Gender Roomours I: Gender and Space

Edited by
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About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. gender forum also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

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Editorial

1   **Gender Roomours I** is the first of two consecutive issues of **gender forum** to examine the intersection of gender and space. The five contributions featured in **Gender Roomours I** explore various spaces from a gendered perspective, engaging with the narrative space granted women in sick humour, the feminine spaces of the own childhood home, the frontier and wilderness masculinity in the Pacific Northwest, fictional representations of domestic architecture, as well as settings of confinement discernible within contemporary Irish Drama.

2   Taking its cue from the sick jokes cropping up after civilian Christa McAuliffe's death in the Challenger tragedy, Rob Baum's "Navigating the Narrative Space of Women: Gender and Sick Humour" is an assessment of the narrative space granted women in public discourse. In her analysis of the humorous public appropriation of the private tragedies of Lorena Bobbitt, and Cathleen Crowell Webb, Baum exposes how in both cases female sexuality appeared as "violable territory" and argues that as spectacles these private tragedies became public sites to be explored and traveled like theme parks, yet which the women were barred from navigating themselves.

3   In answer to Luce Irigaray's call for an altered perception and re-conception of space-time as a means of thinking through sexual difference, Lori A. Brown's art project "my mother's spaces transformed" explores the changes that her childhood home underwent after the death of her mother. Documenting these changes with the help of photographs, Brown seeks to recover some of the feminine spaces of her home that were erased and distorted after her mother's death in a series of large-scale collage drawings. These drawings synthesize the observed changes at the same time that they reclaim some of the effaced feminine spaces by creating new spatiotemporal configurations.

4   Michael Egan's contribution, "Wrestling Teddy Bears: Wilderness Masculinity as Invented Tradition in the Pacific Northwest," makes a case for the integration of natural space as a critical concept within gender studies. Recounting various narratives of bear wrestling, the article not only foregrounds how our notions of nature as either wilderness or "Mother Nature" are gendered differently, but also how the perpetuated anecdotes of men's fight against "wild beasts" helps to ensure an image of "superior" frontier masculinity that differs from but also complements its urban counterpart.

5   Katja Kanzler's "'To Tell the Kitchen Version': Architectural Figurations of Race and Gender in Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*"

explores the spatial dimensions of two antebellum texts by African American women authors, thus decoding and interrogating antebellum domestic architecture as a spatial system of cultural signification. Placing particular emphasis on the kitchen as a gendered as well as - in the context of Southern U.S. slaveholding culture - racialized space, Kanzler illustrates how the kitchen features in the two texts as a site of both oppression and resistance as well as authorial empowerment.

6   In "Bedbound Beauty Queens: Negotiating Space and Gender in Contemporary Irish Drama" Mark Schreiber investigates how the confined spatial settings of two contemporary Irish plays provide an apt room for their theatrical problematisation of conflicts between social expectations and personal development. Drawing on Jameson's influential concept of "cognitive mapping," the analysis purports that the plays become representative of dramatisations testifying to the constructedness of identity in general and Ireland's national identity in particular.

7   In addition, **Gender Roomours I** presents an interview with the British playwright Helen Cooper as well as reviews of recent publications by Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and R. W. Connell (eds.), Ina Habermann, as well as Martina Tißberger, Gabriele Dietze, Daniela Hrzán, and Jana Husmann-Kastein (eds.).

Navigating the Narrative Space of Women: Gender and Sick Humour

By Rob Baum, Monash University, Australia

Abstract:

Women's "narrative space" - the authority granted women's stories - exists marginally, as the concept of female story continues to compete with the perceived monopoly of the "master text." "Sick humour," an approved method of publicly reducing subject to object, principally reconstructs its target, or "butt," through the mechanism of gender identification. Exploring the culture and popularity of "sick humour," I critique the means by which sick jokes-which can in some cases effect social change-define the public awareness of three ordinary American women: Christa McAuliffe, Cathleen Webb and Lorena Bobbitt. Assessing the narrative space of these women, whose private tragedies became sensational public domain, we experience how the humour surrounding and confining women replaces their specificity with the saleable and consumable images of other female bodies.

> *Mary*. Almost. Yes. Better. Ah. There. I've done it. See the invisible passage of an amiable woman. (Timberlake Wertenbaker, *The Grace of Mary Traverse*)

> "How many feminists does it take to change a lightbulb?" "That's not funny." (American folk humour)

1   When microwave ovens appeared on the market, they were accompanied by a rash of stories about women popping pet poodles like corn, old people with pacemakers winding-down and ditzy blondes mistaking the appliances for heat lamps, putting their heads in, and taking off layers of fat and makeup in a matter of seconds. Those kinds of heart-stopping fables are called "jokes."[1] The willingness of American consumers to associate microwaves with death was startling, particularly given the luridness of the images - skin burning, bones exploding - in short, what is known to be true of the crematoria of Europe not so long ago. That women and the aged were now running the ovens, rather than perishing in them, was especially ironic.

2   These visions of women operate upon women, defining them as the tools of technology they have no hope of commanding. Humour surrounds and confines those who tread outside the space given them; sick humour manipulates notions of gender and obscures the real subject while replacing it with saleable and consumable images (for instance, blondes and microwaves). Such narratives are created to disempower; by force of their acceptance they come to substitute for physical ground. Women's "narrative space," then, might be defined as the place or, in this case, authority granted women's stories (Michie 13), and is

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[1] One of the most lucid commentaries on the equation of the comic principle continues to be found in Henri Bergson, *An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Shovell Henry Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: Macmillan Company, 1911).

relegated to the margins as the concept of female space competes with the monopoly of the "master text." Of course the microwave stories depend upon mythical women - actual women would violate the integrity of community legend - by which we know that in these tales female identity is founded on an absence perceived as a presence. But to the degree that such stories are entertained as truths, they become the narrative spaces women navigate.

3 In this article I shall discuss the ways women, utilised as public metaphors, become the objects of "sick humour" (like that which circulated about microwave ovens). My argument will: 1) assess the narrative space of three ordinary American women whose private tragedies became sensational public domain, namely, Christa McAuliffe, Lorena Bobbitt, and Cathleen Crowell Webb; 2) explain the workings of sick humour and its social and socialising potential; 3) show how the tragedy of yet another American woman, Mary Jo Kopechne, provides insight into the use of women as metaphor, deriving from a concept of the availability of female bodies; and finally, 4) theorise female sexuality as the true object of derisive public comment. So although I began with descriptive examples of sick humour, I will be establishing some groundwork on gender and women's spaces before analysing the grotesque, a category over which sick humour reigns.

Necessary narratives

4 We turn first to the representation of women in a space so other it is called "outer," Outer Space. In this joke, which I heard myself, the connection between the *Challenger* and microwave ovens is exact.

> Who's the first woman to cook in Outer Space?
> Christa McAuliffe.

In an article headed "Spaced Out," about the schoolteacher-turned-astronaut Christa McAuliffe (Penley 1993), Constance Penley records the kind of "sick jokes" which flourished in the wake of the ill-fated *Challenger* flight, questioning the attitudes behind the gallows humour. Penley reveals McAuliffe as a prize in the NASA quest for "female mediocrity" and a woman made for its technology. At the moment women were borne into space, they were also born into the famed exclusivity of the masculine and masculinized U.S. Space Program. To have women in outer space suggests that women *could* be in outer space; therefore it became necessary to define *how* they could be in outer space. NASA chose to vanquish the idea of gender equity that projecting a woman into space implied.

5 During her training, McAuliffe was reported derelict in her professed project (to keep a journal for primary school students). In the NASA compound she instead baked apple pies,

worked at needlepoint, and displayed wholesome feminine attributes, including being a woman who could not speak for herself. In fact, McAuliffe was deliberately silenced as a condition of her inclusion in the programme. For all her housewifery she was still a political embarrassment, a woman whose contribution to science (in the event of a successful trip) would have been empty, nothing more than the verification that non-astronauts - even *women* - could survive the rigours of space (a point the world's female astronauts had noticeably failed to win).[2] Under NASA's careful supervision, McAuliffe became a woman "out of control" (Penley 181), symbolised and even proved by her tragic end. Although McAuliffe clearly was not an astronaut - neither a professional scientist, physicist, space engineer, nor military-trained pilot, in short, not a man hand-picked and developed for the longest of flights - her name became cruelly synonymous with the *Challenger* tragedy. In fact, she was blamed for it: after McAuliffe's death, NASA's conclusion was that women *cannot survive in space*.

> What goes up and doesn't come down?
> (You know the answer.)

6   The lesson of female unfitness for the stars came as no surprise, given that the space industry is heavily vested in reinforcing in outer space the same structures of exclusion and gendering that operate on Earth. Fortunately, McAuliffe's death garnered sufficient national attention that NASA need not repeat its fateful experiment soon. In her article, Penley exposes NASA's condemnation, following the disaster, of the "Teacher in Space" project as ill-spent energy, chronicling NASA's generally hostile attitude towards women (including McAuliffe) in space. It seems clear that NASA unambiguously engineered McAuliffe's contribution and image in its program, clarifying a (perhaps) subordinate mission to colonise *inner* space. By "inner" space I refer to "domestic space," a place expressly for women, a space ensured by the complicity of the women who occupy it.

7   It is not, however, a place for "bad" women, and bad women are not mentioned in order to keep good women innocent of the taint of their fallen sisters. Females, born immoral, are prey to negative suggestion, a facet of their weaker minds (measurably smaller, according to the pseudo-science of eugenics); this can be seen in two interesting parallels to McAuliffe's tragedy: the stories of Cathleen Webb and Lorena Bobbitt. In "The Greatest Story (N)Ever Told: The Spectacle of Recantation" (Michie 1992), Helena Michie retells the story of a well-publicised rape charge, the even better-propagated recantation of that charge, and the sinister celebrity attending Cathleen Crowell Webb, a "born-again Christian housewife from rural New Hampshire" (10). The original story received little attention, ignored even in the pages

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[2] Perhaps this is partly because of the "masculinate" stigma attached to Eastern bloc women: female astronauts came predominantly from Soviet countries.

of Webb's local newspaper, despite the conviction of her apprehended rapist.[3] Then, seven years after "rapist Dobson's" incarceration, Webb (having since converted to Evangelical Christianity) publicly renounced her own charges and confessed that she had made the whole thing up! Her retraction was picked up in newspapers and magazines, and Webb appeared on television with the accused man, now released. Webb's "rapist" became identified as the victim of female desire. The rape that recalled or repealed itself called all rape into question, justifying the fable that women cannot be raped because "all women want it." Webb was a laughing-stock. But ironically it was through the act of recantation that Webb's "good name" - destroyed by the "fact" of her rape - was restored.

8   Similarly, with one stroke Lorena Bobbitt became one of the most threatening women of the Twentieth Century, a household name synonymous with danger and repulsion. In the Biblical manner of an "eye for an eye," she one day cut off her husband's penis. Bobitt's act enraged and frightened men across the world, and she was stigmatised as a monster, a contemporary version of the Medusa. It was known that Bobbitt was regularly beaten and sexually assaulted by her husband John. But as he was her legal husband, the assaults occurred in the publicly sanctioned arena of the American marriage. Bobbitt failed to reconcile herself to the prevalence of violence, including sexual violence in marriagea legally contracted atmosphere for argument and abuse, where the male body has and continues to dominate.[4]

9   Intermingling issues and tissues of ownership (e.g., possession of the hymen and reproductive rights), the institution of marriage certifies women as silent partners in an

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[3] In this case I use quotation marks to indicate a definition implied or in question. Like Michie in her article, I avoid examining "Dobson's" guilt, focusing on a more significant issue than finding proof of rape.

[4] Bobbitt's scenario metaphorically recalls Susan Glaspell's short play *Trifles*. In *Trifles*, a dutifully private and silent Mrs. Wright at last resolves her husband's violence by strangling him with a rope. Under his violent ministrations the bed had already become a stage; Mrs. Wright chose to ring the curtain down. "[A] strange death," the townspeople remarked; "who'd have thought it?" Yes, who'd have thought little Minnie Foster Wright capable of carrying out such a deed, after so many years of abuse and deprivation at her husband's hand? And who'd have thought Mrs. Bobbitt capable of amputating Mr. Bobbitt's cock? Many women must surely dream such moments of "truth," wherein they alter or repay male violence in pure gestures. Physical truncation, diminution and neutralisation together perform a complete and absolute gestus-asignature gesture, or gist. Trifles' never-seen character Mrs. Wright goes silently to jail, presumably to perish there for want of favourable evidence. She will never speak the truth of the murder because the men of the town will never speak the truth of her abuse by her husband. Susan Glaspell creates a powerful presence in the unseen character of Mrs. Wright. She also comments on the fact of female absence in marriage: Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, the two women "friends" who discover onstage the truly incriminating evidence of Minnie Wright's dead canary (clearly killed - by her husband), are equally invisible to their own husbands. I do not subscribe to the theory that lack of conclusive evidence, in this case Wright's tiny, quilt-squared canary coffin, guarantees her release. While the Missus Hale and Peters withhold evidence that would certainly result in Wright's death, I do not believe that Wright will eventually be let off. Glaspell reveals Truth to be a gendered issue, and male and female Justice as distinct operations. Although in the play male law appears to defeat female revenge, the ability of the townswomen (but not the men) to discern what really happened gives the women an authority to women as bearers of the truth.

unequal business, and female sexuality as violable territory. More importantly, public opinion "legislates" mastery of female bodies by men, guaranteeing the public domain of female bodies: female anatomy is not private space. (The construction of the female body as a public site is obvious in countries where pornography is openly purveyed and female anatomy is overtly a boom industry for male voyeurism.) Treated as an outer space available for conquest and colonisation, the inner space of women is contestable. In Bobbitt's case, confusing the real manifestation of her own body with her feelings and desires, thinking them both private rather than public stages, the battered wife refused the geography thrust upon her. Her defense was symbolically and concretely aggressive, but as a counter-attack launched against an enemy weapon. Striving for a moral conclusion not compatible with modern jurisprudence, Bobbitt took out the opposition in the war on her body.

10   But like Webb's story of rape, Bobbitt's narrative is marred by the suspicion of lying: Bobbitt also recanted. That is not to say that she "took back" claims of being assaulted. But she told perhaps *too* much truth. Attempting to restore her goodness and grace, whether John's "manhood" or the fiction of feminine docility, Bobbitt publicly repented. Within hours of tossing the dislocated flesh from her car, Bobbitt reported and aided in pinpointing (pardon the analogy) the penis. She thus helped to relocate and remap her husband's body. But in so doing, Bobbitt placed herself on the map of media sensation as a woman who reacted rather than acted, one unwilling to stand (and fall) by her own desires, a woman who - in the moment of escape - replaces the key in the lock. Imagine Nora in Ibsen's *Doll House* poking her head back through that door, still ringing with its courageous slam.[5] Imagine Thelma and Louise, bent upon their final flight across the chasm of heterosexual relationships, leaping apart, hands unknitting, to end solitarily in the rubble below. Both these fictive endings drew - and continue to draw - sharp criticism from men and women. But the point of these stories is precisely in their *endings*, moments communicating strength, growth and personal emancipation, when self-denial is replaced with self-love, and tedium with freedom. If such endings, fictive as they are, impart a threat to American viewers, how much more so a real-life tale in which a woman is forced to a Biblical brand of vengeance, and retaliation takes the form of amputation?

11   Told by others, these narratives resist the idea of women acting for themselves. Women who do so are "out of control," w(r)enches in the works. They are also women whose sexuality is clearly mediated by male bodies. In both Webb's and Bobbitt's personal narratives, female sexuality and its availability are foregrounded. Their genitals become the

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[5] Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* was commended by Norwegian women's societies for a perceived feminism - a platform Ibsen, however, refused.

locus of public controversy. Psychoanalytically, these tales are excellent examples of the Lacanian crisis of identity, as monstrously "lacking" women steal the phallus of "sleeping" men. Looked at with a feminist sensibility, these women are most disturbing because their narratives suggest that women cannot be trusted, either when they protect themselves or when they tell the truth. Their very bodies infer that female "truth" is tacitly false. Of course injudicious imprisonment cannot be condoned. But the ability of women to defend their bodies and their bodies' productions would be greatly improved, were the men our testimonies named to remain in prison. If rape becomes a joke women tell themselves, then women will lose the slim power, one could say, "drama," present after violation. Webb's recantation publicised what too many people (including educated ones) already believe to be true: that women cannot be raped, and that all women who "cry rape" are liars. Webb's story potentiates the ability of some males to oppress others (including other males) with the threat of rape, and increases female fears that we will not be believed if we tell our stories. Webb's recantation replaces us in a familiar position, "less a case of being in on the joke than being the butt of it" (Walton 245).

12   Meanwhile, in the joking that arose over the amputation, it was not John Bobbitt's stitches the public consumed but Lorena Bobbitt's rupture. Conditioned to furnish the public with the best story to savour with breakfast, the media largely overlooked John as the butt of this joke except when it came to questions of ejaculation.[6] Instead we saw Bobbitt as she showed herself to us, retracing her steps that night to the place at which she flung her pound of flesh from the window. Bobbitt's repentance cum recantation so quickly followed upon her act it seemed an undoing. In her ingenuous resumption of innocence and purity there was necessarily an annulment as well, a dismissal of her own emancipation from the problem prick. Bobbitt's physical act was indeed mythic, a *gestus* as replete as Oedipus' gouging of his own eyes, Prometheus' torture on the rock[7], or Thyestes' meal of children. Such acts are "perfect" in their own way: perfectly chosen and perfectly repugnant, aesthetic economy. This irreducibility only made Bobbitt's recantation more odious and problematic, not because one could not empathise with her crime of passion but because it all ended so fast. It was a

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[6] The initial question of how John did it - how he attracted women-became in this act the wonder of how he "does" it - how he has sex with a re-constructed penis: given the media attention to his plight, I suspect that John now has the best male organ that money can buy, a bionic marvel. John later made a more or less public "butt" - of himself by starring in a pornographic movie. That is, seeking to prove the wholeness of his masculinity, John chose a market notorious for its methods of graphic exploitation: in pornography the objectified body is never really whole but exists only because of and through the sexual organ, the camera's central focus. Thus John's desire to show the world his new penis backfired: instead John Bobbitt again showed the world that he is a penis, a man whose sole grounds for mastery over women lies in the violence of his sexual organ.

[7] The Olympian gods punish Prometheus for bringing fire to mankind by chaining him to a rock where swooping eagles routinely devour his liver.

postmodern drama, its moment - even its fame - cut in half.

13   And that was the Warholian prediction, after all. Rather than quarter-hours of "fame," Warhol might have called them moments of "identity." Identity seems more and more a reflection like light from an outside source, a quality of appearing rather than being. And for many men there is little more reflective of male desire and inscription than the female body with its mirrored breasts and "private parts" of female genital sub-terrain, symmetrically balanced (Irigaray 1985).[8] (On the body external, a canvas of duplications, singularity of a form is surprising.) If Bobbitt's blow was a semiotic response, the kind-for-kind answer to the language of male violence, then the operation performed in the surgical theatre that night was a recuperation of male dominance and potency. It was also an act of under-erasure, the denial of a scar. For behold, everything works: John Bobbitt is (as we have seen) up again and beating women. As the scarred implement was itself the original weapon employed to beat, to fell, one can enjoy Lorena Bobbitt's operative moment as suture, historically and poetically "right," poetic closure. Yet the weapon was unfortunately returned to its owner.

Dark reflections

14   How are the stories of a space-borne teacher and two "everyday housewives" related? On the surface these three women are worlds and words apart: McAuliffe wrenching in the gears of the American space industry; Webb reliving a personal trauma of rape and exposure; Bobbitt taking vengeance into her own hands. But we never actually encounter these women except through the narrative space of their chroniclers, through the *simulacra* of what is told about them. Each of these women is victim of the faceless, anonymous engine of public interest. The extraordinary celebrity of tragedy that grants these women a kind of unction "elevates" them from the pages of tabloids to the "high culture" of academic discourse. Each unknown was, prior to the event, distant from (and from the media's perspective, unworthy of) anything but the "mediocrity" Penley iterates in her article. We note a common thread of victimisation in NASA's use of McAuliffe as a public relations gimmick, John Bobbitt's continued abuse of his wife, and the ambiguous "rape" of Webb who (whether or not *originally* assaulted) was, following recantation, deployed as a media possession. The sensationalism of all three stories was immediately ground down for public television: the *Challenger* bursting mid-air before us in vile repetition; Phyllis George's request for "rapist" and "victim" to embrace; photographs of the Bobbitt home, car and knife. As I have said, narrative space can be personal space, even in the margins. But when told by others, the

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[8] Note Luce Irigaray's argument that femininity is erased by binary configurations of the body.

stories of these women lose claim to the integrity and authenticity consistent with personal narrative. Once the narrative is possessed by another, particularly an hegemony like white Western masculinity's press organ, it is edited to fit the space provided. In the transition from private experience to public spectacle, the *image* of a particular woman may magnify, but the *woman* diminishes by comparison. Negative media recognition cuts her smaller, quieter, weaker, and morally remote, more fully gendered "female" - unprotected and unbelievable.

15   These narratives command the subject's reduction to object, a process of "othering" that exposes women to a myriad of public assaults, among them becoming the target of sick humour. The comic butt of the sick joke is rendered inoffensively absent, confined to the sight of a female body no longer her own, manufactured by the social organ. The media's custom (readily discernible in advertisements, cinema and MTV) of biforcating women into parts rather than wholes (showing here a breast, a navel, a pouting mouth) figuratively reduces women to the features deemed most salient. Christa McAuliffe, already cinders, becomes a finger, a face - Lorena Bobbitt and Cathy Webb, objects of stories told about sexuality and power, become nether-parts. These tales are Cinderella fables, told of women catapulted to infamy not through any apparent design but by being in the wrong place at the right time. All three women travel from obscurity into the heat of public recognition, to find themselves pressed to accommodate the stereotype of public spectacle, lives laid open, bodies ready for appraisal. From the margins these women thrust into our view. As Michie relates:

> (S)pectacle translates the traditionally private into the public by amplifying and rendering visual the interiority of the body and its experiences. Narrative frames and contextualizes spectacle, giving it a meaning, an order, and a technology. Together, narrative and spectacle produce a story with pictures, embodied on the level of popular culture by glossy magazines and [...] on the level of "high" culture by academic and scientific discourses about the secrets of the body (12).

The difference between Webb's two confessions - and between the stories of Webb, McAuliffe and Bobbitt - produces a narrative space in which women can become public but only as spectacle, something other or less than they are, composites of copy, pictures and saucy tidbits jazzed up for the morning reader. The public eye opens and closes upon the image of woman, an image corruptible because already corrupted in its earliest narratives[9]; the eye sees an image it has itself generated (Mulvey 1975). Such femalehood is fictive: a quilt, a hybrid, built from clippings of whole women.

