and James' "The Figure in the Carpet," the authors present artwork that focuses on symbolism and induces curiosity in its readers, demonstrating the immense value they place on the power of artwork to incite interpretation from its readers.

In the "Figure in the Carpet," James never reveals the topic or actual subject of Hugh Verecker's novels, yet he almost immediately introduces a tension between the text of Verecker's works and what lies beneath them. Although the unnamed narrator has read, written about, and published on Hugh Verecker, he still fails to articulate "the sense of" Verecker's works (James 359). Verecker tells the narrator that

> there's an idea in my work without which I wouldn't have given a straw for the whole job … it stretches, this little trick of mine, from book to book, and everything else,

> comparatively, plays over the surface of it. The order, the form, the texture of my books will perhaps some day constitute for the initiated a complete representation of it. So it's naturally the thing for the critic to look for. It strikes me … even as the thing for the critic to find. (James 366)

Verecker's art does not consist of the book itself, but the concept within the works. Verecker refers to this hidden concept as an "idea," a "trick," "the thing," and often times, simply "it," indicating the difficulty of defining the underlying meaning within his own works. Verecker's language fails to make any qualifying statement, and the narrator even responds "your description's certainly beautiful, but it doesn't make what you describe very distinct" (James 365). In portraying an artist revealing the secret of his art, James displays the challenge of the artist to include "some idea about life, some sort of philosophy" within his art, yet completely allow the viewer, or reader, to discover it (James 368). The artist himself struggles to truly say what the symbolism "is" because it relies so heavily on the input of the reader. The artist, Verecker, admits that his art inherently possesses something for the viewer, or reader, to "find." In crafting his novels, he purposefully includes an ulterior message, but the frustrated reply of the narrator shows that his efforts have not been detected.

Pico devotes his life to trying to reconcile pagan texts with the theology of Christianity, and in doing so, he thrives on looking beyond the surface of these texts. He struggles to accomplish what James' unnamed narrator cannot. Pico commits to seeing "below the surface, and bring[ing] up the supposed secondary, or still more remote meaning, —that diviner signification held in reserve … latent in some stray touch of Homer, or figure of speech in the book of Moses" (Pater 26). At the same time, Pico's purpose, like Verecker's undetected philosophy, relies immensely on interpretation. Reconciling the ancient philosophical with the theological is quite an arduous task, and his success or failure remains for his readers to discern. Their acceptance or rejection of his interpretation substantiates his efforts. As a result, Pico's own writings about ancient texts possess a philosophy, or symbolism, of their own. Pater writes that "[Pico's] constant tendency to symbolism and imagery give [his] work a figured style … Above all, we have a constant sense in reading him, that his thoughts, however little their positive value may be, are connected with springs beneath them of deep and passionate emotion" (Pater 36). Although Pater published *The Renaissance* before Henry James'

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"The Figure in the Carpet," his language exhibits a Jamesian quality; he refers to the "sense of" Pico's writings and the "passion and emotion" they contain, and like Verecker's, Pico's writings possess an underlying "figure" for the reader to perceive. Through Pico's struggle to accomplish a seemingly impossible task, readers glimpse how authors like Pico and Verecker, Pater and James, must have felt at having their writings consistently read yet never truly grasped or "seen" for everything they represent.

Since artwork emerges in both texts as heavily symbolic, its interpretation becomes crucial to its existence. In "The Figure in the Carpet," Verecker's revelation devastates the narrator's enjoyment of his books but incites a passionate curiosity and devotion in the character, George Corvick. Corvick spends endless time studying the contents of Verecker's novels, and when his efforts bear no positive results, he travels to India. There he gains the insight he lacked; his fiancé tells the narrator that "[the pages] all worked in him together, and some day somewhere, when he wasn't thinking, they fell, in their superb intricacy, into the right combination" (James 381). Corvick's success seems beyond his own control. Understanding "works" within Corvick, and he does not even think; rather, the pieces organize themselves into place. Pater

similarly presents the act of interpretation. Pico's study requires "the act of shutting one's eyes, that one may see more inwardly" (Pater 28). Only in the absence of the books can Corvick understand their mystery, and likewise, Pico's writings demand a spiritual turning inward to recognize what lies beyond the page. Presenting interpretation in this fashion as a rigorous, demanding, mental, yet almost mystical event demonstrates that the authors understood that the analysis, or reading, they advocated can only be accomplished by a select few. Those that do interpret with the intensity they endorsed, only truly exist as artists themselves.