16   Reflectivity of the female body, its ability to hold and reproduce images, is a skill often said to be the essence of womanliness (when fecundity is considered our most precious

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[9] The Biblical Eve is constructed as a knowing corrupter of men: not only does she eat from the forbidden tree, but she also wittingly offers the fruit to Adam.

gift), demonstrating our tendency to turn our surfaces to the advantage of others. Like moons, like Earth, women absorb light and shine it back, orbiting male suns. Having discovered that their bodies are *public* bodies, usable as park benches, it is no wonder that many women marry then cling to that declaration of privatisation, remaining in violent or loveless matches until the end. The promise of a "stardom" (however transient) like Webb's or Bobbitt's offers women an option beyond that of marital indenture or unclaimed baggage: the opportunity to create themselves as public objects of admiration. Such female spectacles are public sites like theme parks, fantastic lands to travel. Through television, tabloids, and talk circuits, women like Webb and Bobbitt become available to American families conditioned to invest gross amounts of time and money in the star precisely because of its brevity. McAuliffe most likely would have shared this fate. And consider the already established celebrity who upon dying arcs into final brightness with an ugly joke, one replacing her late memory with lurid invocations:

> What kind of wood doesn't float?
> *Natalie* Wood.

17   Already public thoroughfare, the bodies of women become, like those of pin-up calendar girls, famous for a year, a month, or perhaps only the time it takes to turn the page, heavenly bodies in the galaxy of public voyeurism, suspended before the public gaze.[10] The Christa McAuliffe created by NASA was a woman who, but for the *Challenger* flight, was destined for obscurity (and life). The outer space in which she was to have ventured did not differ from the inner space in which women already exist, delineated by stereotypes: women bake apple pies, nurture, are bad at mathematics, fail, lie. Penley calls such conceptions "Lucys" (Penley 184) - like Lucille Ball's television character, comic images of the female problem. These women seek refuge in the space that contemporary society conventionally affords women, a space outer in its own way: not the inside track where males historically rest but orbiting it, a space, despite its distance from the core, carefully founded (and funded). As the *Lucy* series regularly depicted, women are dependent upon - and opposite to - the substantial forms of their male counterparts, who have marketable skills, almost solely provide for their families, and must bail their wives out of trouble. Penley calls NASA's public response to McAuliffe's role in their narrative a "disavowal" (186). That is not far from recantation. In this regard McAuliffe is the equivalent of Bobbitt and Webb, women who enabled male institutions to engineer their public images and their bodies.

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[10] Compare Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

18   These three stories of women metaphorically tell us a tale of female space, the allowable space of "undistinguished" women in the public gaze. The real space into which McAuliffe might have flown demonstrates the danger all women pose to institutions like NASA, male bastions striving to maintain Western hierarchy and preserve the watchful eye of the master text. In this narrative women are - like one of the nightmare episodes on *I Love Lucy* - "Lucys in space," wacky and dismissible characters. Lucille Ball, mind you, controlled her own product; the last laugh was her own. As grotesque objects of public scorn, however, McAuliffe, Webb and Bobbitt were caught in the machinery.

Freudian slaps

19   Let us look now at that machinery, examine the mechanism of sick humour[11] and the service it performs. Jokes are constituted of a host of incongruities, ruptures which in thought and language produce metaphor and humour, including the grotesque. In all the jokes cited here (and hereafter), the language of humour calls attention to itself in a terse, rhetorical performance. In most of these jokes two anonymous characters emerge and anonymously ask and answer a simple but "trick" question in the same voice, devoid of character differentiation. In order to provide the "proper" answer it is necessary to divest oneself of certain values and mores, to think in an improper (or "sick") way. The reward is the knowledge that one has mastered the trick by correctly discerning a popular social response, usually by uttering a sexist, racist or otherwise ignorant falsehood. Funny, right?[12]

20   Joking is a means to denying and reducing the power of others, as well as expanding and announcing the power of the joker. Patricia Mellencamp speaks of women as the butt of jokes (Penley 182), recalling Freud's paradigm of a teller, a listener and an absent person about whom the joke is told (Freud 1963). In the following sick joke, the "truth" of rape is divulged:

> An old woman enters a police station to report a rape. When the officer comes to the time of the rape, the old woman states, "Forty years ago." "No, he demands, "When did the rape occur?" "Forty years ago," the old woman insists. And it turns out that she really is reporting a forty-year old occurrence. The police officer puts aside the form and asks, "But if it happened forty years ago, why are you only reporting it now?" The old woman sighs and answers: "Nostalgia."

In the mind of the joke-teller, old women are sexually undesirable, reduced to remembering rape as sex, and coercion as interest. Female desire is contrasted with female utterance - that is, the truth of female perversion is weighed against the lie of female narrative. The belief that

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[11] These are aspects which neither Penley nor the authors she cites discuss.
[12] See also Thomas Huang, "Hey - That Wasn't Funny!" Santa Barbara News-Press (23 April 1995) D1.

women are never actually raped becomes a part of public record, and rape is demystified, becoming a happy narrative deliberately recalled. Outer and inner space are both successfully navigated, as women's interiorities are offered to nameless others, first as objects of rape, then as objects of public record.

21   The inversion of space that occurs also through the perversion of language is the substance of the jokes told about the *Challenger*, jokes in which *Challenger* figures only minutely. The real subject - or object - is Christa McAuliffe: her unfitness for space, celebrity, and science itself.

> Last thing heard over the *Challenger* intercom: "Say, boys, what's this cute little button?"
> In jokes arising about *Challenger*, McAuliffe's spaces became strangely, tragically, mixed - and nixed.[13]

This economical joke features language undeniably intended to evoke gross feminine stupidity. In a single line McAuliffe is made wholly responsible for the tragedy: the button she notices causes the fatal lift-off. But undoubtedly the "button" McAuliffe pushes is related to public perception of women in space. The appearance of the button rather than the gravity of the situation attracts McAuliffe as the butt of the joke: it's little and cute; within the address "Say, boys," she identifies their plurality and greater knowledge, and her own gender difference and lack. That "cute little" button (as we know from the poems of Gertrude Stein) signifies female difference itself.

22   To facilitate our definition of sick jokes, including those about *Challenger*, rape and what my mother (not given to sick jokes) calls "bobbitting," regard a remark made on the radio: "If Ted Kennedy had been driving a Volkswagen, he'd be President." You may well recognise that line, a joke so old I was surprised to hear it exhumed for a show on "Unbelievable Traffic Stories" in the summer of 1994. The anonymous call-in motorist told an innocent tale about his own mother and a Volkswagen. Deejay "Matthew in the Morning" invoked the older "joke" about Cape Cod's Chappaquiddick.[14]

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[13] I cite two examples, as follows:1) McAuliffe's private thoughts were to be surrendered to the space mission for public fare. In comparison with the scientists performing experiments and prognoses in space, McAuliffe's justification for "taking up space" was to have been a journal of her travels, emulating the pioneers who drove their wagon trains across North America. The idea of journal entries remains consistent with the concept of women as silent participants whose offerings subsist in the personal and emotional realm, more or less passive responses reached only by the active encounter of reading. 2) The inner space of the shuttle, which might have penetrated as a closed inner capsule into outer space, was instead exploded, becoming outer space (nearly spacelessness) in the under or inner space of the Atlantic Ocean.

[14] Deejay Matthew Arnett was fired in September of 1994 from rock station KCQR 94.5 FM for "floating rumours over the air" that the station was to be sold. He had invited listeners to participate in "Nasty Rumors Tuesday" by telling all the ill rumours they'd lately heard. Three days after his (Tuesday) firing, the station was indeed sold, and twenty-seven of the thirty employees laid off. Read Andrew Rice, "KCQR Bites the Dust," The Independent (22 September 1994): 22.

23   Twenty-five years having elapsed since the fact and act of "Chappaquiddick," this remark still has the power to shock. It may have shocked me more at this hearing than at its first. Matthew's mo(u)rning joke recalls an advertisement taken out by *National Lampoon* after the (first) Ted Kennedy "incident." The full-page ad, which ran nationally in magazines and became immediately famous, depicted a Volkswagen beetle afloat with the caption:

> "If Ted Kennedy had been driving a Volkswagen, Mary Jo Kopechne would be alive today."

The inference is that the VW, unlike the actual car driven by Kennedy (a 1967 Oldsmobile) is buoyant in water, a feature touted by its German engineers. Despite the off-colour nature of the Lampoon advertisement, VWs became a part of the scenario, shaping public reception of the New England incident. As the Volkswagen company was only then getting off the ground in North America, the advertisement may even have been a financial boost. It certainly located the Volkswagen in the American imagination.

24   Coincidentally, when Chappaquiddick became a household word[15] embroiled in "one of the biggest scandals of the decade" (Murphy B3), the space program was also in its ascendance. Former radio news director Ed Joyce recalls his arrival at the "party cottage" on the "small satellite island" where six married men and six unmarried women had met, among them Kennedy and Kopechne:

> I had my radio on. It was an incredible moment in history. Human footprints were being placed for the first time on the surface of the moon by Neil Armstrong and I could hear his voice as he was doing it! But as Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin searched the surface of the lunar landscape, I was preparing to search the trash cans at the cottage. It was hard to leave the car radio.... (B3)

Through the accident of timing, the two incidents become linked. Transformed by the voice of the media, radio became television, the capsule a car, both driven by men. Pilot into new waters: turn the channel. Kopechne's body foreshadowed McAuliffe's, Webb's and Bobbitt's, women locked in the machinery of politics and manifest destiny, geography and anatomy, women as soft surfaces beneath booted feet, wearing the ineradicable prints of the institution of male desire.

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[15] Several years ago, when I took the ferry to Nantucket, I walked about the small island towns and discovered what the residents had learned years earlier: there is big money in tragedy. Residents of the area want to talk about it. The horrible death of Mary Jo Kopechne provided Chappaquiddick with its perquisite Warholian fame- as well as a means of avenging itself upon a local family eerily protected by wealth and distinction. Every tourist shop, no matter how small, carried a locally printed version of the scandal, while one bookstore specialised in the grisly subject.

Heavenly bodies

25   As Mellencamp found in her own survey (Penley 183), memory is not : although we may genuinely "remember" episodes because of random details (locale, name, time, etc.), those details may have nothing to do with the original event. Thus many people who "remember Chappaquiddick" incongruously equate the car driven by Kennedy with the Volkswagen, even after being reminded of the ad. So I learned shortly after Matthew of the Morning's Chappaquiddick reference, while conducting informal interviews about this and other "sick jokes" such as:

> How many Jews can you get in a Volkswagen? Six million.

In a spatial variation of VW associations, the car becomes a phone booth in a 1950s prank to see how many (living) people can be wedged inside the car. More specifically, the automobile becomes a metaphor for a Nazi crematorium, womb filling in for tomb. Even without knowledge of the collegiate quandary - or this sick joke - Jews have good reason to associate the VW with death. *Volkswagen* means "people's car," and the idea of a small family vehicle that would run economically and efficiently for *das Volk* was the brainchild of Adolf Hitler.[16] That might also explain why the German company has increasingly turned in recent years from *Volkswagen* to the word *Fahrvergnügen* ("traveling pleasure") in its advertising. From its birth, the Volkswagen was intended to mobilise a population with no room for Jews.

26   The existence of such "Holocaust jokes" as that one, told me by a young man on the beach the summer I turned 14 (upon learning that I was Jewish), verbally re-enacts historical violence. Like the "good" sick joke that it is (economically-wrought, horribly witty), it shares in an absence - of Jewish bodies - which out-performs Jewish presence, invoking presence by virtue of sheer nothingness, sign, metaphor, the potency of illusion and allusion. Much as *Challenger* entombed its astronauts, the Volkswagen became a tomb for half the world's Jewish population, unseen victims of the *Shoah*. What makes this a sick "joke" is not risibility but the grotesqueness of its subject - genocide - plus a couple of incongruous associations, and a feminisation of the Other. Metaphorical associations work by eliding incongruencies in language and imagination - the site of metaphorical reception. The sick joke utilises deception, suturing truth, fiction, and phobic behaviour - misogyny, racism, homophobia, primitivism. But while the floating VW joke consciously refers to Ted Kennedy, seemingly spoofing his bid for high office, the image inaugurated by the joke is not of Kennedy but of the car, and therefore the unmarried woman in the car, abandoned by Kennedy. The same

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[16] For a recent discussion of the Volkswagen challenge to Henry Ford, see König, Wolfgang, "Adolf Hitler vs. Henry Ford: the Volkswagen, the Role of America as a Model, and the Failure of a Nazi Consumer Society," *German Studies Review* 27/2 (May 2004): 249-268.

image drives the *National Lampoon* ad: the thought of a woman's hands at the latch, a woman's face at the windscreen, voluptuous torture of a pretty young woman in the agony of suffocation as she drowns.[17] The ad is, in short, a snuff joke. Mary Jo Kopechne's body becomes a secret body, the all-too fleshy relic of a would-be secret, an absence.

27   Pointing out that the dead woman in the car is not visible in the VW picture, Richard Hoch argued, "That's a different thing from taking pleasure in her death."[18] The joke's intention is, however, an invitation to look behind those doors and visualise the unseen. Sunken in the language, submerged in the text and sub-text of American advertising, is a dead woman whose body is never seen again. To this day something mystifies us about that woman and that body because of the mysterious details of the incident, a curiosity that at once makes the accident/murder the more tragic, and the humour it spawns the more macabre. This may be true of *Challenger* jokes as well. In the absence of that which is seen - the bodies of women - that which is unseen (or obscene) speaks instead. Absence generates its own presence. The vehicles wherein these women perished perform as carapaces sloughed of identity. In similar fashion, the body of rape "victim" Webb, publicly divested of the crime, became absent of interest, a box devoid of its jewel, a truss without a wound. When the "rape" became unworthy of public sympathy, Webb stripped away the bandage, exposing the real site of disease. Metaphorically, hers was an "empty case."[19] From rape to recantation, the vehicle for Cathy Webb was Webb herself, body and soul. With her first story, her genitals were acknowledged as public territory, food for public thought. After her recantation, Webb was re-placed on the map of public consciousness, and her private realms "reopened" for viewing. In the inversion of inner space, the turning inside - out of her body as a text, the "hidden" narrative or secret - feminine sexuality itself - disappeared.

28   Now for a short test: which item does not belong among the following?

1. Kennedy's "Olds"

2. U.S.S. *Challenger*

3. Volkswagen bugs

4. Women's genitals

Need more time?

29   Spoken humour makes it possible to insult someone in a "positive" manner: to provide social correctives (basically notes or hints for social interaction), without recourse to physical violence. Ideally that is as far as joking goes: joking itself may have a restoring or neutralising

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[17] Because of the nature of the death the possibility of suicide was considered.
[18] Private conversation, University of California (Santa Barbara, May 1994).
[19] Compare Freud on the image of the jewel case, which comes to replace woman in his studied fantasies.

effect. Yet we know that racist taunts often precede, even incite, racial beatings. The joke is an incomplete narrative that *may* release unwanted energies but *does* permit small truths to couple openly with large fears. We laugh to purge, to heal; our angelic bodies conceal gargoyle hearts. All humour is potentially monstrous.

30   Time's up. Each of the items listed above have in the sick jokes of recent re/telling become containers for mysterious objects, Pandora boxes (Mulvey 1992) of feminine sexuality read as evil, like the coffins of Nosferatu. Given the too *public* nature of the images, perhaps they are more like confessionals, structures mediating between the grotesquery of hidden desires and revealed sins, and the ordinariness of mundane human anatomy. Women are not universally chosen for sick humour unless (in Freud's theory) noticeably present or (in my theory) remarkably absent (and these options may not exhaust the alternatives.) It is not only those jokes we call "sick" which should be condemned for phobic typing. All jokes intended to humiliate (and most jokes do) carry this illness, a disease curable only at the Others' expense.

Absent women familiar

31   I do not claim that women, absent or not, are the butt of every joke, or that women are necessarily any more absent in jokes than in other types of narratives. I do offer a definition of gender with respect to humour, and specifically sick jokes, that explains the way these short stories direct the listener to deride an unseen or absent victim who has no recourse to rebuttal. Such jokes tempt us to ostracise an individual or group through language - a particularly manipulative choice of language - because they pretend to entertain rather than simply to punish, classify, minimise, primitivise and feminise the Other.

32   It is a sobering task to compare the space accorded women with the space women take for themselves. Contrasting the metaphors of public/private, outer/inner, and space/place, we cannot fail to rediscover the fixed nature of such geographies, and the tendency of humans to think in structural opposition (binaries). We also see the ways in which women's "narrative spaces" are constructed differently from men's, and why not only behaviour but also space itself must be gendered to enable female reduction. Webb, Bobbitt, McAuliffe (and Kopechne) are women whose narratives end as they began - in female anatomy, pandoric boxes, voluptuous bodies suspended in glass. Female space is predetermined as a corrupt and corruptible space. In the economy of Self the Other is expendable, an unruly space which must be tidied. Female anatomy is infinitely violable, a noisy space which must be silenced. The feminine Other serves as a necessary difference by which the Self judges itself whole;

woman is the mirror in which the masculine Self erects its gaze. Placed beside the unbroken history of master narratives, "female" methods of telling, seeing and becoming seem ruptures rather than narratives themselves, shards instead of whole vessels, jokes naming absent parties. It remains for us to alter them from unpleasant punchlines to declarations of a powerful presence.

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my mother's spaces transformed[1]

By Lori A. Brown, Syracuse University, USA

Abstract:
Emerging from the desire to document changes in my childhood home, this art project examines gender's impact on this space after the death of my mother. Over the next several years I photographed the house many times. During this period I was in residence at two artist colonies and presented the work in progress. Through conversations with other artists, I received insights proving helpful in the project's development. A series of collage drawings became a part of the project enabling me to synthesize my observations using particular photographs, research and writing I had been doing since the project's inception. The photographs and drawings have been exhibited at Wells College and the Earlville Opera House in Central New York.

> In order to make it possible to think through and live [sexual] difference, we must reconsider the whole problematic of *space* and *time* […]. The transition to a new age requires a change in our perception and conception of *space-time*, the *inhabiting of places* and of *containers*, or *envelopes of identity*. (Irigaray 7)

1   Emerging from the desire to document changes in my childhood home, this art project examines gender's impact on this space after the death of my mother. Over the next several years I photographed the house many times. During this period I was in residence at two artist colonies and presented the work in progress. Through conversations with other artists, I received insights proving helpful in the project's development. A series of collage drawings became a part of the project enabling me to synthesize my observations using particular photographs, research and writing I had been doing since the project's inception. The photographs and drawings have been exhibited at Wells College and the Earlville Opera House in Central New York.

2   This project begins with an interest in the female space as active within the domestic sphere. It involves issues of place making and hopes to understand both the processes leading to and consequences following the alteration and eventual elimination of such places within the home. Through the passage of time I began to decipher difference, differences of my childhood home. The temporality of these spaces fascinates me, how they have changed from a place created by my mother to one by my father, the spatial consequences of these changes, and ultimately how these alterations have affected my brother and our interactions with these spaces. Aware of certain transformations occurring with time, I eventually realized the

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feminine spaces and associations of my childhood home had been reclaimed, distorted, even erased. By displaying my own recent photographs of the house against others selected from our family archive, I am interested in revealing the passage of time and its effect on the spatial hierarchy of the house - specifically, the loss of the feminine. I believe that this loss, once captured, becomes a spatial potential that can be reclaimed. A proposition for something else, something other, and something new can only be contemplated once it has been understood how and why the home has been altered.

3   This work has provided an opportunity to examine gender's impact on the spatial structures of a familiar domestic space and furthered understanding of my father's alterations of our home. Although the primary focus in this project has been to synthesize my observations, it has undoubtedly laid the groundwork for future work to challenge societal "envelopes of identity." As Irigaray points out, for an autonomous and independent self-representation for women and femininity to emerge, a reconceptualization of space and time must occur (see Grosz 120). As both a feminist architect and educator, I am committed to this pursuit. The following photographs and collage drawings are the beginning of my explorations synthesizing my observations with my desires for the space Irigaray speaks of.

the kitchen

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

4   In order to understand the temporal issues at play in the house, one must discuss how their spatial uses have transformed. Before my mother's death, the kitchen was a multi-use space. Obviously used for cooking and eating, it was also a social and commercial space. In order to earn additional money, my mother created and ran a baking business out of her kitchen. After her passing, the kitchen's primary uses changed. My father does not often cook, so it has become a place to eat breakfast and to heat leftovers. However the most fascinating aspect is the kitchen's transformation into a place used to collect random mail, plastic food containers, and other small items. The counter, table surfaces, and utility room have become cluttered and packed with so many items that the spaces have been rendered unusable - now a showcase of my father's daily life. When the family is eating a meal together now, there is no longer a real sense of the event of the meal but instead the focus becomes placed upon the moving and rearranging of things on the table in order to create a space where we can all eat together. Not only does the collection of these unusable items occur in the kitchen, once the family's central space in the house, but it also occurs in the living room and the dining room, spaces adjacent to the kitchen. Spatially, my father has transformed his environment through the addition of items that inherently do not have much value; value in the sense that they are

essentially things he will eventually discard.

the bedroom

Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.

5   Another space that has been altered over the course of time is my parent's bedroom. Once used by both my mother and father, the room has become another area for my father to collect and store things. And because few see it, there is a tendency for him to store even more here. The dresser is a good example. Once divided in half for each to use, my father now has stacks of papers all over it. One sees very little of the actual horizontal surface of the dresser because it is so covered with his mail. The most revealing space is the shared space of my parents' bed. The actual area where my mother once slept has been overtaken by mail and is now not able to be used. He has literally altered his environment to such a degree as to eliminate the space my mother once occupied.

eliminated female spaces

6   I believe the altering of one's space after a loved one passes is completely normal. Architecturally there are many ways to do this. However, what I find fascinating is how and with what my father has selected to do this with. He has not physically reconfigured the space: either by changing the furniture or use of the rooms. Instead, he has selected all temporary items - items that could be argued as neutral, meaningless, or recyclable. Are the objects he has selected to do this with important? I believe they are. They allow for this alteration but encourage the space to continually change - adding to or subtracting from. So in fact, this alteration can be changed yet again and again, reconfiguring in order to mask or fill a void left by my mother's passing. The spaces once associated with her and her daily activities are now no longer present but traces are left behind. For example, my mother was a saver of plastic containers to use for things such as leftovers. Unlike my father, she always put those things away once cleaned. Leaving the containers out on the counter, I am constantly reminded of her when I see them. Many of the spaces he has used to collect things act as similar signifiers. However my father has successfully altered the spaces to such a degree that these traces are no longer apparent to anyone other than my brother and myself.

7   Why has the female space been taken over? Relocated? Adjusted? One tries, either consciously or unconsciously, to create a space that is safe for oneself. In my father's case, he is trying to reconfigure and redefine ownership of one's self through ones space at the expense of the spatial memory of my mother. How does one set boundaries of safety? Why so temporal an alteration? What does this say about the intentions of the alterations? Maybe one could begin to answer these questions through the following: these alterations are not intended to be permanent and so therefore allow for easy modifications, adjustments, or changes. The project would like to consider how to reclaim these spaces and this first happens

through the recognition of their absence.

Fig. 9.

Fig. 10.

this has changed

this room was always reserved for formal occasions shared with guests. mom use to leave ironing in the chair. it was suppose to be clean and clutter free...

the living room was used for mom's break after school, my brother's homework, family tv time, and dad sleeping in his chair

family space

Fig. 11.

Fig. 12.

chora is the space in which place is made possible grosz

how to move forward...

to my brother's bedroom

to my bedroom

so how is space... space they shared for twenty-six years

how does... father create... nurturi... comfort... consol... suppor... surround... protecting... we need? so how is space made once the female is gone? how does my father create the nurturing, comforting, consoling, supporting, surrounding, protecting space we need? so how is space made once the female is gone? how does my father create the nurturing, comforting, consoling, supporting, surrounding, protecting space we need? so how is space made once the female is gone? how does my father create the nurturing, comforting, consoling, supporting,

to feel and be his own space.

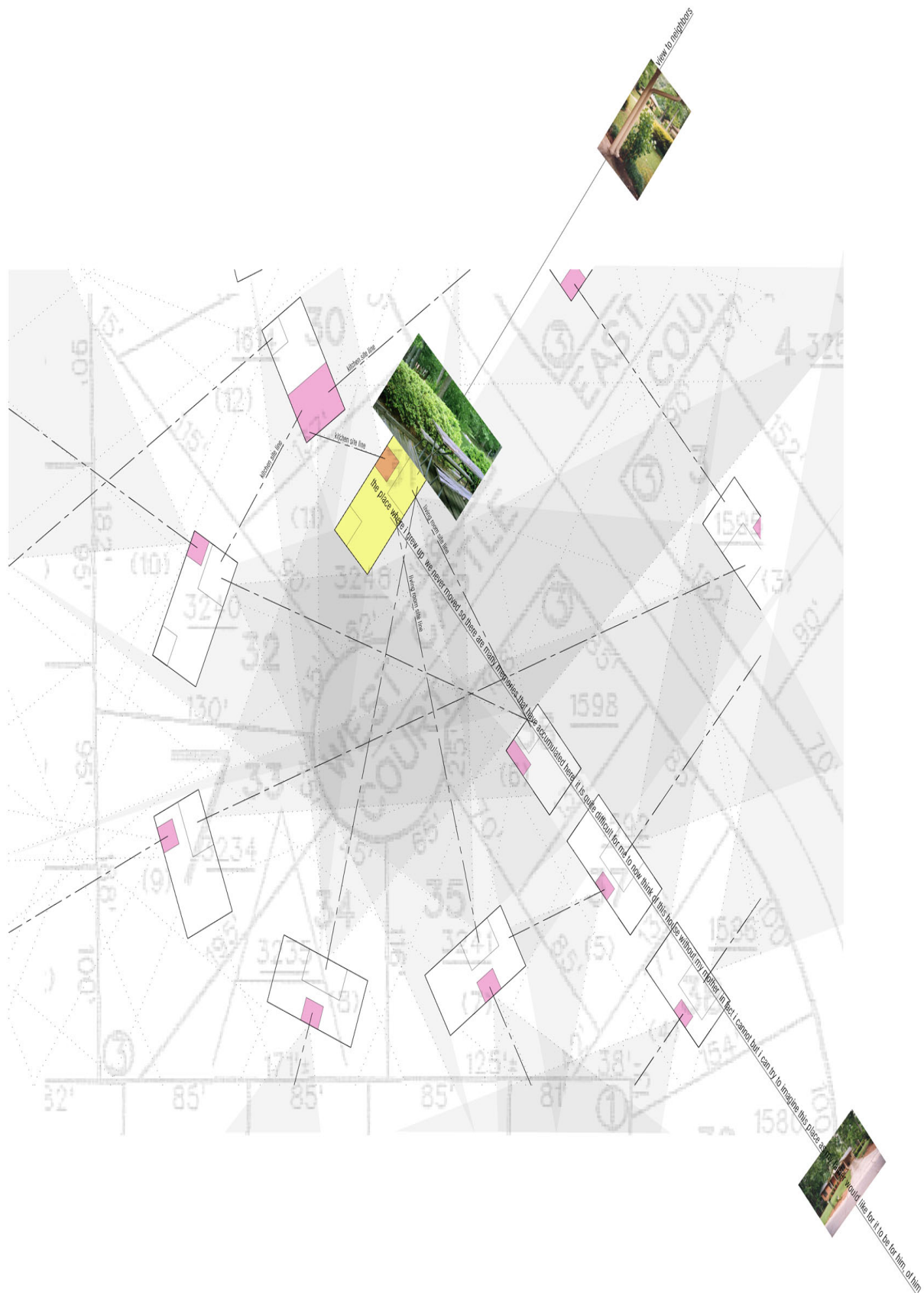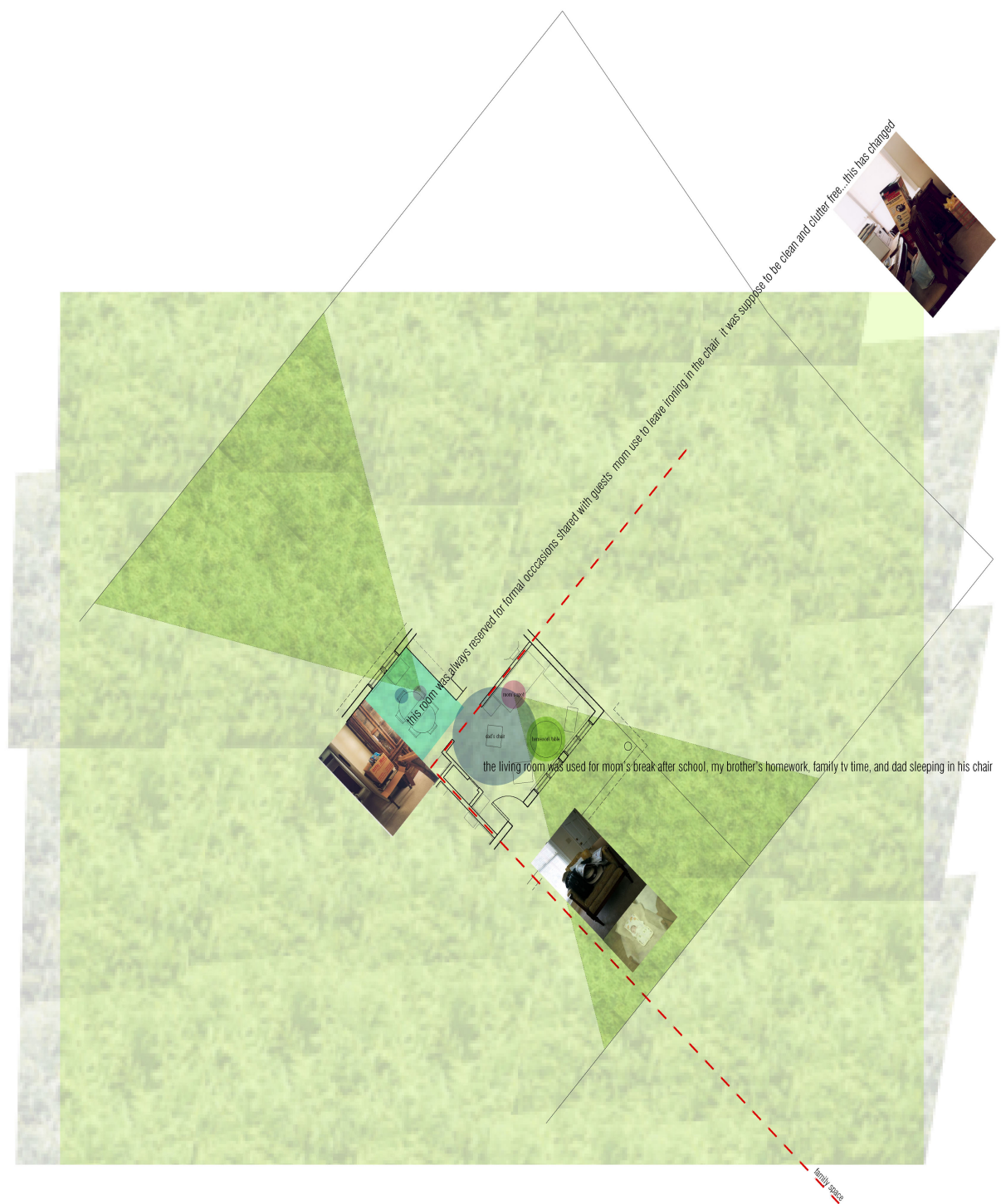what was once theirs is now his to reclaim their bedroom as his own what enables this to happen? to feel and be his own space.
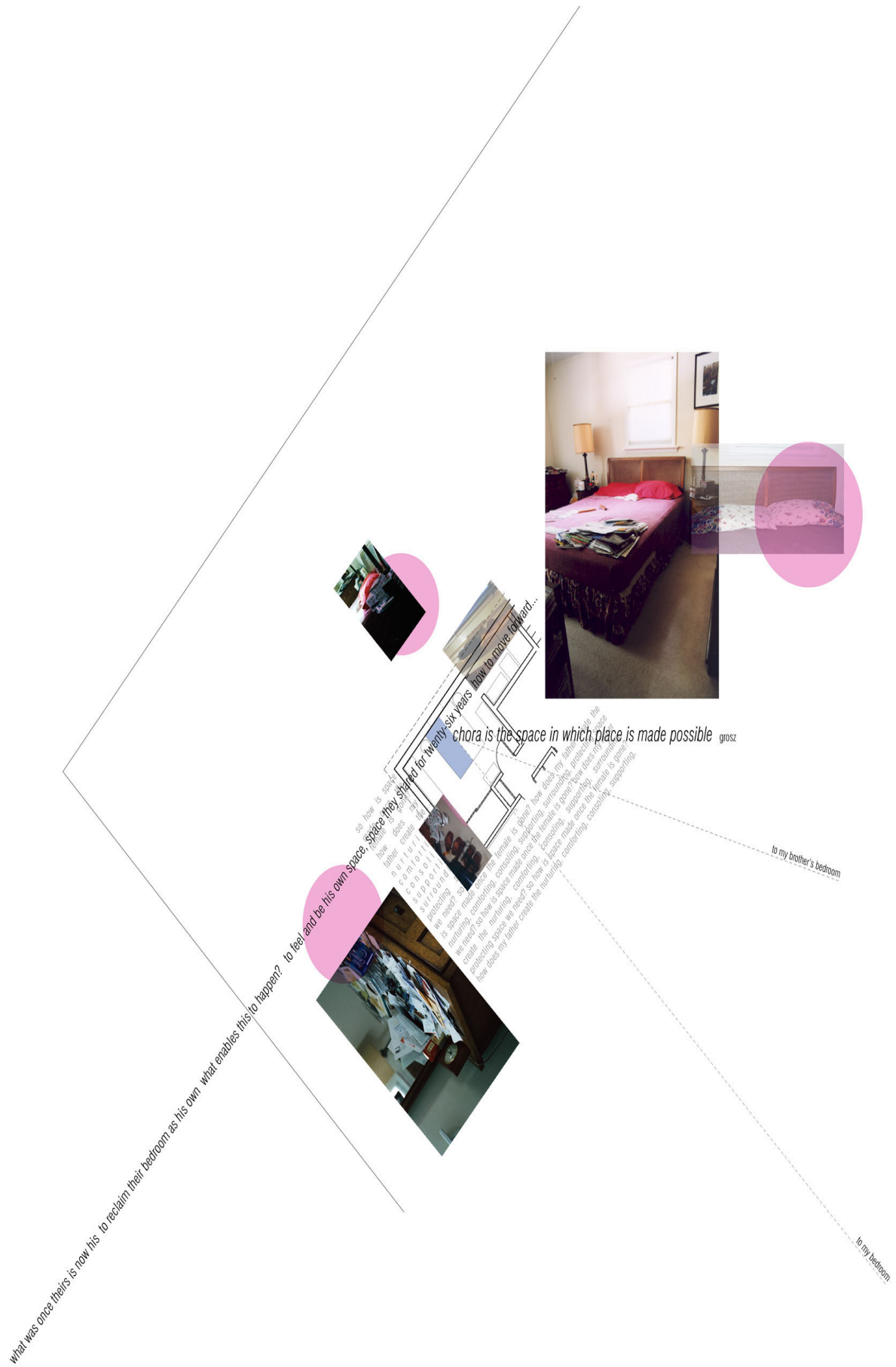
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Wrestling Teddy Bears: Wilderness Masculinity as Invented Tradition in the Pacific Northwest[1]

By Michael Egan, McMaster University, Canada

Abstract:

At the turn of the last century, the tale - end of the great period of invented tradition, Americanism was steeped in or preoccupied with the rediscovery of American masculinity - displaced by Civil War and the economic depression and uncertainty of the Gilded Age - the closing of the frontier, and a growing appreciation of outdoor recreation. The result was division over the expansionist tendencies of proponents for war against Spain, continued labor resentment, and a reinvigorated surge of white supremacy. This paper follows an unorthodox avenue to investigate these themes and tensions. In exploring instances of turn-of-the-last-century human encounters with bears in hand-to-hand combat in the Pacific Northwest, I mean to demonstrate that notions of the frontier and environmental determinism constructed a new, wilderness masculinity distinct from changing expressions of urban masculinity.

> "The wilderness masters the colonist"
> -Frederick Jackson Turner

1   On a dismal bear hunt in 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt was frustrated. After three days of walking, climbing, and riding in the wilds of Mississippi, his party had not come across a single bear. On the fourth day, the local guides and their dogs finally found an old bear, which they chased until the bedraggled creature could run no more. The dogs attacked and injured the bear, and the guides tied it to a tree before calling for the President. Here, at last, was a bear for him to shoot. Ever the quintessential sportsman, however, Roosevelt saw no sport in slaughtering the old and restrained beast, though he did order that it be put down and put out of its misery. The story might well have ended there, but for the media attention Roosevelt's response received, which resulted in the creation of the teddy bear as children's icon and added to the mystique of Roosevelt as the archetypal representation of American masculinity, already firmly entrenched after his heroism during the Spanish-American War. The political cartoonist Clifford Berryman heard of this story and drew the now-famous cartoon of Roosevelt refusing to kill the bear. Interestingly, Berryman's first cartoon depicted a full-grown bear with a rope around its neck looking rather sorry for itself. Subsequent images of the bear turned it into an innocent cub, which further enhanced Roosevelt's rejection of the kill as any kind of challenge.

2   In refusing to shoot the restrained bear, Roosevelt was adhering to his own principles

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of the strenuous life that advocated that hard work of body and mind was the only way to guarantee the survival of the potent and virile attributes of the American, white race. He was also contributing to the propagation of American tradition by imposing the principles of the strenuous life into the invented conception of Americanism and its relationship to its natural environment. Historical geographers have explored the notion of invented tradition in the United States, arguing that mythmaking occurs after a region has been colonized. They suggest that the popular American notion of pristine wilderness is an example of this invented tradition insofar as it exaggerates the extent of the American conquest and downplays non-American influences on the landscape. The invented tradition presented America as "a succession of imagined environments which have been conceived as far more difficult for settlers to conquer than they ever were in reality" (Bowden 20). By insisting that North America was uninhabited prior to European contact, the new Americans became conquering heroes and pioneers of mythical or superhuman proportions, taming the wilderness and transforming it into the Jeffersonian or yeoman farmer ideal, as portrayed by the nineteenth century landscape artist, Thomas Cole. The geographer M. J. Bowden listed four types of invented traditions. The first were instant traditions invented by political and religious leaders. The second were invented by literary and artistic elites, whose messages seeped deliberately but informally into the mainstream. The third also came from above but settled as fact in the mainstream memory. The last type of invented tradition dealt with long held notions that were given form or substance by leaders or heroes who created grand metaphors for the nation. Bowden suggested that the predominant era of American mythmaking was the middle and late nineteenth century, but we might extend that era to include at least the beginning of the twentieth century and the ubiquity of Theodore Roosevelt's influence on all four of these types of invented traditions. Regardless of how we might date the creation or establishment of the major American invented traditions, however, we might properly recognize its rhetorical significance as a means of manufacturing consent or acquiring a hegemonic pull over the central tenets of the nation's popular culture. This is a theme that could benefit from further historical investigation.

3   At the turn of the last century, the tale-end of the great period of invented tradition, Americanism was steeped in or preoccupied with the rediscovery of American masculinity - displaced by Civil War and the economic depression and uncertainty of the Gilded Age - the closing of the frontier, and a growing appreciation of outdoor recreation. The result was division over the expansionist tendencies of proponents for war against Spain, continued labor resentment, and a reinvigorated surge of white supremacy. This paper follows an unorthodox

avenue to investigate these themes and tensions. In exploring instances of turn-of-the-last-century human encounters with bears in hand-to-hand combat in the Pacific Northwest, I mean to demonstrate that notions of the frontier and environmental determinism constructed a new, wilderness masculinity distinct from changing expressions of urban masculinity. The idea for a paper about wrestling with bears in the wilderness was inspired more than fifteen years ago. I spent my summers during high school working as a camp counselor at a forestry camp north of Squamish, British Columbia. After growing up on the stories of "Mighty Men" in European mythology - Odysseus, Heracles, and King Arthur - and reading superhero comic books in my urban, middle class environment, meeting a real-live Beowulf at Evans Lake taught me that these archetypes of rugged masculinity were somehow more than - and yet nothing more than - mere mythological constructions. Andy was an experienced outdoorsman, who had had several encounters with bears. According to camp legend, not only had he wrestled with several bears, he had even killed a bear with his own hands. Such stories would have remained campfire tales, had I not witnessed on a couple of occasions his chasing bears from the camp. Now, Andy was not a violent person with veins in his teeth and he did not go out of his way to harm bears or nature, but his experiences in the wild definitely shaped our perceptions of him.

4   Andy's wilderness environment was central to his image as bear-wrestler. Similarly, both social and geographical contexts of the American West shaped new, Progressive-era ideas about wilderness and masculinity. As Andy's encounters with bears made for lively stories around the campfire, late nineteenth and early twentieth century wilderness adventures were exceptionally well-received, as evidenced by the popularity of the writings of Jack London, William T. Hornaday, and countless books and articles written by adventurers and sportsmen. Further examples of this new masculine, wilderness colonialism - living in the shadow of Theodore Roosevelt's professed "strenuous life" - included a series of urban newspaper articles that reported stories of men wrestling with bears in the wilderness of the Pacific Northwest. These chance encounters and the heroic accounts that they inspired clearly adhere to the principles of what Val Plumwood has called "the masculinist monster myth," an inherent part of the master narrative (Plumwood, "Prey I" 40).[2] In wilderness, man is the

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[2] An abridged version of this essay also exists. See Plumwood, "Prey II". Recognition of these cultural constructions in recent histories is emblematic of a greater social awareness among scholars, but significantly detrimental to inherited notions of the master narrative, that grand scheme or model that represents or symbolizes the relentless development of free institutions and the expansion of political liberty. Too often, the master narrative - born out of narrow-minded, homogeneous consensus many generations earlier - is based on ideal rather than historical reality; it is, moreover, often oppressive and suppressive, imposing a hegemonic mastery over the non-white, the non-male, and the non-middle or upper classes. That the master narrative should claim to consider - yet largely ignore - these minorities strikes at the very root of the historiographical problem it

underdog against wild and savage brutes; his victory heralds yet another example of the progress of civilization and, therefore, the supremacy of the white male. During the Progressive era, these examples of bear-wrestling in the bush reaffirmed a sense of masculine identity that was strongly tempered by the nature of the landscape; only in the wilderness - distanced from "civilization" - was the expression of this primitive virility generally accepted.[3] This epic struggle with the unknown or unfamiliar is intriguing, however, precisely because of its "uncivilized" setting. It is further indicative of a reversal in the manly mystique that had previously symbolized an appreciation for the strategic and mental acuity of nineteenth century manhood. Wrestling with bears represents a more primitive pre-industrial - almost Jacksonian - form of masculinity based on brute physical strength.

5   While considerable scholarship has examined the significance of race and class in the construction of masculinity, I propose that the natural environment plays a similarly significant role and that the interplay between race, class, and nature is central to any kind of gender construction. While scholars have emphasized global competition, economic fluctuations, and social crises as catalysts for the reconsideration or restructuring of notions of masculinity, very few have developed in a sustained way the influence of wild nature on these constructions.[4] My contribution in this paper, then, is to address the problem of the environment's relative absence from theories of gender. Using stories of bear-wrestling as a means of locating contact points between the two existing historiographies, I challenge gender and environmental historians to bridge the gap between their fields of research and broaden their parameters to include more comprehensive and connected understandings of nature and gender.[5]

6   The separation between gender and environmental studies is strikingly artificial. Nineteenth century European rhetoric used to express human mastery over the natural world shares notable links with the rhetorical tools deployed in the imperialist domination of colonies; both imply order and exhibit what have become accepted as inherently masculine

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represents. It is not until very recently that historians have started to question or debate the value of the (or any) master narrative. For an interesting critique of the master narrative, see Huggins.

[3] "Civilized" forms of violence were either still accepted or had become institutionalized during this period. The Progressive era was a period during which soldiers were still heroic and wars glorious. Furthermore, boxing during this period became a "manly art." The distinction between acceptable, civilized, and ordered forms of violence and primitive, wild, and disordered forms finds its roots in the environment in which it takes place. For the association between war and heroism, see Dawson. For boxing as manly art, see Gorn.

[4] See as exception Draper.

[5] One of the major criticisms of environmental history is that it has proven itself unable to incorporate women and the study of gender into its narratives. The reason for this stems from the initial purpose of history and responses to the ultimate question in history: what is the relationship between culture and society? Environmental historians respond "nature," whereas gender historians answer "gender." Such divergent responses, however, should not preclude greater confluence of the two deviating positions. For criticisms of environmental history from a women's history perspective, see Scharff.

traits. Whereas the global atmosphere of imperial competition stressed a scientific justification for white supremacy, the rhetoric of European settlement was steeped in similar "manly" struggles to conquer nature and carve out a sense of place.[6] These latter struggles also required a tangible antagonist against which to pit the hero. The construction of nature as subservient woman is an uncomfortable epilogue to an equally uncomfortable narrative of man's struggle against wilderness as nonhuman demon or beast. The further personification of wilderness in the human-like shape of a bear in the following newspaper accounts even further clarifies the context of male domination over the natural world. The establishment and propagation of this hierarchical ideology - pitting the white male as exploiter of natural resources - are also the central reasons for the environmental crisis we face today, given our inability to recognize the importance of a healthy environment to the progress of human civilization. This inequitable hierarchy is also a key problem against which the feminist movement protests. If environmental history represents the frontline of critical examination to help the environmental movement to better understand itself, as Donald Worster recently claimed, then surely the role of women's history is to serve the same function for the feminist movement. That both histories and movements can raise issue with the master narrative - and the same criticism vis-à-vis the hierarchical nature of that narrative - represents a departure point for the melding of both historiographies.

7   This story starts, however, not in the wild, nor even in the Pacific Northwest, but in Chicago at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. The White City was designed as the archetype of urban life in its noblest and most civilized state. Indeed, if adherence to invented traditions dictated that America was the new Arcadia, the White City was quite obviously the new Athens. The fair was also an exposition of America's new identity and sought to reaffirm notions of manifest destiny, ingrained in the nation's psyche and ethos. Having emerged from Civil War and Reconstruction, Americans were still searching for a unifying national identity or character, and they sought to associate themselves with the civilized image represented in the fair's design. At the fair, a young historian gave an alternative interpretation of American character based not on glorious architecture and feats of technology and civilization, but rather on its opposite. Speaking at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Frederick Jackson Turner presented what has proven to be arguably the most influential essay in American historiography.[7] "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" proposed that an American character had been forged on the westward-bound frontier and that

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[6] This is a longstanding tradition that Carolyn Merchant associates with the Scientific Revolution.
[7] It is important to note that Turner's thesis was not immediately embraced, but within ten years the "frontier thesis" had become a mainstay in historical interpretations of the American West.