Pater and James, as self-reflective authors, also possess a heightened awareness of the implications behind this demanding method. While calling for the un-faint of heart, they also realize that they risk alienating countless readers, like the narrator, who simply cannot see beyond the words on the page. Pater writes that "the Renaissance of the fifteenth century was, in many things, great rather by what it designed to do, than by what it actually achieved" (Pater 36). Pater's words provide comfort and solace to individuals like the narrator who aspire to see but never quite succeed. The act of looking beyond, gaining a profound understanding, cannot occur without that initial struggle, or desire, that the narrator does possess. Furthermore, the ending of "The Figure in The Carpet" leaves everyone who gained the much sought after insight dead, further calling into question how the authors intend for their message to be understood. Most importantly, however, the works of Pater and James, Pico and Verecker, provide an opportunity for readers of "the artistic temperament" to challenge their intellect, and simultaneously allow the ordinary reader's curiosity to surface (James 374). The accomplishment of this feat only occurs because the authors perfect the craft of "saying everything yet nothing too plainly," just as Ruskin insists "the true perfection of art consists" (Ruskin 8).

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Conscious Denial of an Undeniable Idolatry in Sonnet 105

Let not my love be called idolatry,
Nor my beloved as an idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be
To one, of one, still such, and ever so.
Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
Therefore my verse, to constancy confined,
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.
Fair, kind, and true is all my argument,
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words;
And in this change is my invention spent,
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.
Fair, kind, and true have often lived alone,
Which three till now never kept seat in one.

In Sonnet 105, William Shakespeare creates a speaker who denies idolizing his beloved. The speaker, however, fails to realize that his argument deteriorates gradually throughout the course of his defense. Increasing metric irregularity signals an unconscious breakdown in the speaker's argument. Reverent word choice referring to the speaker's beloved exposes the true object of his worship. And large-scale paradox creates a speaker guilty of unwitting defiance in addition to idolatry. Therefore, "Sonnet 105" is ultimately a speaker's unconsciously deliberate defense of an undeniable idolatry.

Sonnet 105 begins in perfect iambic pentameter. The first quatrain, and sentence, innocently defies any person's claim that the speaker's "love be called idolatry." The speaker acknowledges this claim by conceding that a skeptic might easily jump to this conclusion because of his subject's constancy: "Let not my love be called idolatry … Since all alike my songs and praises be / To one, of one, still such, and ever so" (ll. 1, 3-4). The speaker recognizes the potential for an accusation and becomes defensive. The quatrain's regular meter conveys an unwavering innocence and support of upright religious orthodoxy. This defense is appropriate, as a contemporary reader would have looked upon this accused idolatry as the violation of a Christian command-

ment and a deviation from the religiously grounded social norm.

The sonnet's meter becomes more irregular as the poem progresses. A trochee starts the first line of the second quatrain, which expounds upon the speaker's original defense by citing his beloved's constant benevolence: "Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind, / Still constant in a wondrous excellence … " (ll. 5-6). Perhaps this trochaic foot results from the speaker's perceived need to emphasize his argument with noticeable force. But in retrospect, this emphasis serves only to expose the speaker's defensiveness; it draws attention to an apparent compensation for his argument's potential weakness. Moreover, the trochee represents a departure from the first quatrain's regular meter and, accordingly, from the essence of innocence that the speaker initially strove to present.

Lines 9 and 10 of the third quatrain, in comparison to line 5, are even more irregular. Line 9 begins with a spondaic foot. Hypermetric line 10, the most metrically irregular in the entire sonnet, contains, sequentially, one spondee, one iamb, three trochees, and a final stressed syllable. These stresses, as well as the anaphoric "Fair, kind, and true" in both lines, convey an unprecedented forcefulness. The speaker has become frantically emphatic in his argument, and he uses this force to counteract any doubts about whether his unwavering poetry is not, in fact, idolatry. More than ever, the poem's meter deviates from the original quatrain's iambic pentameter and continues to suggest increasing social and religious deviation.

Both lines of the sonnet's couplet are metrically irregular. Line 13 begins with a spondaic foot and continues regularly. The sonnet's final line contains two iambs, one trochee ("never") and two iambs. The reprise of "Fair, kind and true" attempts to add final emphasis to the speaker's baseless argument that his love cannot "be called idolatry." The trochaic "never" in line 14 serves the same purpose, and the speaker's potentially suspicious emphasis calls attention to itself once again.

As a whole, Sonnet 105's metrical instability progresses at an even and gradual rate. While the first quatrain is wholly regular, one-fourth of the second quatrain's lines are irregular, a half of the third quatrain's lines are irregular, and the entire couplet is irregular. Thus, the speaker's deviation from the first quatrain's metrically suggested religious norm becomes steadily more pronounced with the poem's progression. Accordingly, the speaker's defensive emphasis intensifies also. Sonnet 105 concludes, metrically, as deviant and self-protective of the speaker's undeniable idolatry.