American forms of freedom, democracy, nationalism, and individualism - the key components of this exceptional identity - were all products of this process. In essence, America offered the world civilization in its purest form only because it had an abundance of wild nature at its most beautiful or scenic and, more importantly, at its most dangerous and challenging to the settler. The frontier was a place where Old World civilization could be washed away and man could become attuned to his more animalistic instincts. During a period where a lack of physical vigor was becoming a great concern among men, this rediscovery of man's innate senses was highly valued. Ultimately what America offered was the insertion of man back into nature; manmade monuments were less representative of this frontier mentality than were natural obstacles and the vastness of the landscape.[8]

8   Turner's identification of American character, however, was not wholly positive; he opened and concluded his essay with the notion that the frontier - that lasting symbol of American-ness - had closed according to the 1890 census, thus ending the first period or chapter of American history. Since westward progression was so central to both national character and its policy of manifest destiny, the Pacific Ocean, if only temporarily, represented a psychological as well as geographical barrier to American interests in participating in international imperialism. Having defined the character of the first four hundred years of European presence in America, Turner left open the obvious question: "what now?" If the closing of the frontier represented the conclusion of the first stage of American exceptionalism, what was to shape American identity in the future? Subconsciously or otherwise, popular culture resisted Turner's suggestion that the frontier had closed. The closing of the frontier implied cultural limitations in the future and raised serious questions about the nation's abundant - heretofore believed infinite - pool of natural resources. Federal management - in the guise of professional administrations - became the cornerstone of the Progressive era and significantly changed the relationship between Americans and their natural environment. But while perceptions of managing natural resources had changed, human and male dominion continued to reign supreme; nature remained an object for *controlled* human exploitation.

9   The final stages of the closing frontier also coincided with an emerging - though unrelated - crisis in American masculinity. A considerable amount of scholarship has shown that turn-of-the-last-century middle-class men were enormously interested in - perhaps even obsessed with - ideas about manhood.[9] American culture had changed dramatically during the

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[8] For a detailed discussion of Turner's frontier thesis, see Etulain.
[9] See, for example, Bederman; Dubbert; Higham; and Kimmel. Bederman would question, however, whether this obsession with masculinity really constituted a crisis. See Bederman 10-15.

past century, and masculine ideals had changed, too. During the early nineteenth century, at the height of westward migration, and the Jacksonian-era market revolution, increasing numbers of American men found economic success as entrepreneurs, professionals, and managers. Their self-made success invariably demonstrated a feeling of independence that associated itself with the individualism championed in the new country's triumphant march westward. Whig success after the Civil War promoted the continued affirmation of self-restraint and individual success that had dominated much of the pre-Civil War notions of American manliness. For the middle-class, America was the land of opportunity. Middle-class masculinity distinguished itself by stressing success through gentility, respectability, and control over impulse. Strength of mind and reason were central to this newfound masculinity. Here was a real sign that the Whigs of the North had won the Civil War; this attitude, combined with an astute business sense was very much their contribution to subsequent generations. By the 1890s, however, economic depression had signaled the end of such universally prosperous times for the middle-class. Between 1873 and 1896, tens of thousands of bankruptcies suggested that the age of the self-made man had drawn to a sputtering close. Indeed, between 1870 and 1910, the proportion of middle-class men who were self-employed dropped from 67 percent to 37 percent (Bederman, 12). With an increasing dependence on others for income, the traditional source of male power and status - financial independence - had become limited to a very elite few. The crisis in masculine identities worked on the premise that if men were unable to prove their manhood through capital, then some alternative avenue would have to be found.

10   Entering the Progressive era, surviving tough economic times and the psychological impact of the closed frontier required mental and physical strength. On the new "throne" of manliness in America was President Teddy Roosevelt, a self-made "man," Dakota rancher, Rough Rider, big game hunter, outdoorsman par excellence, naturalist, and intellect. Roosevelt was a living embodiment of a new American manhood, one that balanced *civilized* morality and intellectual exploits with a more *primitive* physical muscularity. Roosevelt promoted - and embodied - a modification of the traditional manly mantra, "strength, self-reliance, determination" that applied to the male body as much as the mind. In this capacity, Roosevelt also expressed a sincere belief in the necessity of the "strenuous life," associating vigor with a sense of national duty as the pillars of American manliness. To Roosevelt, imperial dominance and male power were inextricably linked, and both needed to be confronted and realized (Roosevelt, *Autobiography* 32-60).

11   At the heart of Roosevelt's public character was an effusion of virility. Arnaldo Testi

notes that "among foreign observers the perception of Roosevelt as a virile reformer was second only to the perception of him as virile imperialist" (1513). In his address to the Hamilton Club in Chicago, 10 April 1899, Roosevelt first introduced the concept of "the strenuous life." The speech had more to do with American imperial interests and foreign policy in the wake of the Spanish-American War than with the cult of masculinity with which the doctrine of the strenuous life is more regularly associated. But Roosevelt effectively tied the two together, by arguing that America and American imperialism must be recognized worldwide as unflinching, forthright, just, and, therefore, manly. "I do not like to see young Christians with shoulders that slope like a champagne bottle," he noted in his autobiography (49). In so doing, Roosevelt essentially deferred the reserved nature of nineteenth century manliness in favor of a bolder masculinity that implied a rugged physicality. He attributed this characteristic as being inherently American and as a result of the frontier experience, thereby further propagating the supremacy of this new masculinity. Describing himself as an effeminate youth, Roosevelt remade himself by pursuing boxing, wrestling, and hunting. He further perpetuated his self-made rugged image as a rancher in the Dakotas, and then as leader of a handpicked group of Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War. Roosevelt's carefully crafted image suggested that he might be regarded as the last frontier-made man. Tantamount to this doctrine was the importance of knowing "how to wrest triumph from toil and risk" (Roosevelt, *Strenuous* 3). The virile man had to show courage and not back away from difficult challenges. Ernest Hemingway would later define beauty as grace under pressure. Taken by an Italian translation of his essay, Roosevelt adapted "strenuous life" to "vigor of life" in his autobiography, written in 1913 (Roosevelt, *Autobiography* 58). Nevertheless, the idea remained the same. "Powerful, vigorous men of strong animal development must have some way in which their animal spirits can vent" (Roosevelt, *Autobiography* 48). For Roosevelt, game hunting and wilderness travel were the ideal outlets; boxing and wrestling were adequate, urban alternatives.

12   Wilderness - nature at its most primitive or natural state - was the archetypal venue for this quest. Nowhere were such struggles more intriguing than in the newly fashioned (and accepted) concept of wilderness as a primitive, "pristine" landscape devoid of any civilizing characteristics.[10] Indeed, wilderness was (and is) recognized as a place where people can visit but do not remain; it is ultimately a place where people and human civilization are not.

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[10] This perception of wilderness is, of course, fallacious in that it fails to appreciate that indigenous people inhabited these "wilderness" areas prior to their wilderness designation. Indeed, the concept of wilderness being where civilization is not present is purely a twentieth century construction. See Catton; Spence; Plumwood, "Wilderness." Social criticisms of wilderness preservation follow similar arguments. See Pulido; Guha.

Because wilderness eludes human control, "wilderness" can only be conceived through metaphors relating to experiences within our own environment (Cronon; Haila). We view nature and wilderness through metaphors because nothing else is possible; it is through the realm of the familiar that the unfamiliar is envisaged in our imagination. "Wilderness" is defined by assuming it is similar to (or the opposite of) something that can be grasped (Haila 130). The received "portrait" of wilderness - either as a barren landscape or as a forest primeval - is fairly consistent throughout western literature (Nash; Oelschlaeger). In spite of this relatively consistent western concept of wilderness, the physical nature of wilderness landscapes is hardly so universally similar. As the aptly named G. S. Shrapnel told his readers in a 1908 article, "traveling in the woods and mountains of Vancouver Island was far more difficult than either the wilds of Ontario or Quebec, or indeed any other country I had formerly hunted in" (*Victoria Colonist*, 23 Feb 1908, 21). Whereas Africa and India represented hunting locations that were culturally exotic, the coastal Pacific Northwest was symbolic of something decidedly ecologically wild. Accounts from the first Europeans to enter the coastal Pacific Northwest demonstrate the ecological unfamiliarity of the region. Chinquapin, devil's club, 15- to 20-foot high rhododendron, impenetrable salal, three- to ten-foot ferns, and decaying, fallen trees, all of which created an undergrowth so thick that William Keil, an early settler, remarked that it was "impossible for man or beast to penetrate" (Bunting 42). Lieutenant Henry Abbot, a transcontinental railroad surveyor in the mid-1850s, further colored the perception of real wilderness by suggesting that "wandering amid 'forests primeval' in poetry, and among the Cascade mountains, are two essentially different things" (Bunting 42).

13   The harsh physical realities of the Pacific Northwest wilderness only emphasized the difficulty inherent in "gendering" this landscape. Wilderness was no woman. Whereas the representation of Mother Earth as fecund and inviting is a timeless pastoral image, wilderness is dangerous and completely nonhuman. Rather wilderness was the chaotic construction of devils, beasts, or demons. Because wilderness was a place devoid of human influence or civilization, the need to subdue or control it as a part of the progressive master narrative was a uniquely male endeavor. As an example of wilderness being an uninviting, nonhuman environment, the *Victoria Times* noted in one story of a wilderness wrestling match that "the odds were on the bear receiving assistance from her kind before the man's friends arrived, and his being mauled to death" (*Victoria Times*, 2 July 1908, 10). In wilderness, humans were not in their familiar or comfortable surroundings. In order to survive, one had to struggle and adhere to Rooseveltian ideas about the strenuous life.

14   The management mentality that entered into Progressive-era policy sought to change that perception of wilderness. Like other landscapes, wilderness needed to be ordered. During the early decades of the twentieth century, thousands of miles of recreational and logging trails were cut into the wilderness (Egan). In spite of the closing of the frontier, Roosevelt promoted an imperialist ethos that was as auspicious in domestic wilderness as it was in overseas colonies. Indeed, Roosevelt's close friend, advisor, and Chief Forester, Gifford Pinchot echoed his sentiments regarding the masculine nature of wilderness. Referring to early problems of forest management in the American West, Pinchot insisted that "forest management was a job for well-trained, vigorous, tough men, not [...] sad creatures so short of physical strength and moral vigor" (Pinchot 163).

15   The relationship between the wilderness and a newfound - yet strangely primitive - breed of masculinity should not seem altogether foreign to a western audience. It has been widely alleged that the perpetuation of the received view of wilderness is a perpetuation of male-centeredness, the idea that wilderness is macho. The early American framers of this received view clearly thought so. Roosevelt wrote that wilderness promoted "that vigorous manliness;" Robert Marshall, one of the founders of the Wilderness Society, saw wilderness adventure as providing Williams James' "moral equivalent to war;" and the nature writer Sigurd Olson imagined wilderness travel as "the virile, masculine type of experience men need today" (Nelson). Some have asserted that the received view of wilderness, and any importation of it, still carries with it this androcentrism. This is evident in pop-culture images like advertisements for trucks and SUV's and Robert Bly's *Iron John*, not to mention *Crocodile Dundee*, where manly Mick Dundee the crocodile-wrestler protects the attractive New York urbanite, who represents the epitome of femininity. As Dundee states, wilderness is "no place for a Sheila."

16   Wilderness was, however, a place for Louis Dubois. On 16 March 1908, the *Victoria Times* raved: "Such a display of physical strength as was witnessed a couple of days ago [...] when one Louis Dubois, a giant Frenchman, in a life and death combat, completely overcame an immense black bear, is as yet without parallel in Southern British Columbia." Dubois - whose name changes to Debois midway through the article - and a young Scot, Alex Campbell were cutting cordwood on Toulou Mountain, in the Cascade Range in northern Washington, when they encountered a bear's den. Dubois provoked the bear by swinging his axe at what he thought was a protruding snout. The "snout" turned out to be the bear's forepaw and the enraged beast "made a savage attack on the two men." "Campbell, the smaller of the two men, succeeded in getting out of the bear's reach, but the big Frenchman,

somewhat conceited over his personal strength, preferred a personal encounter to running." The bear quickly swatted Dubois' axe out of reach and started to squeeze the French-Canadian. "It was now a struggle for life between the man and the bear," the *Times* reported. "The man being an adept at wrestling succeeded in tripping his antagonist, and the bear fell heavily to the ground with Debois on top of him. In this position the powerful Frenchman actually pinned the bear to the ground by holding the animal's legs apart and clutching the brute tightly by the throat." At this point, Dubois received assistance, but rather than letting his companions hack the bear to pieces, he insisted that they open an artery in the bear's neck and let the animal bleed to death: "When [...] Debois was thoroughly washed it was ascertained that he had not even received a scratch from the bear. Louis Debois, the hero of this encounter, weighs 240 lbs., and is 6 feet 3 inches in height [...]. The bear which made this savage attack is claimed to have weighed over 500 lbs" (7).

17   That the bear was guilty of a "savage attack" on the men raises some serious questions about the relative ethics of chopping off a bear's paw in the woods, but it plays into the conceptual acceptance that this wilderness masculinity is under attack, and that white male supremacy must fight back. As such Dubois' "conquest" over nature makes for good reading. The article did not conclude with a disclaimer - "kids: don't try this at home" - and Dubois was described as a hero. More to the point, Dubois' exploits were incorporated into a canon of manliness that included the prose of Jack London and (later) Ernest Hemingway and was devoured by a male, urban middle-class whose environments and virilities - and likely common sense - prevented them from participating in similar activities. Their social angst, however, allowed them to live vicariously through this French-Canadian from the lumber camps on the Ottawa River. Dubois was no middle-class cleric, but accounts of his bravado certainly represent a celebration of this new, virile, and manly behavior very much in the mold of Roosevelt's ideas.

18   Gender and environment are the two related themes that make Dubois' machismo enthralling to an urban readership. His obvious size and strength is impressive, but it is the hostile and exotic wilderness environment in which he exhibits his strength that makes the story so compelling. More centrally, however, this incident demonstrates the necessity of masculine character in the subduing of the wilderness landscape. Through his prowess, Dubois demonstrates that the body can be transcended; in risking his life, Dubois achieves his existence or identity. Unlike the more domestic or "feminine" pastoral or settled landscape, wilderness is a chaotic landscape where man does not belong. Man's colonization of this landscape, even in symbolic gesture - vanquishing a bear - represents a manly rejection of his

carnal state and a reconnection with his heavenly origins (Beauvoir, 154).[11] This, Donna Haraway argues, is the painful lesson illustrated in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*: risking life - the ultimate symbol of self - identity or existence - is a uniquely male endeavor. Dubois' encounter with the bear fits with the ironically "upside down world of Teddy Bear Patriarchy" - that bastion of white and male supremacy - in which "it is in the craft of killing that life is constructed" (Haraway 241). Life and reproduction are traditionally associated with femininity, but the danger involved in taming wild nature - the production of human landscapes - is an experience that promotes male dominion over the natural world, and reasserts a male-dominated hierarchical order.[12]

19   Roosevelt himself had a close encounter with a big, charging grizzly bear in the Rocky Mountains, which he managed to shoot and kill while he was only just out of its reach. Roosevelt's story, which he recounted in his autobiography, might not match the adrenaline level of Dubois's experience, but the danger quotient, the element of adventure, and the value of the story are all similar. Further, the danger represented by a charging grizzly ought not to be dismissed. Nor should Roosevelt's experience represent some kind of an institutional taming of wilderness. Though Roosevelt's Progressive-era administration remains among one of the foremost American administrations in conserving resources and protecting wild lands, these stories of bears mark a particularly non-institutional, non-industrial, and individual - as opposed to collective - battle with the unknown. The collective element is drawn, rather, from the popular response to these real-life accounts in addition to their fictional counterparts, produced in pulp form as stories for boys (Roosevelt, *Autobiography* 40-46).

20   Dubois' story is enticing, but it is hardly unique. Rather, what is constructed is an age-old formula of man encountering his natural self in the wilderness. There, he engages in a mock struggle to prove his legitimacy, which is a recurring theme in the Judeo-Christian Bible, in European mythology, and in modern literature and pop culture.[13] The consistent theme in this "masculinist monster myth" is the significance of the non-human "other"

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[11] Plumwood notes that "transcending death this way exacts a great price; it treats the earth as a lower, fallen realm, true human identity as outside nature, and it provides narrative continuity for the individual only in isolation from the cultural and ecological continuity and in opposition to a person's perishable body" (Plumwood, "Prey II," 60).

[12] For an example of male identity being realized through the risking of life, see Dawson.

[13] As examples, consider Jacob wrestling the angel; Christ being tempted in the wilderness; Heracles' capture of Cerberus at the gates of Hades; Beowulf fighting Grendel's mother in her watery lair; and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein in which man's encounter with the monster takes place on Mont Blanc. More recent examples might even include the introductory parable in Robert Bly's Iron John and the confrontation between Luke Skywalker and an imaginary Darth Vader in the murky wilderness of Yoda's Dagoba System in The Empire Strikes Back.

possessing an almost human shape or being given human characteristics, thus making it a worthy opponent.[14]

21   Also implicit in the article is the suggestion that Dubois is more "manly" than his urban counterparts. Middle-class nimrods and sportsmen of all types simply did not match up to his "display of physical strength." Indeed, Dubois' combat using only his bare hands - after the loss of his axe - creates a distinct division between the organic nature of the wilderness man and the artificial creation of the urbanite. Dubois' encounter with a bear is in stark contrast to sportsmens' encounters with the same animal. In her work on big game hunting in Canada, Tina Loo shows just how constructed the modern wilderness experience was made for the trophy hunter. The introduction of exotic species and large hunting parties, complete with cooks and guides significantly perverted the "wilderness" experience that sportsmen romanticized. Furthermore, the relative comfort that the participants of these expeditions enjoyed as a result of the technology they brought with them raises serious questions about the quality of their "natural wilderness experience;" all of a sudden, "roughing it" takes on a whole new - and somewhat farcical - meaning. Increasingly, the gun - another symbol of technology - came to distance the wilderness experience from anything purely masculine or manly. As Carl Akeley noted in *In Brightest Africa*, the most effective manner in reducing "the potency of game for heroic hunting [was] to demonstrate that inexperienced women could safely do the same thing (Haraway 247; Akeley 226)."[15] Taken in this context, Dubois' heroics take on a whole new meaning. In essence, there are two receding frontiers here; not only is the physical wilderness retreating from man and his colonization, manliness is also retreating from woman, marking an intriguing contradiction in the process of American invented tradition.

22   The recession of these frontiers also transcends class divisions to a certain extent. Dubois' social status plays only a marginal role in the story, as is evidenced by similar stories recounting similar wrestling encounters. Less than four months after Dubois' wrestling match in Washington, Lieutenant Kingscote, R. N., was forced to engage in hand-to-hand combat on Vancouver Island with a female black bear when shots fired from his rifle failed to have the desired effect. "The bear hurled herself at him. Seizing his rifle by the barrel he struck at her, stopping her headlong assault on his life just long enough to allow him to reach his knife. By the time he had clasped the handle of the knife the bear had her teeth through his shoulder and

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[14] As subtext - though decidedly not a part of the traditional myth - in shamelessly provoking the bear Dubois demonstrates qualities that might be considered savage, thereby limiting the differences between himself and the bear.

[15] It is worth relating Akeley's comments to hunting accounts from previous generations, where the virility of the hunter was keenly associated with the number of animals killed. See Mackenzie 85-119.

her claws tearing his face." In the ensuing struggle Kingscote, a recent resident of the Lake Cowichan area, "stabbed the animal to the heart and let flow the last drop of its life blood." Whether or not Kingscote's ability to retain some kind of weapon distinguishes his encounter from Dubois', Kingscote's manliness is characterized by his strength and courage, but also by his humility. The *Times* story notes that this encounter would likely not have been made known had not Kingscote "had to obtain medical assistance for his gashes and wounds" (*Victoria Times*, 2 July 1908, 10). Clearly a class distinction exists between the "conceited" Dubois - most likely a Catholic - full of bravado, and the "gentlemanly" Anglo soldier. The newspaper accounts play on this, but the heroic structure of the stories does not differ much. Indeed, both start with a certain sensationalism that belies the accuracy of the account. Kingscote's account in particular is steeped in the tradition of epic struggles, where "for upwards of an hour [...] a fierce fight was waged between man and bear with the result that after a contest fought in the lonely woods, miles away from assistance" the bear succumbed to the man's superiority (*Victoria Times*, 2 July 1908, 10). The subsequent story provides a summary of the battle that could not have taken more than ten seconds. Nevertheless, the introduction whets the reader's appetite for adventure in much the same manner that does the beginning of the Dubois article: "such a display of physical strength [...] is as yet without parallel" (*Victoria Times*, 16 March 1908, 7).

23   Two conclusions present themselves for this paper. The first is that because of the closing frontier and the influence of Progressive-era management, man sought to reestablish or reaffirm his masculine identity through his reconnection with the natural world. Louis Dubois and Lieutenant Kingscote typified this new masculine identity, as did intrepid explorers such as Robert Falcon Scott, Ernest Shackleton, and Roald Amundsen. In each case, physical contact with wild nature represented a masculine desire to find a "room of *his* own." Only through violence and/or suffering, however, was man able to do this and distinguish his own identity from a new female identity that was emerging through increased workforce participation and imminent suffrage.[16] This conclusion is overly problematic on a number of fronts, not least because it is unable to resolve less violent, yet equally masculine interactions with the natural world. This approach is also unable to reconcile Roosevelt the hunter with Roosevelt the naturalist or Roosevelt the Rough Rider with Roosevelt the intellect. More importantly, however, the sensationalization of bear-wrestling in media accounts is a part of

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[16] Testi notes that female suffrage and social reform were both central to Roosevelt's unsuccessful Progressive party platform of 1912 (1513). Ironically, the perpetuation of the monster myth narrative also implies an ongoing recession of the wilderness frontier and the continued colonization of the wild nature to which men sought escape.

an ongoing subordination of marginalized groups - in this case women and nature - by the master narrative. The repackaging of these stories in assimilated form is a perpetuation of that enduring but fallacious narrative that man and nature are in opposition to each other and that the taming of wild nature is a predominantly masculine endeavor.

24   The second, more plausible conclusion points to the ahistorical condition in which storytellers - historians included - are drawn to the compelling nature of invented traditions, and situate their narratives in archaic modes that separate nature and culture and assign gender qualities to one landscape or another. The moral of this flawed conclusion is that this approach is far too simplistic and its synthesis-oriented approach neglects important historical aspects and players. *We need to tell more complicated stories*. The promotion of the "masculinist monster myth" does a disservice to ideas about nature, gender, and history, by caricaturing and serializing important relationships. The master narrative - which portrays nature and gender as "other" - fails to reconcile the disparity between western perceptions of nature and gender with their overriding significance to any plausible or inclusive historical narrative. Moreover, if we accept Val Plumwood's suggestion, that "the colonizer identity is positioned as an eater of Others," then it is evident that we cannot possibly hope to understand relationships between nature and gender and history using the existing framework (Plumwood, "Prey I" 43). Indeed, in that light, the promotion of the "masculinist monster myth" surrounding the various stories of rugged bear-wrestlers loses its historical significance as a practical struggle for masculine identity, because it has become engulfed within Teddy Roosevelt's mystique and more general concepts about American frontier identity. But these stories and mythologies require examination if only so we might appreciate the fundamental problems extant in western perceptions of nature. Any attempt to address the current state of nature consumption, gender disparity, or race inequity must recognize that western rhetoric regarding perceptions of nature situate nature as an outsider or colonized "other." By linking themes of environmental history and gender history, the subsequent complication of nature and gender narratives might offer more in-depth understandings of both feminist and environmental movements. Similarly, situating gender histories more carefully within their physical environments will advance and produce more complex and serviceable understandings of both these important historical constructions.

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"To Tell the Kitchen Version": Architectural Figurations of Race and Gender in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*

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Abstract:

I propose to engage the spatial dimension of antebellum domesticity by exploring architectural figurations in two texts by African American women authors. This reading, first of all, seeks to challenge prevailing assumption about the antebellum American home as a culturally coherent and cohesive space that finds its conflicts with the world outside rather than within its own. Quite to the contrary, the structures of domestic architecture allow writers to engage complex systems of social ordering, the spatial signification and enforcement of as well as the resistance against socio-cultural hierarchies. In the context of thus interrogating architecture as a system of cultural signification, I focus on the kitchen as the room that most centrally hosts narratives of gender and racial difference.

1   The scholarship on 19th-century American women's literature and culture has greatly benefited from understanding domesticity as a discursive operation. From Barbara Welter's seminal work on the 'cult of domesticity' onward, historians and literary critics have described and critiqued what they variously called the ideology, virtues, practice, or cult of domesticity. The discourses these terms reference, however, also have a spatial dimension, which surfaces most insistently in the notion of 'separate spheres' that continues to shape scholarship on antebellum gendered culture(s). For at least two decades, literary and historical scholarship alike has struggled to come to terms with the complex operations of the separate spheres paradigm in antebellum culture, as well as its equally complex reverberations in the scholarship.[1]

2   In the following, I propose to engage the spatial dimension of antebellum domesticity by exploring architectural figurations in two texts by African American women authors. This reading, first of all, seeks to challenge prevailing assumption about the antebellum American home as a culturally coherent and cohesive space that finds its conflicts with the world outside rather than within its own. Quite to the contrary, the structures of domestic architecture allow writers to engage complex systems of social ordering, the spatial signification and enforcement of as well as the resistance against socio-cultural hierarchies. In the context of thus interrogating architecture as a system of cultural signification, I want to focus on the kitchen as the room that most centrally hosts narratives of gender and racial difference. Arguably the epicenter of domestic operations, the kitchen occupies a remarkably

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[1] Cf., for example, the various essays anthologized in Elbert and in Davidson and Hatcher.

marginal space in most narratives of the antebellum home: It commonly figures as the domain of those members of the household who occupied the most inferior positions within the domestic hierarchy — employed, indentured, or enslaved 'servants' — while the 'work' of the mistress of the house unfolded in the parlor. The kitchen thus presents itself as antebellum domesticity's spatial unconscious, the largely concealed flip-side of discourses of bourgeois femininity. Theorizing Literary Architecture

3   Critical inquiries into the creative interplay between literature and architecture arguably find their beginning in Ellen Eve Frank's Literary Architecture (1979). Frank primarily relies on a phenomenological approach indebted to Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* to explore the genealogy of, in her words, "the habit of comparison between architecture and literature" (3). As such an approach is chiefly interested in the experience of architecture as universally human and transcending boundaries of, say, gender or class, it should come as no surprise that Frank exclusively discusses canonical texts by male authors: by Walter Pater (who coined the term 'literary architecture'), Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust, and Henry James.

4   Subsequently, scholars have directed their attention to the multiple resonances between discourses of cultural difference and literary figurations of domestic architecture. In Dwelling in the Text, Marilyn Chandler insists on the significance of historicizing literature's architectural figurations. She points to American national narratives as an explanation for the prominent role of houses in U.S. literature. The preoccupation of narratives of the American nation with homesteading — with claiming territory by settling it, with transforming wilderness into national territory by way of domestication — reinforce more fundamental assumptions about the mutually reflective relationship between a person and his/her house. Chandler's readings suggest that literary houses lend themselves to reflecting (and refracting) several aspects of 'personhood': 'identity' figured in psychological as well as social ways, bodily appearances, histories, memories, and virtues.

5   Most significantly for my present purpose, the national narratives Chandler identifies as the center of the symbolic exchanges between characters and houses accommodate both male and female subjectivities. Thus 'homesteading' and 'domesticating' represent distinct yet complementary practices that provide a matrix for reconciling gender difference with a shared national identity. In fact, gender emerges as a key fault line in the engagement with literary houses. Chandler singles out two gender-specific master-narratives: 'masculine' home-ownership and 'feminine' housekeeping. This dual blueprint proves quite compelling as it neatly reflects the duality of dominant gender narratives.

6   And indeed, recovering housekeeping as a mode of engagement with houses that lends itself to literary self-fashioning and self-authorization enables Chandler to add to the canon of literary houses a number of dwellings penned by female authors. Next to the sheer accomplishment of recovery, however, anchoring the cultural significance of housekeeping in narratives of national identity opens up avenues for recuperating 'public' dimensions in women's 'private' work. Such potential to subvert the 'separate spheres' ideology surfaces throughout Chandler's readings, e.g., when she discusses housekeepers meddling in questions of property, or female characters from Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier to Marilyn Robbinson's Sylvie Fisher altogether rejecting the role of housekeeper.

7   Millette Shamir, in her essay "Divided Plots," more specifically addresses the signification of gender by way of literary architecture. Asking in how far the interior structure of houses allows for the organization of gender difference, she recovers in antebellum American fiction a battle between the sexes within the confines of the middle-class home. She diagnoses "a material and metaphorical division of the house's interior between feminine and masculine realms" (434). This division, Shamir argues, performs important cultural work by managing antagonistic narratives of 'home': "visions of a romantic interiority *and* of self-denying morality, visions of the ideal of solitude *and* the ideal of intimacy" (434).

8   Focusing on this set of cultural antagonisms — respectively sustained by antebellum discourses of (masculine) romantic individualism and domestic femininity (433) — draws Shamir's attention to two particular rooms in the middle-class home: the study and the parlor. These rooms represent essentially masculine and feminine spaces, and the definition of each room reflects the dynamics of the gender discourse it accommodates. While the study is entirely dedicated to man's withdrawal and privacy, the parlor serves as a social space where not only the members of the family would gather but where also guests would be received. For man, Shamir accordingly suggests, the meaning of home is predicated on individual privacy and juxtaposed to the public world of business and politics. For woman, home is a place where she dispenses affection, maintains family and social ties and manages intimacy; her capacity to do so, however, is (also) predicated on a specifically feminine 'interiority' — the model woman in antebellum America distinguishes herself neither by her skills nor by her actions but having internalized a set of values that enable her to "feel right" (cf. Romero 25).

9   Where Chandler's and Shamir's work helps uncover the ways in which domestic architecture maps gender, Homi Bhabha proposes to theorize the complex interplay between space and (postcolonial) culture. Although he generally works with more broadly conceived notions of spatiality, his essay "Locations of Culture" includes a brief discussion of artist

Renée Green's architectural installations. Especially Green's use of the stairwell attracts Bhabha's attention as it aids him in elaborating his concept of the 'beyond' and the 'in-between':

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy […]. (4)

Owing to Bhabha's interest in destabilizing the fixed notions of (gender, race, ethnic, class) identity imposed on subjects by colonial power relations, his essay above all seeks to make useful metaphors of in-between-ness and iteration. Such metaphors sketch out spaces that — while circumscribed by the imbalances and exploitation of colonial power relations — accommodate subversion and resistance. With its half-forgotten chambers, corners, nooks, and passageways, the home provides such metaphors in abundance. While rooms such as the study and parlor stage the gender difference between master and mistress of the house, other domestic spaces — maybe smaller, less significant, not as easily grasped in writing — may host different narratives, apart from, underneath, or in contrast to the narratives scripted in the grand, representative rooms. They may both render legible subjectivities peripheral in the antebellum American household and thus invisible in the grand rooms, and they may uncover nuances, ambiguities, and instabilities in the spatial definition in the home's owners otherwise concealed.

10   Next to the home's ability to illustrate Bhabha's notion of the in-between, domestic spaces figure in his concept of the 'unhomely,' in which Bhabha brings Freud's concept of the 'uncanny' to bear on the postcolonial experience. He picks up on Freud's uses of the home (*Heim*) as the quintessential space of the familiar to spell out his notion of the uncanny, *das Unheimliche* (or the 'unhomely'), signifying the eruption of the repressed into the seemingly most safe and well-known spaces, and correlates it with colonial history which buries its own unspeakable episodes (of displacement, enslavement, disenfranchisement, but also of resistance) that may erupt into signification. As Bhabha's readings of literary texts from a variety of cultural contexts make apparent, the home again and again furnishes the stage where the traumas and conflicts of colonial history erupt into characters' lives. Thus, Bhabha invites us to register the ways in which the ostensibly 'private' space of the home becomes the

place where the aftershocks of 'public' history manifest themselves, and he prepares us for the potentially fleeting, oblique, and uncanny quality of these manifestations (9-18).[2]

11   The diverse scholarship I briefly sketched out provides a valuable blueprint for reading domestic architectures. Although the kitchen does not explicitly figure in any of them, the critical impulses provided by Frank, Chandler, Shamir, and Bhabha frame it as an extraordinarily rich signifier. If we pursue housekeeping as a productive metaphor of selfhood and authorship, there is no way around the kitchen as the gravitational center of domestic work. Extending on Virginia Woolf's famous call for 'a room of one's own,' I will suggest that women have always had a room of their own — the kitchen — and that they did write there. Of course, the conditions for authorship the kitchen offered fall far short of the room Woolf envisioned, but they still circumscribe a valuable feminine literary tradition. In addition, the kitchen presents itself not only as a gendered space — it also bears connotations of class and, certainly in the American South, of race. More than any other room, the kitchen brings the mistress of the house together with (varying numbers of) servants or 'help.' The work each of them performs in the kitchen as well as the tracks on which each may (or may not) move through the rest of the house are carefully scripted, and these scripts host complex negotiations of gender, class, and race. The kitchen seems to represent a thoroughly paradoxical space as it accommodates both some of the most central domestic operations and the most peripheral members of the household.

Writing the House of Slavery

12   Turning more specifically to houses built and operated on the basis of slave labor adds another dimension to the web of cultural differences negotiated in writings of the antebellum American home. As scholars working with a wide range of cultural artifacts have emphasized, slavery operates on the basis of a spatial logic. Historian Stephanie Camp notes, "[a]t the heart of the process of enslavement was a geographical impulse to locate bondpeople in plantation space […]. Slaveholders strove to create controlled and controlling landscapes that would determine the uses to which enslaved people put their bodies" (533).[3] This spatial logic of domination provoked equally spatial strategies of accommodation and resistance, which Camp terms "rival geographies" (533). In a similar vein, John Michael Vlach maintains in his

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[2] Neither Bhabha nor Freud explicitly address the gender connotations of the private home vis-à-vis public history. The oblique quality of unhomely moments may partly owe to the prisms of gender through which colonial experiences travel on their way from 'public' to 'private.'

[3] As Vlach points out, plantations make for only a fraction of slavery's workplaces (7). In the popular imagination, however, especially that vented in an abolitionist context, plantation slavery has become established as the quintessential form of bondage (Sanchez-Eppler 260).

study of plantation architecture that "[s]laveowners set up the contexts of servitude, but they did not control those contexts absolutely" (1). Slaves found myriad of ways to appropriate the spaces to which slavery confined them.

13   Given the material and cultural import of spatial formations for slaveowners as well as for slaves, the architecture[4] of slaveholding properties is charged with particular significance. Their structures and designs organize the complex power relations in the slaveholding household, display the family's social standing, and give material expression to the virtues and values according to which the lady of the house executes her role as mother and wife. In performing such multifaceted cultural work, Southern dwellings participate in proliferating debates about domestic architecture throughout the United States. As Lori Merish elaborates in her study of gender and material culture, the formation of the discourse of feminine domesticity in the antebellum years entailed a growing concern about the material structures in which this ideal of domesticity was to unfold. Thanks to the value evolving notions of 'true womanhood' placed on the domestic, architectural choices were invested with increasing cultural and 'civilizational' significance.

14   Accordingly, the structures and uses of domestic architecture appear uniquely qualified for spelling out not only the regional idiosyncrasies of Southern living but also the particularities of slavery. They help define slavery as a 'feminine' concern, a topic that women authors, from their supposedly domestic perspective, would be particularly authorized to address. While most texts spatially conflate the racism represented by the institution of slavery with the South, I wish to include in my discussion a novel that makes a point in disjoining the two. The two texts I selected are part of a broader literary tradition in which authors writing from a variety of perspectives — from abolitionist to pro-slavery — have focused on the architectural formations of the 'house of slavery' to flesh out the 'peculiar institution.'[5] Domestic structures allow writers to stage both the differences and the similarities of slaveholding and non-slaveholding households: They may mark the different — but comparable — organization of workspaces and spaces of residence, stage encounters between slaves and slaveholders, and outline the specific arrangements of domestic labor. If, as many scholars have noted, 'family' figures as the primary touchstone for representations of slavery (again, in texts indebted to a variety of politics), domestic spaces present themselves

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[4] Camp and Vlach sometimes use the terms architecture, landscape and geography interchangeably. When I speak of (literary) architecture, I wish to denote (the literary representation of) built structures along with the uses that map them. While my focus rests on homes, sometimes other 'architectured' spaces need to be considered alongside them, such as gardens or outbuildings. Especially Southern plantations, Vlach reminds us, need to be understood as ensembles of 'Big House,' slave quarters, and workspaces (1-3).

[5] Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to which I return throughout my argument, may serve as the most widely known representative of this tradition, and so do the many texts written in response to Stowe's novel.

as the sites where familial relations gain material substance so as to lend themselves to representation. In all constellations, a focus on domestic architecture offers readers outside the South moments of recognition that other aspects of the plantation economy might not. Thus, architecture provides a perceptual angle through which slavery becomes 'readable.'

15   In exploring domestic architecture as a system of signification, I want to zoom in on the kitchen as the one room where, in text after text, the operations of slavery become most readily intelligible. It is precisely the fact that the kitchen connotes a distinctly feminine labor — and female laborers — that makes it useful for dramatizing the exploitative and abusive nature of slavery. In the two texts I will discuss, the kitchen unfolds its signifying potential through its strategic use as a setting as well as its architectural contextualization within the house as a whole. From John Michael Vlach's material perspective, the kitchen occupies a curious position on Southern plantations as part, yet not quite part of the 'Big House': Those Southern home owners who could afford it would relegate the kitchen to a separate building somewhere between the master's house and the plantation's workspaces and slave-quarters. While pragmatic considerations certainly played a role here, separating the kitchen from the living-space of the slaveowner's family also codified hierarchical relationships "between those who served and those who were served" (Vlach 43). At the same time, cooking of course remained a key domestic operation, resonating with the cultural and affective significance discourses of domestic femininity invest it with. Finally, detaching the kitchen into a separate building diminished the influence of the lady of the house (as well as the rest of her family) over that room, increasingly ceding it to the slaves who work there.

16   The writings of Andrew Jackson Downing — antebellum America's most influential architect — further help appreciate the cultural significance of the Southern kitchen. As William Gleason notes, architectural guide books of the period, and Downing's among them, remain conspicuously silent about slavery (154). Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses*, however, offers one telling exception: In elaborating one of his regional designs, "A Small Country-House for the Southern States," Downing identifies two features that distinguish Southern from other modes of architecture — the kitchen and the veranda. In defining their distinctiveness, he needs to make reference to the particular social structures generated by slavery: "A peculiar feature in all Southern country houses is the position of the kitchen — which does not form part of the dwelling, but stands detached at a distance of 20, 30, or more yards. This kitchen contains servants' bed-rooms on its second floor […]" (313). Throughout his discussion of this design, Downing returns to the "detached kitchen" as the one architectural principle that gives spatial expression to the racial segregation underwriting

the slaveholding household.[6] Downing thus acknowledges the ways in which domestic architecture reflects the social hierarchies of slavery, and he singles out the Southern kitchen as its most potent signifier.

17 Antebellum literary conventions offer a rich and varied language to write the houses of slavery. Authors navigate this terrain in often eclectic ways, utilizing and combining conventions of domestic, sentimental, and Gothic fiction along with those of autobiographical and advice writing. In the process, they flesh out an amazing array of literary homes, sometimes taking the reader on grand tours, prying open the last door and directing our attention to the minutest detail, sometimes tightly controlling and delimiting our access to them. Next to the specificities of such spatial formations, the culturalization of domestic architecture the texts work on finds its final context in the act of writing the texts represent — in varying ways, they explore the interplay between writing a house and owning a house, between domestic labor and authorship.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

18 The kitchen figures as the central setting in many African American writings of the houses of slavery. Slave narratives, irrespective of whether they detail female or male experiences of slavery, typically set many of their plantation scenes in the kitchen of the 'Big House.' In Frederick Douglass' most canonized narrative, the kitchen accommodates scenes that flesh out the exploitation of slave labor, the violent abuse of slaves, and the dynamics of the slave community that regularly assembles in that room. Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* certainly participates in this representational practice. At the same time, however, her protagonist's very different — and, as several critics maintain, highly gendered[7] — strategies of escape lend another twist to the architectural figurations in her narrative.

19 Jacobs' narrative takes its readers through several homes, located in the South as well as in the North, owned by slaveholding as well as non-slaveholding whites, including even one black-owned property. Throughout, the text picks up on the way in which contemporary domestic discourses picture the home as a safe haven, arguing that this promise fails to materialize for African Americans. In a key scene, the house of Linda's black grandmother — a free woman — is easily violated by white raiders as they search for runaway slaves. Even

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[6] Gleason offers an intriguing reading of the human figures featured in Downing's sketches of the design, which, he argues, pinpoint Downing's ambivalence about representing the "ostensibly unseen labors of the southern slave" (157).

[7] Typically, the 'feminine' quality of Jacobs' narrative is located in the strategies of escape it narrates (hiding inside domestic settings rather than fleeing, geared toward liberating her children rather than just herself) and in the generic conventions it employs (sentimental fiction). Cf. Morgan and Gray.

more pronouncedly in the narrative's descriptions of the house of Linda's oppression, the Flints' mansion, the privacy typically associated with 'home' assumes a meaning radically different from that in dominant (white) narratives of the time: The relative publicity of the Flint household, where family and slaves are constantly present, affords Linda some degree of protection. She panics when Dr. Flint announces his plans to build for her a cottage of her own because the privacy of this space would place her entirely at his mercy.

20   These two episodes involving the Flints' and the grandmother's houses outline a perversion of the public vs. private binarism central for antebellum culture. For the slave narrator, the connotations of public and private have been reversed: While publicity signifies (albeit limited) protection, privacy signals vulnerability and exposure. Throughout its elaboration of privacy thus perverted, the text aligns the question of African American's control over their dwellings with that of control over their bodies — the plot most immediately thrives on Linda's efforts to protect her own sexual integrity. Ownership — expansively defined to encompass economic as well as semiotic control over one's surroundings, possessions, and self — figures as the text's central language for charting the evils of slavery.

21   Another moment of critique presents itself in the narrative's depiction of the Flint-household, where the kitchen plays an important role in fleshing out the insidiousness and perversity of slavery. In thus using the kitchen, the text extends on conventions established in Frederick Douglass' foundational slave narrative which, though narrated from the perspective of a male slave, employs female characters to illustrate the abusive nature of slavery. In a key scene, the young narrator of Douglass' text witnesses the whipping of one of his aunts. He frames this scene — which, symptomatically, takes place in the kitchen — as his first initiation into slavery, "the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of the slavery, through which I was about to pass" (7). Along similar lines, Jacobs' narrator singles out the family's cook as a paradigmatic figure of victimization, subject to constant harassment. Her work in the kitchen regularly exposes her to the whims of her master and mistress. Their preferred mode of disciplining the house-slaves proves particularly vicious:

> If dinner was not served at the exact time on that particular Sunday, [Mrs. Flint] would station herself in the kitchen, and wait till it was dished, and then spit in all the kettles and pans that had been used for cooking. She did this to prevent the cook and her children from eking out their meagre fare with the remains of the gravy and other scrapings […]. The cook never sent a dinner to [Dr. Flint's] table without fear and trembling; for if there happened to be a dish not to his liking, he would either order her to be whipped, or compel her to eat every mouthful of it in his presence. The poor, hungry creature might not have objected to eating it; but she did object to having her master cram it down her throat till she choked. (22)

Alternating between keeping their slaves hungry and force-feeding them, the Flints employ food as an instrument of punishment, a practice whose evilness contemporary discourses would highlight. As virtually the entire South depends on black labor for their sustenance — from mother's milk to gourmet cooking — the Flints' regime of punishment turns a key service the slaves render their masters against them. Where in antebellum writings of the ideal home the preparation of food figures as a labor of love, as material expression of a mother's love of her family, strengthening family tie,[8] it here becomes a service that is forced, occasioning the diners' wrath and abuse rather than their love and gratitude. Food prepared and served, withheld and force-fed this way fails to nourish and sustain; it rather violates and perverts the sacramental potential of food.

22   Turning our attention to the various homes of *Incidents*, we are presented with almost labyrinthine structures which feature a wealth of secret spaces that help the narrator in her eventual escape. Both the elaborate mansion of some unnamed (slaveholding) benefactress and the humble cottage of Linda's grandmother provide secret rooms that shelter the narrator from her persecutors. Linda finds one of her most stunning hiding-places in the above mentioned mansion: After Dr. Flint pretends to know of Linda's whereabouts, the lady's cook — Betty — removes Linda from the attic, where she had been hiding, to the kitchen, where she conceals her underneath the floor-panels. There, the narrator not only passes one day perfectly protected, she also witnesses several conversations in which Betty involves whoever enters her kitchen, all of which testify that her whereabouts are entirely unknown in the neighborhood.

23   Betty's kitchen presents itself as a highly polymorphous space: a room many people pass through — servants of this and of other households, merchants, occasionally the master and mistress of the house along with their guests — both a junction within the household and a contact zone to the world outside; yet in midst of this ostensible publicity, the kitchen offers Linda perfect seclusion. The room's secret spaces — its corners, recesses, and the space underneath the floor-paneling — are entirely under the control of the slave-cook. Betty's kitchen both extends on the depiction of kitchens in other antebellum texts — especially their porous boundary to the marketplace — and contrasts with pictures like that of the Flint-kitchen which position this room as the paradigmatic place of slavery's exploitation of (female) slave labor and highlight the vulnerability the slave suffers in the kitchen. Against this background, Betty's kitchen can be read as symbol of resistance, outlining ways in which

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[8] Note, for instance, the sacramental mis-en-scène of the meal Rachel Halliday serves in Uncle Tom's Cabin.

slaves appropriate the spaces slavery assigns them. There is an unmistakable trickster-quality to Linda's hide-out in Betty's kitchen — it is not only about hiding from but also about eavesdropping on the people who hunt after her, especially the detested Dr. Flint, and hearing about (and rejoicing in) the wrong tracks they are following.