The diction of Sonnet 105 also contributes to this potential deviance, as

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the speaker describes his beloved and his verse to his beloved in exceedingly reverent terms. In line 3, the speaker describes his poetry as "songs and praises," which amount to sung prayers and hymns. In line 6, the speaker explains that his love is "constant in a wondrous excellence." This characterization of his beloved seems fitting for a deity or monarch but unbecoming of a lesser figure. The adjective "wondrous" appears again in line 12, reinforcing the speaker's beloved's perceived aura of eminence. These examples of deferential diction provide a glimpse into the speaker's perspective. If he does depict his beloved as a deified, magnificent being, then he is guilty of the idolatry he adamantly denies.

The couplet encapsulates the sonnet's conflict between the speaker's viewpoint and the reality of his idolatry. The speaker asserts that the qualities of "Fair, kind, and true have often lived alone / Which three till now never kept seat in one." The final line, though, suggests a blasphemous departure from the creed of Christianity, which emphasizes the holy trinity: God, Jesus Christ, and a Holy Spirit existing as one entity. The speaker forcefully asserts that three such admirable qualities have not existed in a single being. The trochaic "never" is consciously emphasized, but, unlike other stressed state-

ments in the sonnet, it does not serve to argue against the speaker's idolatry. Rather, the speaker unintentionally and heretically incriminates himself as with this utterance. Therefore, the couplet creates a paradoxical statement in and of itself, as well as of the entire sonnet. Independently, the denial that three highly regarded qualities have ever existed in a single entity contrasts a pillar of the Christian faith. The speaker, though, attempts to align himself with Christianity throughout the sonnet by denying idolatry of his beloved, forming a superficial paradox.

On a larger scale, paradox occurs in the battle between the speaker's denial of idolatry and the reality of idolatry, which the speaker may or may not be unconsciously aware of. Throughout Sonnet 105, Shakespeare's speaker steadfastly and consciously denies committing idolatry by worshipping his beloved through verse. The truth appears, though, through deferent descriptions of the speaker's beloved, as well as through the speaker's metrically defensive measures. The first ten lines of the sonnet display the speaker's potentially unconscious idolatry, but in the couplet the speaker ceases to deny his idolatry. Rather, with the heavy "never" of line 14, the sonnet turns, and the speaker's conscious assertions perhaps finally synchronize with the unconscious reality of the speaker's idolatry. The speaker attempts to justify his unconscious idolatry consciously and, in doing so, locates the equilibrium, though unorthodox, between his conscious and unconscious intentions: that his love may, in fact, be called idolatry.

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Love *vs*. Fear in Lao-Tzu and Machiavelli

> "*You can get further with a kind word and a gun than you can with just a kind word.*"
>
> —Al Capone, *The Untouchables* (1987)

Both Machiavelli and Lao-Tzu articulated strong conceptions of leadership. However, it is hard to determine which philosopher posed the best argument. Both writers addressed many aspects of a leader in great detail. However, the biggest question answered in both works is whether or not a leader should be feared or loved. In the following text, I will pose the argument given by each philosopher. I will ultimately answer this question while citing examples from film and history.

Lao-Tzu was straight-forward in his *Tao-te Ching*: he advocates for a peaceful leader who does not alienate the people. He dreamt of a leader who thrived to govern, not rule. Lao-Tzu believed "weapons are the tools of fear; a decent man will avoid them except in the direct necessity and, if compelled, will use them only with the utmost restraint. Peace is his highest value" (25). Lao-Tzu suggests that weapons and the idea of war create fear in the people. War should be used as a last resort and only to protect the well-being of the people.

Concerning how a leader should be viewed by the people, Lao-Tzu left nothing to the imagination. In Chapter 17, he declares, "When the Master governs, the people are hardly aware that he exists. Next best is a leader who is loved. Next, one who is feared. The worst is one who is despised" (22). Lao-Tzu clearly states his opinion in his text. He accepted that leaders are at their best when the people are hardly aware of their existence. Also, Lao-Tzu strongly believed that a leader should strive to be loved. Machiavelli, on the other hand, believed the complete opposite.

Should a leader be feared or loved? This question is also answered in Machiavelli's *The Qualities of the Prince*. He explains, " … one should like to be both one and the other; but since it is difficult to join them together, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved when one of the two must be lacking" (44). This clearly contrasts Lao-Tzu's argument that a leader should be loved; however, it is not the only idea of Lao-Tzu's that Machiavelli disagrees. Machiavelli was a supporter of war, whereas Lao-Tzu was an avid supporter of peace. Machiavelli thought that war should be the only idea on the mind of

a prince. He said war is the only profession which befits one who commands (37). This strongly differs from Lao-Tzu's beliefs that war should be the last thing on the mind of a leader and peace should always be maintained.