24   The episode in Betty's kitchen focalizes the figure of the eavesdropping slave that recurs throughout writings of slavery,[9] which, in turn, draws attention to the pervasive association of liminal domestic spaces with resistance. Precisely because slavery alters the meanings private and public spaces bear for the slave, her resistance needs to unfold in the in-between, in spaces too small or too slippery to control (in material as well as in epistemic terms) for slavery to fully colonize. Jacobs' narrative here invites a postcolonial reading: Homi Bhabha's concept of liminal domestic spaces helps appreciate the architectural dynamics of Jacobs' houses of slavery. The kitchen presents itself there as a place of both oppression and resistance, as representative of the in-between spaces (and of its protagonist, the eavesdropping slave) at once created by and subverting slavery.

25   Overall, the dwellings in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* are far from the readily legible structures in that most successful novel about slavery, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The text shows no ambition to flesh out any of these buildings in detail. Instead, the narrator's attention rests with individual rooms, that are invariably off the tracks the white inhabitants take through their houses. The text's glimpses of kitchens and attics never connect to pictures of entire houses. In contrast to the narrative voice in Stowe's novel, Jacobs' narrator does not seem to feel entitled to owning the houses she chooses as her setting. She rather takes narrative possession of those rooms literary conventions would picture in the Gothic mode — rooms that are neither fully ownable nor knowable. This narrative stance further adds to the narrator/protagonist's framing within a subaltern subjectivity. Next to its appropriation of sentimental conventions, the text uses architectural conventions as a touchstone to both connect with its readers and to flesh out its indictment of slavery.

Our Nig

26   Although Harriet Wilson's novel features a Northern setting, and her young black protagonist Frado is not a chattel but 'merely' an indentured slave, the text unmistakably calls for readings that contextualize it within the narratives of slavery circulating at the time of its publication. The novel tracks houses of slavery even to the 'free' North, demonstrating that their crippling effects are neither bound to the South nor to the system of chattel slavery. As

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[9] Texts as different as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Hannah Crafts' *The Bondwoman's Narrative* feature eavesdropping scenes at key moments in their plots.

several critics have noted,[10] the text draws much of its power from questioning the certainty found in most abolitionist texts that once African Americans leave the South, or once slavery were abolished, the effects of slavery would be undone. Wilson's novel unfolds an analysis that locates the evils of slavery not in the provisions of Southern law, but in the colonial impulse that informs Southern law as much as it informs Northern racism and capitalism.

27   Against that background, *Our Nig* furnishes an important link between writings of the house of slavery and the broad literary tradition of architectural figurations set in the 'free' North. Mrs. Bellmont's decision to take the dark-skinned girl Frado into the house is motivated by her frustration with the domestic service contracted on the market of free labor. Her remark, "'If I could make her do my work in a few years, I would keep her. I have so much trouble with the girls I hire, I am almost persuaded if I have one to train up in my way from a child, I shall be able to keep them awhile. I am tired of changing every few months'" (26), echoes a sentiment recurring throughout writings of the non-slaveholding home. The novel positions a labor relation that, to everybody involved, looks exactly like slavery as a remedy to the much belabored problem of supposedly inadequate and unreliable domestic service.

28   The text correlates Mrs. B.'s abuses of Frado, whose brutality the narrative details, with the principles of domestic management generally outlined as exemplary. There is an uncanny resemblance between Rachel Halliday's regime of 'gentle admonitions' in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the principles spelled out in domestic advice literature like Stowe and Beecher's *The American Woman's Home*, and Mrs. B.'s violent beatings of Frado: All of them are motivated by an ostensible interest in educating dependent members of the household. In the logic of antebellum culture, this dependency translates into a 'civilizational' hierarchy which may ground itself on differences of age, race, class, or gender.[11] While the novel's narrator considers racism the reason for her mean treatment, parallels to 'Northern' texts suggest that the injustices indicted in writings of the house of slavery are not limited to slavery and to racism against blacks. Rather, antebellum discourses of domesticity provide for, even necessitate, 'civilizational' hierarchies that sustain a colonial logic right within the American home. This colonial logic finds its focal point in the labors and relations of the kitchen.

29   *Our Nig* most explicitly associates its protagonist with the kitchen in the Bellmonts' house. Since Frado performs most her work in the kitchen, it becomes the room where she has

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[10] Cf. Leveen; Stern.
[11] Cf. Dudden's depiction of familial hierarchies in her discussion of the "blur[red] […] line between paid and unpaid housework" (18) in early 19th-century US households.

most contact with her mistress and, thus, where she suffers most from her incompetent and sadistic mode of housekeeping:

> It is impossible to give an impression of the manifest enjoyment of Mrs. B. in these kitchen scenes. It was her favorite exercise to enter the apartment noisily, vociferate orders, give a few sudden blows to quicken Nig's pace, then return to the sitting room with such a satisfied expression, congratulating herself upon her thorough house-keeping qualities. (66)

The narrator associates the kitchen with an ever-expanding work-load (52) and with the experience of violence and abuse. Indicatively, the only detail she relates concerning the kitchen's interior is the presence of a tool of punishment — "a rawhide, always at hand in the kitchen" (30). As Julia Stern observes, even banal kitchen paraphernalia such as a dish towel, which Mrs. B. stuffs into Frado's mouth to silence her, are converted into tools of torture (Stern 449).

30   In addition, Frado also has to eat in the kitchen, "standing, by the kitchen table, and must not be over ten minutes about it" (29). As Faye Dudden's study of domestic service indicates, the place where domestic servants took their meals served as a key indicator of their place in the household (36-37): Whereas the temporary, often neighborly workers 19th-century Americans called 'help' ate with the family, workers employed permanently and on the basis of a contractual relationship, 'domestics,' were expected to eat separately, relegated to the kitchen while the family ate in the dining room. The question of where a domestic worker would eat — whether her presence in the house would be entirely confined to the kitchen — figured as a key battleground in the negotiation of the relationship between employer and employee in antebellum American homes. Altogether, then, the kitchen in Mrs. B.'s house presents itself as a highly un-motherly place, articulating a critique of the domestic worker's exploitation through its very lack of care and nurture.

31   Mrs. B.'s insistence on Frado's kitchen meals contributes to the characterization of the white woman's attitude toward the little black girl as void of any maternal impulse.[12] Rather than adopting the abandoned child into the family to care for and educate her as contemporary discourses would rationalize the indentured domestic servitude of children,[13] Mrs. B. makes an effort to keep her outside the family circle. Her refusal of adequate meals goes hand in hand in the novel with the refusal of an adequate education and with restrictions on Frado's practice of religion. Mrs. B. systematically denies her adopted child those dimensions of nurture — physical, intellectual, and spiritual — contemporary discourses code as maternal.

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[12] Cf. Stern for a discussion of the novel's maternal politics.
[13] Cf. Dudden for a discussion of the bound-out orphan's "ambiguous position between servant and nonservant" (20).

Her treatment of the child not only disavows any familial relationship to her, it also dehumanizes and commodifies Frado. But the work of Mrs. B.'s torture of Frado reaches beyond reinforcing her status as commodity. As Stern notes, Mrs. B. and her daughter Mary bond over the abuse of the black girl, "[t]heir intimacy can be confirmed only by a ferocious ritual of exclusion, as maternal-filial ties are reforged over Frado's bleeding body" (452).

32   As 'ferocious rituals of exclusion,' the abuses the two Bellmont women inflict on Frado become meaningful only in concert with the spatial logic according to which family relations are organized. Repeatedly, Mrs. B.'s son James, who figures as Frado's most important supporter in the family, makes a point in taking Frado to the parlor — to sit with him (50), to meet his wife (67), and to eat at the family's dining table, after the family have finished their meal (68). When Mrs. B. objects vehemently, the text has her voice that objection in spatial terms: "'Take that nigger out of my sight'" (50), or, "'according to you [Mr. B.] and James, we should very soon have her in the parlor, as smart as our own girls'" (89). The parlor here circumscribes both a set of social practices marked as leisure — conversation, meals — and it signifies social proximity. Mrs. B.'s spatial rhetoric highlights the significance of architectural divisions in encoding and maintaining hierarchies within her house.

33   Accordingly, Frado is given a room in close proximity of the kitchen. Already announced by members of the family as a highly unattractive room, yet "good enough for a nigger" (26), the narrator's introduction to her chamber takes her through several "nicely furnished rooms" to reveal, after a "dark, unfinished passage-way", "an unfinished chamber over the kitchen, the roof slanting nearly to the floor" (27). The passage describing Frado's walk to her chamber, which furnishes the only tour of the house on which the narrator takes the reader, underlines the way in which Mrs. B. uses the architectural structures of her house to signify the child's position in the family. Her chamber presents itself as thoroughly different from the other rooms: accessed through a lengthy and unwelcoming passageway — claustrophobic, make-shift — it does not even seem to belong to the house.

34   At the same time as this non-room over the kitchen encodes Frado's abject position in the household, it also emerges as a space of tacit protection and empowerment. As the narrator details the abuses Frado suffers from Mrs. B., who hunts her to every corner of the property, she remarks: "But there was one little spot seldom penetrated by her mistress' watchful eye: this was her room, uninviting and comfortless; but to herself a safe retreat. Here she would listen to the leadings of a Saviour, and try to penetrate the veil of doubt and sin which clouded her soul, and long to cast off the fetters of sin, and rise to the communion of

saints" (87). Precisely because Frado's chamber lacks all the qualities of a proper room, because it is in every way distinct from the rest of the house, it affords the protagonist some degree of protection as well as a place where she can mature spiritually and intellectually by reading the Bible. Again, a liminal space, originally conceived to accommodate a hierarchical relationship, becomes a space of resistance. As Lois Leveen notes, "Frado learns to use the spatial differentiation [of the Bellmonts' house] to her advantage," not only by taking advantage of her mistress' dislike of the attic over the kitchen, but also by spreading her own version of the injustices she suffers — narratives the text calls the 'kitchen story' — among sympathetic members of the family" (n.pg.). This moment of resistance by telling the "kitchen version of the affair" (71-72), together with the education and meditations of her chamber, pave the way for Frado's change of occupations signaled by the novel that tells 'her' story.[14]

35   The novel's authorial voice — expressly marked as autobiographical in the preface and appendices — is entirely predicated on the author/narrator's experience of the kitchen and of her kitchen-chamber in the "two-story white house, North." As many literary efforts by women, and especially by women not of the middle-class, Wilson's authorship bears ambivalent connotations. On the one hand, leaving the Bellmonts' house and her occupation as domestic servant to become a writer gives Wilson a degree of control over that space and her experiences there she emphatically lacked during her presence in that kitchen. The publication of her life-story is intimately connected with Frado's kitchen stories in the narrative and, thus, with resistance and empowerment. On the other hand, the authority of Wilson's narrative utterly depends on its autobiographical framing. Becoming a novelist out of economic necessity, the author is bound to capitalize on her life-experiences. Her authorship thus bears an uncanny resemblance to the domestic work the novel details — both occupations are entered out of economic hardship, and both entail the commodification of the black woman's self, of her body with its ability of physical labor, and of her life-story.[15]

36   To conclude, architectural figurations allow both of the texts I discussed to characterize and critique the oppressions of slavery. Unfolding slavery in domestic settings not only enables the texts to highlight a specifically feminine experience, it also offers them a cultural register they could expect to resonate with their audience, which chiefly consisted of white middle-class women. The writings of the kitchen on which I specifically focused

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[14] The novel's preface and appendices most explicitly identify the protagonist with the author.

[15] The novel's conflicted authorship adds to other moments of ambivalence in the text. Leveen explores some of its key ambiguities, e.g., in the narrative's slippages between first and third person, or in its choice of 'our nig' as both title, protagonist, and pseudonym for the author.

pinpoint the conflicting negotiation of victimization and resistance the texts engage in, along with the ambivalences of authorial self-fashioning that emerge out of it.

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Bedbound Beauty Queens: Negotiating Space and Gender in Contemporary Irish Drama

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Abstract:

As concepts of nation and national identity are more and more being questioned in the globalised and transcultural environment of contemporary Ireland, the creative and imaginative potential of drama and theatre takes up a crucial position. The performative quality of drama and its theatrical realisation on the stage allows the genre to constantly oscillate between the imagined spaces and places of the text and the real, social, cultural and political spaces and places of its production and reception. Thus, a critical assessment of how theatre and drama imagines and playfully manipulates what it means to be "male" and "female" in a society that has experienced such tremendous economic, social and cultural transformations in the last decade as Ireland can also productively contribute to the necessary discussions of Irish identity in the 21st century.

1   Both, conceptions of gender and of space have become prominent categories for critical analysis in almost all of the fields of the humanities and social sciences. From the political impetus of the feminist movements into the academic circles - first through Women's Studies and later broadened by Gender and Queer Studies - the analysis of the intricate and complex relationships between the sexes, be it in on the level of economic, social and political discourses or in literary texts and other forms of cultural production and expression has become one of the cornerstones of critical scholarship today.

2   Notions of space and place, too, have been lifted from the mere passiveness of the given fact as a priori areas where human beings simply happen to exist. Since the 1950s, scholars such as Erving Goffman, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Edward Said and others have time and again elucidated the fact that space and place are social and cultural products. Human beings - through interpersonal and intercultural contact, communication and miscommunication, battling over or supporting certain political, economic, cultural and social forces - actively contribute to the shaping and production of the very spaces and places they inhabit.

3   The ways and the extent to which we are able to partake in these processes, however, are dependent on the dynamics and relations of power. The fundamental question is: Who am I and how am I positioned in relation to the spaces and places, people and forces around me?

4   Drawing from Fredric Jameson's theory of "cognitive mapping",[1] Gerry Smyth starts

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[1] The concept of "cognitive mapping" was first introduced by Jameson in his seminal essay "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (1984) and later expanded in "Cognitive Mapping" (1988). The concept is intended to enable individuals as well as groups to make better sense of themselves as subjects in the

his exploration of *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* (2001) with a sense that "early twenty-first century Ireland interacts with the imaginative or imaginary sense of a range of spaces that continue to be widely invoked throughout Irish culture" (19). The challenge, Smyth puts forward, would be:

> to produce cognitive maps which enable Irish people to locate themselves in relation to both their own local environments and to the series of increasingly larger networks of power which bear upon those environments. (19)

I argue that with Martin McDonagh and Enda Walsh we have two contemporary Irish playwrights who are attempting to do just that.

5   In my paper, I mainly focus on "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" (1996) and "bedbound" (2000). Although set in two entirely different locales, both plays have a number of striking similarities. Apart from a critical assessment of gender and traditional gender expectations,[2] they problematise violence, familial and generational conflicts between daughters and their mothers/fathers, placing the characters in inescapable spaces (the country cottage and the walled-in bed respectively), creatively mixing past and present. Both plays center on the question of personal identity and availability of choice that is evidently linked to questions of gender and space. What room is there to move, to break free from the prison of history, to be a 'new' or 'different' woman or man in a 'new' or 'different' country? Furthermore, both plays highlight the importance of a critical re-definition and re-positioning of contemporary Ireland, both urban and rural, and thereby contribute to more far reaching discussions of Irishness and Irish identity at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

6   One of the pioneers who has forcefully made a case for the inclusion of the category of space in the analysis of theatre, Una Chaudhuri, has argued that "[C]ontemporary theatre is above all a remapping of the possible terrain of subjectivity" (xv). This is not to claim that the contemporary Irish social world is necessarily full of grumpy old hags, disillusioned, bored and violent brutes or physically and psychologically damaged characters, but in its focalizing

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increasingly complex political, social and cultural spaces they inhabit in the postmodern world. With regard to the experience of postmodern city life, Jameson's concept suggests a "dialectic between the here and now of immediate perception and the imaginative or imaginary sense of the city as an absent totality." (Jameson, "Mapping" 353). In other words and more generally, an individual's self understanding depends on a combination of his or her immediate corporeal experience in the life world as well as the imaginative invocation and reconstruction of all other aspects of this life world, even if they are not part of the subject's immediate corporeal experience.

[2] By "traditional gender expectations" I mean the roles and functions usually ascribed to woman and man in a patriarchal system of signification. Challenging these roles (the woman as childbearer and housekeeper taking a subordinate function to the man as head of the household and the family) is a particularly necessary endeavour within the Irish context where these roles and hierarchies and the conflicts evolving from this setup are far from being resolved.

and heightening capacity, the theatrical stage provides a plethora of opportunities to explore the fears and insecurities, hopes and dreams of a world where fluidity surpasses fixedness (both in a concrete spatial sense as well as on the more metaphorical level) and stability of meaning and definition seems like an unattainable fantasy. Chaudhuri also notes: "[E]very play takes place in a place and the varieties of platial experience allowed by the medium of the theatre - and recorded in dramatic texts - far surpass that of any other art form" (21).

7   Since his jump start with "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" nine years ago in Galway, much has been made of Martin McDonagh's dramatic output to date, while his personal antics and strategies of self-stylisation even more have been subject to the occasional sneer or chuckle. Compared to a theatrical pendant of The Pogues or Quentin Tarantino, classified as what Aleks Sierz has termed (for the British stage of the 1990s) as "[I]n-Yer Face Theatre" (2001), accused of raping the Irish literary tradition - all the way from Synge to Beckett - or indulging in "banter (usually meaningless or mundane) and violence" (Wallace 118) are just some of the labels that have been stuck on his plays.

8   Enda Walsh, probably most well known for his first major success "Disco Pigs" (1996) at first glance seems to be a dramatist very different from McDonagh. Most of his plays are set in contemporary urban Ireland (mostly Dublin and Cork) whereas McDonagh's oeuvre, until "The Pillowman" (2003) has largely nourished on the brutal idyll of the Western Irish countryside. Walsh's plots, characters and settings also often appear much bleaker and humorous elements, no matter how dark this humour might be, are hardly to be found in Walsh.

9   Both "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" and "bedbound" centre on complicated familial relationships of two characters - Maureen and Mag in "The Beauty Queen" and DAUGHTER and DAD in "bedbound" and questions of personal positioning and personal identity lie at the core of both conflicts. Of course, especially with regard to McDonagh, a lot more would need to be said about the various male characters, not only in "The Beauty Queen" but in the Leenane Trilogy in general. If one needed an example for the topic of "masculinity in crisis" in contemporary Irish theatre, the likes of Pato and Ray Dooley, Valene and Coleman Connor, Thomas Hanlon or Father Walsh/Welsh would be more than suitable objects of analysis. For the scope of this paper, however, I will focus on the central conflict in the two plays, namely that between DAUGHTER and DAD in "bedbound" and Maureen and Mag in "The Beauty Queen". What complicates these struggles is a continuous blurring of conceptual boundaries and a discrepancy between "reality" and "fiction" in that we can never be sure whether the stories and events that are narrated to us by the characters are "true" (as opposed to imagined).

Furthermore, both plays are set in spaces that one would at first thought not equate with struggle, conflict and violence.

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> I'd like to see Irish theatre embrace the profound change that has occurred: that we are barely a country anymore, never have been and never will be that most nineteenth century of dreams, a nation once again; that our identity is floating, not fixed. I could live a long and happy life without seeing another play set in a Connemara kitchen, or a country pub. (Hughes 13)

The Connemara kitchens that Declan Hughes wants to eternally dismiss as settings for Irish plays have little to do with the kitchen that forms the singular place of action in "The Beauty Queen." The kitchen here is a very unhomely place, virtually a battle field and a prison, an uncanny mixture of a seemingly idyllic past, brutal and claustrophobic present and uncertain future, with a disillusioned "mother" Ireland rocking in her chair, waiting for the news on TV (see illustrations 1& 2). In general the play suggests that if news have no immediate effect on oneself, as long as they do not disrupt everyday life and the already problematic relationship between Mag and Maureen, the outside world is allowed and welcomed to intrude in mediated form, even if it is only "Australian old shite" (BQ[3] 53). None of the characters, apart from Maureen, has any interest in "seeing Ireland," be it on TV or in unmediated form.

Fig. 1.

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[3] BQ - "The Beauty Qeen of Leenane", bb - "bedbound"; numbers indicate pagination of the published playscripts.

Fig. 2.

11   Mag, however, always tries to make sure that her daughter has as little exposure to the outside world as possible and if Maureen would not need to go shopping once in a while, she would probably have no chance to break free from the claustrophobic environment of the house and the kitchen. The reasons for Mag's insistence that Maureen should not leave her and should not "be out gallivanting with fellas" (BQ 15) are more than dubious and never clarified. Even when Maureen gets to experience life outside the house and the possessive claws of her mother, there is never really a sense of freedom for her. Her sexual encounters with Pato after the party are unmasked as mere illusions. Later, when she finds out that Pato had written her a letter from London to ask her to come with him to Boston, a letter she never received because Mag burns it in her absence, she rushes off to the train station to catch Pato before he leaves. However, the reality of this story too is more than doubtful as Ray, Pato's brother, claims Pato had left by taxi rather than train and is going to marry another woman. Did Pato ever write this letter to Maureen? And if he did, what was its content and why did Mag burn it? As Werner Huber has argued, the question remains as to "whose story can we ultimately trust?" (568).

12   Maureen is a complex character, a middle-aged woman trapped in the prison of stories, unreliable realities, trying to make sense of a world that refuses to be made sense of -

a virgin and a vamp, independent and constrained to stay with her mother, strong and fragile, clear and confused all at the same time (see illustrations 3-6).

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

13   Regardless of her bitterness towards Mag and the fact that, according to Maureen Mag is just "oul and stupid" (BQ 6) and does not know what she is talking about, for a long time Maureen tries to understand her mother's intentions. When Pato has left the house after their supposed sexual encounter, promising to write to Maureen Mag says:

> Mag: He won't write at all. (Pause). And I did throw your oul dress in that dirty corner too!
>
> Pause. Maureen looks at her a moment, sad, despairing but not angry.
>
> Maureen: Why? Why? Why do you…? (BQ 33)

Her question however, is never answered. Instead Mag goes on complaining about her porridge having turned cold.

14   After Maureen confesses to Mag that she sometimes dreams about her mother's funeral, with a man standing next to her holding her waist and smelling of good aftershave, she says:

> Maureen: I suppose now you'll never be dying, you'll be hanging on forever just to spite me.
>
> Mag: I *will* be hanging on forever. (BQ 16-17)

Even killing her mother with an iron poker in the end does not provide ultimate freedom.

Moreover, talking to Ray after the funeral and reflecting on Ray's remark about the rainy weather, she says:

> Maureen: [I]t could have been last month we buried her, and she could have got the last of the sun, if it wasn't for the hundred bastarding inquests, proved nothing. (BQ 52)

This statement again proves that Maureen's feelings towards her mother are not entirely fuelled by hatred. She killed her, but at the same time wishes that there had been sunshine for her funeral.

15   Shortly before the end of the play, Maureen is sitting in Mag's rocking chair - in Ray's words "the exact fecking image of your mother, sitting there pegging orders and forgetting me name!" (BQ 60) As she is sitting in her mother's rocking chair and listens to the radio, an unspecified song by The Chieftains is slowly fading out and Delia Murphy's "The Spinning Wheel" (1939) is played to honour Mag's 71st birthday. Around the middle of the fourth verse, Maureen gets up from the chair, takes the suitcase and leaves the stage. Considering the lyrics of the song, this scene acquires a remarkable significance. The song tells of how a young woman escapes from her blind grandmother to meet her lover who is waiting outside. The two women had been spinning wool and singing traditional Irish songs - specifically mentioning "The Coolin," a song telling of a man who is looking for his beautiful fair haired girl - together with the grandmother always accusing her granddaughter of hitting the wrong notes.

16   As the young woman in the song is able to free herself of tradition, Maureen's exit at the end of the play could be read as a final act of liberation (even if we know from the remainder of the Leenane Trilogy that Maureen stays on). However, as the play suggests, this is only possible with an acute awareness of the multilayered "versions and reversions" (Wallace) of history. One production even made a direct reference to the importance of history for a self-understanding of the Irish today and the problem of the continuing prominence of images of an Ireland long gone (or one which never truly existed by integrating a giant reproduction of a typical John Hinde postcard into the set (see illustration 7).[4] The romantic image of a peaceful cottage set in the pastoral idyll of green fields conjures up a scenery which runs counter to the conflicts between Mag and Maureen and the eventual brutality of Maureen's murder of her mother. Moreover, the fact that the postcard does not try

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[4] These postcards were produced in the 1950s and sold well into the 1980s and beyond. Images of country cottages, green fields and young red-haired and speckled boys and girls still dominate tourist brochures and advertisements of Ireland all over the world.

to be anything but a postcard underscores the strong discrepancy between "image" and "reality".

Fig. 7.

17   Enda Walsh's play "bedbound," although structurally very different from "The Beauty Queen," touches similar terrains. In "bedbound" we encounter a middle-aged DAD and his DAUGHTER together in a small bed which is completely enclosed by four walls. Whereas the claustrophobic and repressive atmosphere in "The Beauty Queen" is mainly evoked via language and character interaction, the stage design in "bedbound" crassly alludes to the fact that both characters are trapped: "There is a large box in the centre of the stage made of plaster board. Suddenly the wall facing the audience crashes to the ground" (bb 9; see illustrations 8 & 9).

18   Throughout the play, DAD and DAUGHTER perform scenes from the father's life from storeroom boy in a furniture shop to successful furniture salesman in Cork and Dublin with DAD playing himself and DAUGHTER complementing the scenes by playing those characters her father meets.

DAUGHTER: Ever think of getting a wife yourself?

DAD: A wife? And what the fuck would I be needing with a wife?

DAUGHTER: To do the cooking, boss.

DAD: And by fuck but Dan Dan was making some sense! Recalling a young quiet thing who clung to her Mam in the Bingo Hall, I make my moves. I spot her reading some romantic tacky book. Clear my throat to be heard above the bingo scribbling, my first words are, 'You should marry me, you know'.

DAUGHTER: Congratulations, boss!

DAD: Why thanks very much Dan Dan! I enrol her in an evening class entitled 'Create your own Dinner Parties' […]. Mister and misses me and her. Her done up like a porcelain doll, me like a life-sized action man!

[…]

Then I spy him […].

DAUGHTER: I'm a friend of Bernard's. Marcus Enright.

DAD: […] An ex-barrister, he tells me he's going to open a furniture shop in Dublin. How his two sons share his interest in

DAUGHTER: Quality furniture.

DAD: I fucking hate him. I want to open his face with the corkscrew I carry around. […] I vow to see his business fucked. I promise to gobble him up and shit him out. Fuck it, I need an ally though!

DAUGHTHER: *in her own voice* Ya need a son!

DAD: I go at the wife all doggy style. Grabbing her round arse in my prawn cocktail stained hands with the dinner party and no doubt Marcus fucking Enright in full swing down below. It's my first ever fuck. Never had the time, interest, want before until now […]. I jiggle about for all of two minutes before shooting my load. 'Never doubt the potency of my sperm, woman!' Nine months later and it's all push push pushing! 'Til out it drops! Not a son at all but a girl!'

DAUGHTER: Hello Dad!

DAD: Fuck! (bb 23-24)

DAD is ashamed of his daughter and his wife whom he only sees as the producer of his misfortunes (first the father wanted to have a son, but the mother gave birth to a girl and later the DAUGHTER fell into a ditch and contracted polio). Furthermore, he gradually loses ground in his business career after having to give up his furniture stores in Dublin (due to

competition pressures) as well as failing to be the first person to open three new shops in a day). Blaming one of his assistants for this particular failure, he brutally dispenses of him. He pursues his business interests brutally, and uses people as he pleases. All that counts for him is success and he will do anything to achieve it - not even shying away from homosexual intercourse with one of his potential business partners. He returns to Cork and begins to build walls inside his home, gradually enclosing his wife and daughter in the bed to hide them from himself and the outside world. The DAUGHTER spends all her time in the bed with her mother, being read to from a romantic novel about a young girl on a horse in a lush and pastoral landscape. His wife eventually dies in the bed leaving his daughter there alone (until he joins her shortly before the play begins). Trying to recover her own past, the daughter continuously urges her father to tell her about his life.

Fig. 8.

Fig. 9.

19   At the end of the play, the father's narrative arrives at the moment shortly before the play begins, when he finds his wife dead, carries her out of the house and afterwards joins his daughter in the bed. The bed just like the kitchen is at first glance not necessarily a space that evokes conflict and violence but might rather conjure up ideas of home, comfort and shelter. Furthermore, in a patriarchal system of signification both places would most likely be considered female rather than male spaces (like the pub, the factory, and the like). In the two plays in question, these traditionally gendered zones of comfort and stability become battlefields where conflicts between generations, between tradition and future possibilities are played out.

20   Like Maureen in "The Beauty Queen," the DAUGHTER in "bedbound" has been deprived of her own life and identity. Her memories of the outside world end at the moment she falls into the ditch and is subsequently placed into the bed. All she hears is the voice of her mother reading to her and the thumping noises from beyond the bedroom walls, but she does not know who they come from or what they mean.

> DAUGHTER   And we stay awake…me and her. And I can't sleep so she talks and talks! Sometimes not making sense but sometimes making pictures with her words and words become my life as I try to fill the space, for what pictures do I really have but the four fucking walls that you've given me, you fucker! (bb 32)

She is also unknowing with regards to the reasons why she is hidden from the outside world. It is only through the ensuing "play," when DAD joins her in the bed, that she gradually realizes the course of events and the underlying reasons. Hers is not a prison of history trapped between traditional expectations and personal longings in a world dominated by images and simulations rather than a coherent sense of reality, like that of Maureen. As she is physically disabled, she does not fit in the world picture of her father, and neither does his wife. They have both become useless tools in the father's pursuit of fame and economic success. Threatened and ultimately beaten by the forces of a globalizing economy, the father fails too and voluntarily imprisons himself in the box he had built for his wife and daughter.

21   In "The Beauty Queen," Maureen finds herself trapped, locked up but at the same time strangely attached to her mother. Despite all the hatred and verbal as well as physical violence, the two women stay together and try to battle it out. The death of one and the possible escape to freedom of the other stands at the end. Reconciliation is not an option.

22   In "bedbound" physical violence is taken off the stage and placed into the realm of narration and the play-within-the play of the characters. DAD and DAUGHTER engage in brutal verbal exchanges. At various times, the DAUGHTER leaves her role as supplementary characters and addresses her father directly. The silent moments between the violent ranting

and those attempts at establishing a relationship beyond the mere connection as players are the most interesting ones as here, reality slowly creeps through the walls and forces the two characters to face up to each other as father and daughter. In the beginning, this results in panic and refusal:

> DAD   I've got nothing to talk to you about.
>
> DAUGHTER   We're talking now!
>
> DAD Yeah but about nothing!
>
> DAUGHTER   It's filling the gaps, isn't it?!
>
> DAD   It's making the gaps! If we didn't talk there would be no gaps! There'd be quiet! A great big field of quiet! That's what I want! (bb 14)
> And later into the play:
>
> DAUGHTER   What is it, boss?
>
> *DAD begins to panic a bit and covers himself with a blanket. The DAUGHTER is immediately nervous.*
>
> DAUGHTER   Is that all we're doing then? Daddy? Dad? (bb 20)

For both the father and the daughter, the re-enactment of the events leading to their current state of affairs might be, in Clare Wallace's words termed a theatrical version of a "talking cure" (Wallace 119). Having confessed his crimes, the father eventually finds reconciliation with his daughter.

> DAD   And this is me talking. This is really me talking now. And I don't have words for you. I don't have the right words for you love. I just want to sleep and get back to the silence but I can't.
>
> […]
>
> *Slowly the daughter leans to her DAD. She kisses him softly on the forehead. He then kisses her. They sit back and look at each other. She listens to the silence for a bit.*
>
> DAUGHTER   I'm in the bed. The panic is gone and all that's left is ta start over. I get that tiredness turn to calm…and I give into sleep. I let go. Go. (bb 33-34)

Demands towards contemporary Irish drama to move away from its focus on language and to more performance-based approaches negate the performative potential of language, stage design as well as the expressive force of the mere physical presence of the actor or actress on stage and his or her use of language.

23   As most critics and scholars agree, it is impossible today to perform "Ireland" as one coherent whole, but rather only bits and pieces of a fragmented society. Cognitive mapping of

the subject self in all its facets and in relation to the immediacies of contemporary experience as well as the rich but at the same time dangerous archive of cultural history in a rapidly transformed society first and foremost require an acute awareness of this fragmentation. The theatrical problematisation of the conflicts between past and present, the highlighting of reality as being constructed and unreliable and the challenges of a social space that has rapidly changed might be a helpful contribution to overcome what Tim Robinson in a programme note for a production of "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" has termed "the Connemara in the skull"[5] and at the same time to come to grips with "the underbelly of the Celtic Tiger" (Llewellyn-Jones 6).

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[5] www.connemara.net/words/tim-robinson/. This is both an interesting inversion of the title of another McDonagh play that is part of the Leenane Trilogy "A Skull in Connemara" (1997) as well as a cross-reference to Lucky's speech in Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" (1953). The phrase sums up neatly the haunting presence of the past in Irish culture, a past, however, that should not be simply discarded, but further explored and creatively employed in mapping contemporary Irish cultural identity.

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"Every choice we make takes us on a different journey…": Helen Cooper in Conversation

By Astrid Recker, University of Cologne, and Christina Wald, University of Augsburg, Germany

Helen Cooper was born in Holland of Welsh/Dutch parentage. After studying History of Art at Leiden University and at the Victoria and Albert Museum she went to the **Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Arts**.

Film

Helen wrote the highly acclaimed screenplay for **Mike Figgis'** film *Miss Julie*, which was based on her original translation of August Strindberg's play. Helen wrote and produced the short film, *Station*, directed by **Jackie Oudney**, which won the **Cinerail de Bronze** in Paris, the **Best British Short Film Award** at the Kino Festival in Manchester, the **Best Short Film Award** at the Croydon Film Festival and was **nominated** as **Best Short Film** for **BAFTA** Scotland's New Talent Award 2000.

Theatre

Her most recent highly acclaimed play *Three Women and a Piano Tuner* premiered in June 2004 at the Chichester Festival Theatre, directed by Sam West, and was runner-up for the **Susan Smith Blackburn Award**. It transferred to the Hampstead Theatre in June 2005.

Helen's other plays include, *Mrs Gaugin*, produced at the Almeida Theatre and later in Amsterdam, Hamburg and Ghent, *Mrs Vershinin*, produced at the Riverside Studios, London, The Tramway Theatre in Glasgow and the Theatre der Welt, Hamburg. Both plays were directed by **Mike Bradwell** and were **nominated for the Susan Smith Blackburn Award**. *The House of Ruby Moon* was developed by the Royal National Theatre Studio and was premiered at the London New Play Festival.

Helen translated Strindberg's *Miss Julie* for Tom Cairns' production at Greenwich Theatre, Ibsen's *Hedder Gabler* for Chichester Festival, the libretto of *Don Giovanni* for Scottish Opera and was the dramaturge for Tom Cairns' production of *La Boheme* at Stuttgart Opera House.

Radio

Helen's play, *Mrs Vershinin*, was broadcast on **BBC Radio 3**; her translation of *Hedder Gabler* on **BBC Radio 4**. Her original radio play *Mothers at at the Gate* was highly acclaimed and is now being developed for theatre.

Helen's work in progress includes **1934** commissioned by **Skreba Films**, a new commission from the Royal Shakespeare Company, and her play *Mothers at the Gate*, which is being developed by the **Royal National Theatre Studio**.

Interview taken in London in July, 2005.

Christina Wald and Astrid Recker: We understand that you worked as an actress before you started writing plays. Could you tell us how your interest in the theatre began and how it developed over the years?

Helen Cooper: None of my family are in the theatre. I was at school in The Hague in Holland. Although my mother is Welsh, English was my worst subject at school. So I was sent to England before going to Leiden University for a year to do my proficiency in English. Then I came back to Leiden to study History of Art, but I had lost my heart, so I didn't want to stay and I went back to England as I convinced my parents that studying History of Art was

far better in London than in Leiden. I went there and secretly auditioned for drama school. And I was rejected and accepted, accepted and rejected, and then I went to the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. The best thing of all was that I got a scholarship. I trained for three years, and after that I did a lot of acting work. I played parts like Hermione in Winter's Tale opposite Jim Broadbent, who played Leontes, I played Celia opposite Fiona Shaw in *As You Like It* at the Old Vic, I played Viola in Regent's Park. I did a lot of classical work as well as contemporary work, but my biggest change was working with Ken Campbell, a wild, anarchic theatre maker in England. We did a 24h show which started on Saturday morning at 10 and finished the next morning at 10. We had a group of forty actors, literally grabbed off the street almost. That was a hugely important experience for me. It was there that I met Mike Bradwell with whom I've worked since a lot. I met Jim Broadbent, Tim Albery, Pierre Audi, who is running the Stopera in Amsterdam, the actor Bill Nighy, Terry Johnson, the writer - a fantastic group of kindred spirits, who were a huge inspiration. It was then that I began to think that it was not only acting, but theatre as a whole that I wanted to be involved in.

You know the work of Mike Leigh, how he works, which is extraordinary, and this is the same way Mike Bradwell works. You create a character from the womb up to however old you are. So rehearsals mean sitting in a room on your own for weeks, and the director comes in and asks, "So how old are you now? Five? What was your favourite present for your fifth birthday?" You begin to create this whole world from birth to the end, you create the whole picture of the character. He does that with, say, five characters for a play. When you are ready, you can go out. You walk the streets in character, and you start to see the world from this character's point of view: what magazines she would buy, what newspapers she would buy, what food she would eat. And then, when they feel you're fully-fledged, they let you meet the other characters, and out of those meetings the play is created.

In the first play that I did, I was a Dutch art student. At some point we were ready, we had done our twelve weeks of research, and our characters were ready, but when we started to do the play, I realized that it was only the tip of the iceberg that was shown, and I was left with this huge iceberg - so I started to write some short stories about this character. I was working as an actress at the Almeida theatre at that time, and I showed the stories to Pierre Audi, and he commissioned me to write my first play. That was an extremely lucky moment for me, to get that first commission. So that's how I became a writer.

CW and AR: Have you also written for the TV?

HC: I have written for film. Mike Figgis's film *Miss Julie* - I wrote the screenplay for that,

and my short film *Station*, which did very well at festivals all over the world and got two Scottish BAFTA nominations. I have written some more films, but they are all work in progress. I do love the world of theatre, but I do love the world of film as well. It is the collaboration, the working together, I love.

CW and AR: Would you also be interested in directing?

HC: I was offered to direct my own version of *Miss Julie*, and I will do that. I would never do the first production of one of my plays, because you need another person to wrangle with to get it right.

CW and AR: Why did you decide to do *Miss Julie*? Did you have a special affinity to Strindberg?

HC: No, not at all! I was asked by Tom Cairns, who was asked to direct *Miss Julie* and didn't like the available translations. At first I thought why should I, a twenty-first century woman, try to translate a nineteenth century misogynist? Then I thought it is a challenge, and I read this fantastic biography by Michael Meyer and I grew to love Strindberg. He is full of paradoxes, he is extraordinary, and he was a real modernist. And actually, although everyone calls him a misogynist, I think he had the guts to pull women off pedestals and to actually make them as flawed and faulty as men. *Miss Julie* is a horrendously complex and paradoxical woman. But I think that Strindberg has done women a lot of good by making them more real and more powerful rather than putting them on pedestals. So, actually, Strindberg should be on the list of playwrights who influenced me.

CW and AR: Speaking of influence - are there other playwrights that you particularly like and who influenced your own work?

HC: One of my first plays was *Mrs Vershinin* and I think Chekhov is magnificent. Chekhov, Albee, and Pinter, I suppose, are my real inspirations.

CW and AR: What are your experiences with seeing your plays performed? Did you sometimes discover new aspects of your work when you saw them? Or did you sometimes feel that crucial elements were lost in the production?

HC: It is a very strange process. The weirdest experience I had was when I saw my first play, *Mrs Gauguin*, translated into my own language, Dutch. There is something about the rhythm of a language; the music of a language makes such a difference. English is much lighter and wittier than Dutch. A Dutch sentence is three times the length of an English sentence, so the play became much more serious, which I sometimes liked but sometimes did not want. Translation is an extraordinary thing. Fay Weldon had a play on at the same time in Paris and in Denmark, and it was a farce in Paris and a tragedy in Denmark - the very same play!

But even seeing my plays performed in English is a very strange and painful process; you have to let the play go. I remember Mike Bradwell throwing me out of the rehearsal once, telling me: "It's not yours anymore!"

CW and AR: As you have seen your play performed in the Netherlands, what do you think about Dutch theatre and the more radical way that the play scripts are used for and transformed in production there?

HC: I am told they do some fabulous work but unfortunately I haven't seen a great deal lately. What was amazing when I saw my own play, *Mrs Gauguin*, produced in the Netherlands was the difference to the original production at the Almeida. We did it with a tiny budget: there was water showering down onto the stage and it was a beautiful, fantastic set - but we had four men behind the stage who had to open and close taps. But the Toneelgroep Centrum in Amsterdam had an unlimited budget, and they had a wall of water, a proper waterfall where you could walk behind. It was extraordinary. But then again, I saw an amateur production in Ghent, and it was the most moving thing I have seen. They had solved the water problem with a hose with four holes in it: The director was a young guy of twenty-one and he wrote in the programme what he thought the play was about. That had nothing to do with me anymore, it was completely his creation. A play is like a child that grows up - it's yours, but it has its own life.

CW and AR: You are obviously very interested in recent theatre developments in Britain. Are you also interested in theatre developments in other countries? Do you regularly see performances?

HC: I would like to see more. One of my greatest inspirations in theatre is still Pina Bausch. She has inspired me more than other theatre makers. The Bush Theatre do productions of contemporary plays from all over the world, and I see everything they do. But apart from the Bush and occasional trips abroad, I would like to see more.

CW and AR: In which way did Pina Bausch inspire your work - has dance found its way into your literary work?

HC: Sometimes you see theatre that makes you think "Oh, that's possible as well" - she opened a whole new dimension. She gives you courage, I think.

CW and AR: When you start writing a new play, what do you normally begin with? Is it a specific topic that you are interested in or a particular constellation of characters?

HC: Well, *Three Women and a Piano Tuner* for example was commissioned by the RSC by Steven Pimlott, who then took it to the Chichester Festival. When I pitched the idea, my idea

came from a short film, *Station*, that I had made with two other women; often I looked at them and thought "God, we are so different," but at the same time I thought, I could have become like them if I had made their choices. So, that was the basic idea. I wanted to write about the choices women make. When I started to write, I thought what was the crucial choice that separates them, and then the whole Elektra Complex came out, and that was certainly not planned. I think my writing process has come out of how I came to writing, namely, through acting. I very much start from the characters, not from a symbolic idea.

CW and AR: Your plays focus on female characters. Do you consider yourself a feminist playwright? Do you think that questions of gender play a crucial role in your work?

HC: I see the world from a female point-of-view. I am a feminist in so far as I am absolutely and forever grateful that people fought for women's rights and broke barriers - and there is still fighting to be done, and I am aware of that. But I am not a separatist. Especially as I brought up a daughter, I have seen how boys are often badly treated by female teachers. I think this is very serious, and I do think it's important to redress that balance. That's why I loved Strindberg pulling the women down from their pedestals, revealing that we are all human and therefore inherently flawed - men and women.

I'm sure you know *Women Are from Venus, Men Are from Mars*. I recently saw a card with this printed on it: "Men are from the planet earth, so are women - deal with it!" That's my kind of feminism. We should fight together and there are still many things that need to be done - men have got privileges, especially in English theatre. But I think separatism is not the answer. By the way, at the moment I am writing a play about the Dutch humanist Erasmus, again for the RSC, and there are no female parts in it at all.

CW and AR: Do you think that theatre can be, or always already is, political? Do you think that plays can trigger social change?

HC: I would like to think so. Every human action, such as bringing up a child, can make a tiny little shift. In that sense, everything is political, every choice you make. But if we talk about Political with a great "P", there is a lot to fight against or fight for at the moment. W.H. Auden said that there are two kinds of art: escapist art, which we all need as much as good food and deep sleep, and parable art, which shall teach man to unlearn hatred. I like that.

Three Women and a Piano Tuner

CW and AR: In how far does the revived production of *Three Women and a Piano Tuner* at Hampstead Theatre differ from the original production at the Chichester Festival last year?

HC: Well, it is the same director, but the production is set in different performance spaces

and one actor is different, and that makes a huge difference. Beth was played by Suzanne Burden, but she went to the RSC. Phoebe Nicholls's Beth has a very different chemistry. It was fascinating how she then influenced the others to change. I think she's fabulous; she's very subtle, and she's been a good influence in that way.

They also changed the text and the orchestra at the end. And, as I've said, the performance spaces differ: The theatre in Chichester is almost in the round, so that's a very different feeling. Hampstead is slightly warmer - the atmosphere in Chichester is much cooler and sharper. Sometimes I prefer that, and sometimes I prefer this.

CW and AR: We understand that the music was composed especially for the play?

HC: Yes, it was composed by Jason Carr. Samuel West, the director, I, and Jason had a long talk about it, and I think he absolutely got it. Music is extremely important in my work. It plays a huge part in productions. The music in *Three Women and a Piano Tuner* is evocative; it does set the scene strongly.

I was chilled when I first heard it - I think it is brilliant. I talked to lots of musicians beforehand, and one of them said "Music is never a narrative. Never would a composer talk about a stork." Another did say it can come out of a story or a narrative. So we talked a lot about it beforehand.

CW and AR: We thought it was very interesting how the music is interpreted in the play by the different characters, how Ella conceives of it differently than Liz and thinks that Liz should be playing it differently. The same seems to be the case with memory - Ella, Liz, and Beth all interpret their memories differently.

HC: Absolutely. But you see, I don't think Liz or anyone could play it perfectly for Ella, and even she can't because she hasn't got the tools. This is a very strange thing. I wonder if a musician ever hears what he or she meant to hear.

CW and AR: When discussing your play in class, we were wondering whether Ella can be considered a more "real" character than the "might-have-beens" Beth and Liz, or, in the terminology of psychology, whether she is the "host personality" for the "alters" Beth and Liz. Did you have any hierarchy of the characters in mind? Or do you see the three figures as equally "real" figures which stand for three different ways of coping with the experience of incest?