One idea that both men agreed on was that leaders must not have the people hate them. Machiavelli believed that a prince should be feared. He believed that a prince should use force when needed to keep the people in line because "with very few examples of cruelty he will be more compassionate than those who, out of excessive mercy, permit disorders to continue, from which arise murders and plundering" (43). Machiavelli later writes, "A prince must nevertheless make himself feared in such a manner that he will avoid hatred, even if he does not acquire love; since to be feared and not to be hated can very well be combined" (44). This idea ties back to the quote from the film *The Untouchables* at the beginning of this essay.

Al Capone was a feared mafia boss in the early twentieth century. Though he was known as the most feared man in Chicago, he was also loved. This may seem odd but Al Capone is the ultimately the personification of Machiavelli's prince. Though Robert De Niro's quote in the film The Untouchables cannot be directly traced to Al Capone, it was meant to express the ideals that Capone lived by.

Throughout the film, Capone is place on a pedestal. The viewers witness his attendance at balls, operas, etc. In the majority of scenes featuring Capone, he is being interviewed by the media with a smile on his face. Capone is portrayed as a model leader in public's view. However, when the doors are closed in a personal meeting he gives a speech to his followers after a large shipment of alcohol was confiscated by the police. He picks up a baseball bat and says:

> Life goes on. A man become preeminent, he's expected to have enthusiasms. What are mine? What draws my admiration? What is that which gives me joy? Baseball. A man stands alone at a plate. This is the time for what? For individual achievement. There he stands alone. But in the field, what? Part of a team. Looks, throws, catches, hustles. Part of one big team. Bats himself to livelong day. Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb and so on. If his team don't field, what is he? No one. Sunny day, the stands are full of fans. What does he have to say? I'm going out there for myself. But … I get nowhere unless the team wins.

Capone follows his speech with an outward act of cruelty, swinging the baseball bat into the skull of one of his followers. Here, violence relays a message to the rest of the men that Al Capone will not tolerate selfishness. He will not tolerate failure. In this one act of cruelty, all of his men understand his message loud and clear. Minutes later, however, we see Capone smiling ear to ear. This further expresses Machiavelli's idea that a man should try to be loved and feared at the same time (44).

The quote I posed at the beginning of this essay can be directly related to the views of Machiavelli. Capone happily declares, "You can get further with a kind word and a gun than you can with just a kind word." This statement further pushes the idea of fear. Capone's power heavily depended on the fear of the people. Though it seemed that many people loved him, it was because many people feared hating him. Fear kept Capone alive. In the film, Capone does not take embarrassment lightly. After another alcohol exchange is foiled by the films protagonist, Eliot Ness, Capone exclaims, "I want this guy dead! I want his family dead! I want his house burned to the ground! I want to there in the middle of the night and piss on his ashes!" Once again, this expresses Machiavelli's belief in using cruelty to maintain order. In Capone's business, bootlegging, order was a necessity. The only way to restore it was to make examples of people who try to disturb his order.

Leaders must be feared to maintain power. After the September 11th terrorist attacks in 2001, the people of the United States looked upon their President to respond. These attacks killed thousands of innocent people and America wanted revenge. Not only did they revenge; they wanted respect. Soon after the attacks, President George W. Bush initiated attacks on suspected terrorist camps in Afghanistan. This attack was a way of showing the world that if the United States is attacked; the United States will respond forcefully. These initial attacks were used as a tool to instill fear into terrorists with the idea that we will attack you with everything we have if you force us to. Fear is what prevents war. If fear was not evident in the world, war would take over. The fear of retaliation is what keeps countries using diplomatic measures instead of military measures.

Machiavelli's views are very much a part of society today. Power is kept by instilling fear. In Scorcese's *Gangs of New York*, the film's antagonist, Bill the Butcher (Daniel Day-Lewis), speaks candidly on how he stayed alive and in power for so long:

> I'm forty-seven. Forty-seven years old. You know how I stayed alive this long? **Fear**. Fearsome acts. A man steals

> from me, I cut off his hand. If he lies to me, I cut out his tongue. If he stands up against me, I cut off his head, stick it on a pike and lift it up for all to see. A spectacle of fearsome acts. That's what maintains the order of things. **Fear**.

Machiavelli himself could not have said it better.

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"Thanks to celebrity gossip columns, what could have been a bottom-of-the-discount-DVD-heap romantic comedy becomes a bizarre fatalistic signpost for the future path of movie watching."

–Rob Turbovsky

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