HC: I think Ella is the one who brings on the others, she is more real. In Chichester, where the original version was played, some people I heard in the interval had already realised that they are one person, others did not get it at all, which is fine. It's like life, there is a mystery. When we read the reviews, we realised that even some reviewers had not understood it. When

we wanted to transfer the play to London, an outside producer, Peter Woolfe, put money into it. He saw it in Chichester and absolutely loved it. But then, when he considered putting money into it, he read all the reviews and it turned out that he had not realised that they are the same person. He wanted me to rewrite it, and when I said that I would never rewrite it, we had exactly the situation of the play, where Ella refuses to cut the stork-passage in her composition. But finally, I changed tiny things because I did want people to get as much out of it as possible. And then the reviews came out, saying, well, it was subtle in Chichester but now they're hammering it over our heads - it's weird.

CW and AR: Was your idea of multiplying the central character related to psychological studies on trauma, sexual child abuse, and dissociation? Did you read such studies when working on *Three Women*?

HC: I didn't set out to write about trauma, so I did talk to a lot of people only after I had written the play. Most of the people found it hard to accept Ella's unconditional love for her father. I am interested in this Elektra Complex, because I think the Oedipus Complex is so often talked about but you rarely hear about the Elektra Complex. I also think that the power system that I wrote about is different from sexual child abuse because Ella was already an adult when their incestuous affair began. However, as Liz says, "after ten years of foreplay, what do you expect?" I think it is also important that memories constantly change, and a new experience can shift everything that was in the past. So for those three women, having made their choices - aborting the baby, having it adopted, and raising it - changes their whole relationships with their past, which is the same past.

CW and AR: You just mentioned that Trauma Studies didn't play a particular role when you wrote the play, and that you only realized later on that there are parallels. Did you have other plays in mind which feature multiple protagonists such as Sarah Daniels's Beside Herself?

HC: I know of it, but I haven't read it. I would like to read that, actually. It has been done before - everything has been done before, but I don't think that there was a particular model. It really came of thinking how different our ways of looking at the world are; our choices are so different, and yet, I felt, essentially we are all absolutely connected.

CW and AR: The three main characters all have to cope with a trauma and do this in very different ways: Liz is very emotional about everything, very furious and unimpressed by social conventions (obvious also in her "striptease"). Beth absolutely avoids any memory and therefore any feeling that could arise, besides she is rational and in control of herself at all times. Ella, we would argue, is somewhere in the middle between the two, influenced by both Liz and Beth. When you developed their characters, were you also thinking about the

Freudian concept of "ICH", "ÜBER-ICH," and "ES," or did the separation of different coping mechanisms automatically lead to characters that would kind of match the Freudian concepts?

HC: I didn't consciously think of these concepts, but I'm glad that the characters have this echo. But, you see, I would like to think that there are many more of them. I would love a German production with an orchestra of women coming on at the end saying, "We have concentrated only on three women, three different choices, but there are so many more possibilities." In the Chichester production we had Harold say at the end: "Mom, look, there they are. Nuns with violins, prostitutes with double-bass, and so on," and that was lovely. But then Sam suggested we should have shadows instead of the speech. This has gone on and off, and on and off, and I lost. I think it's a huge shame. I want to say that we have so many more possibilities, not just these three. Every choice we make takes us on a different journey leaving behind many parallel might-have-beens...

Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and R. W. Connell, eds.: *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities.* **Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005**

By Valerie Palmer-Mehta, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, U.S.A.

1   The publication of the book Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities marks a watershed moment for the field of critical men's studies. Edited by leading researchers in the field, Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and Robert W. Connell, the collection provides a rich overview of developments within critical men's studies, primarily from a social science perspective, establishing the viability of, and productivity within, the field. The book includes key articles by those researchers who have had a meaningful impact on the development of the studies on men and masculinities, as well competent and interesting articles from newer, yet still accomplished, voices. The book provides a solid foundation upon which one could teach an upper level undergraduate or graduate course on critical men's studies, largely from a social science perspective. However, those who come to the study of men and masculinities from the humanities may find a lack of representative articles because, as the editors assert in the introduction, "even though there are important debates from the humanities," "it is the social sciences that have produced the greatest amount of research on men and masculinities" (3). Consequently, the scholarship within the humanities does not find ample representation throughout the book. Certainly, providing what is perceived as "fair" representation across disciplines is a challenge for any book that seeks to provide an overview of such an interdisciplinary topic as the critical studies of men and masculinities.

2   The book is divided into five sections. The marrow of the book begins by presenting essays that offer various theoretical perspectives for researching men and masculinities, including social theory, feminist theory and queer theory. By selecting these essays to commence the volume, the editors have provided diverse perspectives through which to theorize masculinity, one that is informed by approaches that speak to both the social sciences and the humanities. Such variation in approach is critical to providing a sense of the complexity and depth involved in studying masculinities. Each article aptly provides a historical context for its chosen theoretical perspective, a discussion of interventions into the theory as well as future directions for theorizing masculinity. Judith Kegan Gardiner touches on the issue of race in her article on feminist theory. However, an additional theoretical exposition that focuses specifically on the intersection of masculinity and race / ethnicity would have been a welcome addition to this section of the book. Of course, one must take into consideration that there are many lenses through which one can view masculinity and the

editors obviously had to make choices that cast the broadest net.

3   The second section entitled, "Global and Regional Patterns," urges readers to reflect on how global contexts, globalization, development, and postcolonialism influence the construction and iteration of masculinities. Here issues of race and ethnicity gain a greater theoretical voice, as if to answer my concern regarding race in the first section, and the range of voices is impressive. Robert Connell, for example, provides a framework for reconceptualizing masculinities as "a feature of world society" and for understanding "men's gender practices in terms of global structures" (72). Certainly there is a tendency to think of masculinities locally and individually, and Connell urges us to push past the local toward a rethinking of masculinity in terms of macrocontexts. This section provides postcolonial perspectives on masculinity in the third world, as well as reflections on masculinities within specific cultural contexts such as Latin America, East Asia and Europe. Black masculinity in Africa and the U.S. also are discussed in detail. The chapter authored by Robert Morrell and Sandra Swart covers an impressive array of ideas related to postcolonialism, development and indigenous knowledges, and includes the ways in which men have functioned as both the oppressed as well as the oppressor in various times and locations.

4   Section three focuses on the structures, institutions and processes that undergird and influence masculinity in societies. The collection of articles in this section addresses all of the major socializing institutions, such as the family, the legal system, the educational system, the media and the workplace. The section also addresses issues of class and sexuality, which are tied to the broader structures of capitalism and heterosexual normativity. Because I am intrigued by the intersection of hegemony, ideology and the social construction of identity, I was compelled by this particular collection of essays and their interrogations of those broader social structures that ultimately dovetail together to reinforce particular conceptualizations and performances of masculinity. Morgan's article on class, which leads the section, is particularly provocative. Morgan rightly points out that historically class has not been gendered, and "it has been only in relatively recent times that any discussions of gender and class have come to focus on the practices of men rather than those of women" (176). There is a lacuna in the intersection of masculinity and class, and Morgan lays out a great case for exploring this important terrain further.

5   The fourth section, entitled, "Bodies, Selves, Discourses," provides an overview of the ways in which the experience of embodiment intersects with the performance and reception of masculinities. The essays span a range of relevant topics invested in corporeality such as sports, violence, bodily normativity and transgendering. Michael Messner's article reviewing

the work completed at the intersection of masculinity and sports is foundational because sports continues to be a central site where hegemonic masculinity is reified and where men establish their dominance not only over women, but also over other men.

6   The final section, which is given the title "Politics," offers an eclectic and important mix of essays that reflect on the historical and contemporary intersections of masculinities and nationalism, terrorism, militarism and citizenship, which is particularly fitting for the complex global political situation in the 21st century. As Paul Higate and John Hopton argue, "the nexus linking war, militarism, and masculinities has remained an enduring and consistent feature of societies and their cultures across time" (432). At the turn of the 21st century, the U.S. has seen a resurgence of the intersection of masculinity and militarism, with dramatic implications for U.S. foreign policy, and material implications for human life. For instance, Carl Cameron, reporter for the conservative U.S. Fox News network, posted fabricated quotations on the network's website declaring that 2004 democratic presidential candidate John Kerry had stated, regarding himself and incumbent President Bush, "I'm a metrosexual-he's a cowboy." Oliver Burkeman in the *Guardian* newspaper reported, "the 'metrosexual' story taps into a persistent theme underlying the election race, in which the Republican party and its supporters in the media have sought to make a campaign issue of the candidates' perceived masculinity." The intersection of masculinity, war, terrorism, and citizenship has salient implications for human life, and can be seen not only in the U.S., but around the world, such as in Scandinavia and the Middle East, as Michael Kimmel aptly points out in his chapter entitled, "Globalization and its Mal(e)contents: The Gendered Moral and Political Economy of Terrorism." The final chapter of the book by Michael Flood provides a fitting ending because it focuses on men's collective struggles for gender justice through anti-violence activism, providing a humane perspective on how and why to untangle oneself from unjust power relationships. Flood demonstrates how some men are fighting to educate others about patriarchal and heterosexual privilege and working to end abuse and promote social justice. Flood also shows what a precarious position these men face, as the backlash against pro-feminist / anti-sexist men can be vicious and, I would argue, dangerous. Consequently, from this reader's perspective, such efforts should be encouraged, recognized and praised.

7   Without question, Kimmel, Hearn and Connell have gathered intriguing and worthwhile essays that provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of the major developments in critical studies of men and masculinities. The book is a "must read" for those interested in the critical study of masculinity. Editing such an important collection is undoubtedly fraught with difficult choices regarding what should be included. Certainly it is

impossible to cover or include every disciplinary area to that discipline's satisfaction, yet the editors have done, in this reader's view, a respectable job addressing key concepts and ideas. Of course, coming from the humanities, I would have liked greater representation of work from this realm of inquiry. In particular, greater discussion of the implications of masculinity's representation in the media (television, film, advertisements, comic books) would have been welcomed, as the media is such a pervasive and powerful force in the lives of so many. Of course, I would be remiss if I did not disclose that my primary area of research involves the media. Disciplinary proclivities are neither shocking nor new, but the study of men and masculinities has always been an interdisciplinary enterprise and, as it continues to grow, I believe it will be a mutually reinforcing enterprise between the humanities and social sciences.

Ina Habermann: *Staging Slander and Gender in Early Modern England.*

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003

By Kai Merten, University of Kiel, Germany

1   "I consider defamation principally as a mode of social exchange which operates on the basis of the spoken word - hence my overall focus on oral defamation, or slander." (1) Recent tabloid, i.e. paper, battles over celebrity love affairs would thus clearly seem to be beyond the scope of Ina Habermann's book - and not only for historical reasons. However, what makes her concisely argued and well-written study fascinating also for anyone interested in the contemporary politics of gendered defamation is the way in which it traces the topic in a period no less obsessed than our own with individuality, reputation and social as well as erotic prowess. Early modern England differed in many respects from present-day Britain but the problems of self-fashioning and of the husbandry of one's own economic and social position that Habermann examines are not only similar to today's culture of self-realisation but can also be read as an archaeology of contemporary forms of subjectivity.

2   The principal 'archaeological' difference of the English Renaissance is exactly that it experienced an intensive confrontation of (older) oral and (more recent) written forms of communication. Therefore, textuality's competition with and anxiety about orality is what permeates Habermann's book, and she impressively demonstrates how this confrontation was acted out particularly in connection with the phenomenon of slander, traceable through a range of oral and corporeal practices and present in texts of all genres including legal and religious treatises. 'Slander', however, is not only where text and theatricality, pen and tongue, come together, it is also the field where the sexes and - importantly - the constructions of gender meet. Habermann offers the model of a "slander triangle" (2) including slanderer, listener and victim, and it becomes clear throughout her study that, although positions may change within this constellation, women are mostly the victims in what is chiefly a discourse of male exploitation of and self-assertion against women. Women may have been widely depicted as slanderers in early modern culture, but this depiction is in itself mainly a slanderous one.

3   The study pays particular attention to the theatre, the "performativity" (4) of which, according to Habermann, offers a unique perspective on social situations, thus enabling audience and critic to observe the psychology and sociology of slander before anyone (except the slanderer, that is!) has become aware of slander taking place. However, within the concept of performativity, Habermann also takes issue with the uncritical equation of performance

with illocution and argues for a fresh look at the differentiation between illocution and perlocution. It is exactly in slander and its rhetoric of persuasion and manipulation that the fundamentally perlocutionary character of language becomes apparent. Language may acquire illocutionary power, i.e. the capacity to act through words directly, but only from the principally unstable and precarious position of perlocution. In this context, drama is of particular relevance to Habermann's argument not least because of its traditional connection with rhetoric and the law. Aristotle already described poetry, especially tragedy, as negotiating "between the general and the merely incidental" (5), thus connecting it to the notion of equitable jurisdiction - the modification of the law to make it more justly applicable to individual cases. Habermann therefore considers drama as "equity", a site of "the dynamic and unpredictable exchange indispensable for true inquiry and exploration" (6) comparable to juridical negotiations (which were in fact often practised in theatrical format at the London inns of court). Slander, however, functioned as the dark and no less theatrical reverse to equity's "ethics of fair judgement and good faith" (7).

4   Chapter 1 applies this to the more general relation of language to slander and posits slander as a kind of dark rhetoric, a sinister but nevertheless competent use of persuasive speech. In the period under scrutiny, language was considered necessarily rhetorical for it was only through the (social) practice of language that the gap between word and thing, or between saying and meaning, could be bridged. Language only functioned - indeed existed - as usage.

5   Habermann explores this notion further in her reading of Othello in chapter 2 by showing that manipulation of this gap can be effective but only in a violent way. Iago welds word and deed together when he makes others turn his evil speech into crimes. However, it is exactly the difference between illocution, i.e. unproblematic acting through words, and perlocution, i.e. an effective, emotionalising and manipulative usage of words, that enables the slanderer, by merely talking about violence, to persuade others to carry out his crimes: Iago's linguistic actions are not straightforward, let alone generally transparent, but they gain fatal effectiveness through his magisterial use of the indirection and contextuality of any use of language. At the same time, language's perlocutionary precariousness - and the potential exploitation of this precariousness - become the (theatrical) normality of the world in Othello. From the perspective of the early modern period, then, there could be no ignoring the linguistic gap, it could only be bridged, either by means of violence and manipulation or else by means of social sanctions. This led to an attempt to control language through the legal

system and ultimately to a splitting up of rhetoric into an official, 'male' version and a 'female' one, unruly, dangerous and marginalised.

6   Chapter 3 and 4 consequently trace the complex legal history of slander, thus "bring[ing] into dialogue the scholarship of traditional legal historians with the sensibilities of literary criticism" (43). In English jurisdiction, slander was originally treated as an equivalent to physical assault. It was dealt with by the ecclesiastical courts and punished almost regardless of the fact whether the imputation was true or not. In the later course of the Middle Ages, the actual content of a slander became increasingly important and defamation jurisdiction was gradually taken up by secular courts. At these, "a most precarious situation" (47) resulted, in which slander as a criminal offence that endangered the public peace was based on the illocutionary equation of word and deed, whereas in private cases more modern, 'perlocutionary' assumptions concerning the instability of language were applied. It was exactly through the latter field, i.e. (practised) civil law rather than public law or legal writing, that slander jurisdiction came to play a major part in what Habermann sees as a humanist turn of the law, an equitable and experimental treatment of individual cases. Later, however, this culture of debate also served factional dispute and institutional closure, thereby facilitating male 'homosocialization' of the legal system.

7   Chapter 4 analyses the - passive as well as active - role of women in the legal discourse of slander. Within the complex entanglement of official and unofficial, juridical and ritual, forms of conflict settlement in the early modern period, Habermann reconstructs the important function of women as "brokers of oral reputation" (chapter title), which was, however, played down in legal treatises by men and strongly curtailed by an increasingly 'textualised' legal system. "[S]ocial ritual and forensic inquiry" finally "m[et] on the early modern stage" (67), and the theatre, in dramas such as Webster's *The Devil's Law Case* and Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, displayed and analysed not only a whole range of slander discourses but also the involvement of women in the practices of oral reputation. Both dramas posit the theatre as the supreme and most 'equitable' site of legal conflict settlement and women as important participants in these theatrical solutions, both for themselves and for the community as a whole. Implicitly, however, female power remains strongly contained and feminine settlements subtly disparaged, and so comedy emerges not so much as a critique of patriarchal institutionalisations of the law - let alone a counteracting force to them - but rather a mitigation of the consequences of this development.

8   The plays under consideration in chapter 5 are in the tradition of Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* and therefore of a more ambitiously literary nature, linking slander to the question of

authorship itself. In these dramas, women become the object of a courtship symbolic of "the uncertainties of social advancement through persuasive rhetoric" (79). As touchstones of male success in a modern, increasingly individualist society, they are strongly fetishised and occupy a limbo position between praise and slander. In *The Faithful Sheperd*, femininity is posited as the origin of the instabilities in a contemporary society recast as a pastoral world. Only one female character can be "[p]roperly husbanded" (86f.) and so engenders a re-semantisation of the Petrarchan language of desire into a discourse of property that in its turn can be connected to the author's own "struggle for patronage and advancement" (88). Ben Jonson's *The Devil Is an Ass* projects femininity as a "(tragi)comedy in which men play all the parts" (92), ultimately testifying to both the male power to create (fictional) women and to the function of these fictions in a patriarchal society. Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*, however, goes another way. By recasting female slander as brokerage of oral reputation and as a genuine negotiation of gender relations, rather than simply an authoritarian expression of them, the narcissism and cruelty of men's sexual politics are exposed and criticised.

9   However, in contemporary (male) treatises on defamation, which Habermann analyses in chapter 6, slander is not only again heavily feminised but also written onto the body. The corporeal epitome for the spirit of detraction is the tongue, an "unruly member" (108) routinely associated with women. Slander is variously described as an evil force, disrupting both the community and the state as a whole, and as a "technology of power" (104), against which another technology, "the discourse of science" (105), has to be pitched. Although slander treatises, as a generalisation of particular cases (often connected to the authors themselves), stand in a reciprocal relation to slander plays, which *particularise* the general phenomenon, Habermann discovers a fascinating fusion of the two genres in the university play *Lingua*. As suggested by the title, *Lingua* is an attempt to concretise and thus to pin down the elusiveness of social communication in a twofold manner: by making the very scientific embodiment of an unruly female orality, the tongue, appear on stage as a female character. Hence it is not surprising, as Habermann impressively argues, that slander again came to function in an epistemic metadiscourse of the period in that, by being variously characterised as physical assault and 'intelligent' strategy, it embodied the transition from the medieval mind-body *communio* to a period in which "the modern dichotomy between mind and body" (113) began.

10   The pastoral writings examined in chapter 7 deepen the misogyny displayed by the scientific discourse on slander and thus reveal the more sinister - and authoritarian - side of the power practices of the church compared to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction explored in

earlier chapters. The key image of a religiously motivated language scepticism is the notion of "government of the tongue," title of several pastoral treatises. "The tongue comes to stand as *pars pro toto* for the sinning Christian who must be governed, cured, examined, disciplined and punished" (122) and who is generally feminine, i.e. a woman or an effeminate man. Women's religious writing of the period avoided both the rhetorical eagerness of this discourse and the image of the tongue and instead developed a sober and meditative language of the heart and soul, which addressed God rather than the shallows of the world, but which nevertheless became quite acceptable and marketable. In this context, psalm translation emerged as the site not only of female self-fashioning but also of ambitious literary projects. In her translation, Mary Sidney Herbert both dissociates herself from slander and re-claims 'the tongue' in an impressively confident performance of authorship. The religious discourse as appropriated by women writers thus comes back to invigorate the very female (authorial) tongue it had set out to slander.

11   Habermann's last chapter explores slander's most complex formation and most potent fantasy, the "virtuous woman wrongly accused of incontinence" (135) or "slandered heroine" (chapter title). Slander in this context becomes a strong image of the "linguistic interpellation of the subject" (137) as explored by Judith Butler in that - as an assault against both property/matter and psyche - it stands for the interpellatory fusion of body and mind, things and words. In this context, *Othello*, with its absolutely unstoppable and almost joyful drive to kill Desdemona, appears as the tragedy of "an erotic embrace," in Stephen Greenblatt's words (141), of the interpellating power structures. Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam*, on the other hand, dramatises the female assertion of honour and subjectivity as tragic and figures the death of her heroine as active resistance against the paradoxical praise/slander dialectics and as "obedience to a higher principle" (150) beyond the world of patriarchal interpellation.

12   All in all, slander appears as the projection onto women of what is in fact a *human* fallibility - the dependence on an unstable language and a restrictive social order. This is perhaps the most profound insight of Habermann's book but ultimatley also the most frustrating one. Slander, as the site in early modern culture where a far-reaching cultural and social transition was negotiated and played out, was also the field where women appeared as the victims of this development - both discursively, in that they were associated with the 'archaic' and unruly sphere to be overcome, and practically, in that their political and social practices, or their participation in them, became increasingly marginalised. Women bore the brunt of what was of course a transitional development in the history of *both sexes*. In this respect, Habermann's exploration of the relationship of slander and (human) subjectivity is

what impressed me most about her study, but it is also at this point that I would tend to disagree slightly. Compared to early modern theatricalised and feminised subjectivity, Habermann sees the subsequent period of the 18th century as a phase of the "autonomous" (136) and self-contained subject and of the on-stage celebration of self-silencing femininity. However, the problem of (self-)expression of the subject within (and by means of) political and legal institutions as well as cultural media is a transhistorical one, and both this problem and its gendered 'solutions' haunted the 18th century just as much as the 16th and 17th. Having read Habermann's book, one finds just as much exteriorised and feminised (inter-) subjectivity in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* as in Renaissance treatises and just as much gendered slandering in William Wordsworth's tragedy *The Borderers* as in *Othello*.

Martina Tißberger, Gabriele Dietze, Daniela Hrzán, and Jana Husmann-Kastein, eds.: *Weiß - Weißsein – Whiteness: Kritische Studien zu Gender und Rassismus: Critical Studies on Gender and Racism*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2006

By Elahe Haschemi Yekani and Beatrice Michaelis, Humboldt-University Berlin

1   This much-needed collection of German- and English-language essays on Critical Whiteness Studies combines different disciplinary and thematic approaches to the topic and explores this relatively new field in German academia. The articles - all of them well-structured and of readable length - interrogate a number of important (political) questions: What are the blind spots of German feminism when confronted with its own hegemonic position? Can Critical Whiteness Studies serve as a tool to approach the structural racisms that so are so easily neglected when racism is time and again only equated with right wing extremism and Neo-Nazi brutality? And how can we clarify the fact that race is not something that applies only to racially and ethnically marked people, but has a lot to do with Whiteness and Occidentalism?

2   Martina Tißberger's two essays try to shed some light on the psychological effects of Whiteness or, to be more specific, the absence of an informed White perspective in dominant German psychological discourses. In her first German-language essay, "Die Psyche der Macht, der Rassismus der Psychologie und die Psychologie des Rassismus," Tißberger explores the history of her discipline and its entanglement with racist practices such as intelligence tests. On a smaller scale, she also records the defense mechanisms of White German psychotherapists she interviewed on their understanding of race and racism in her second, English-language contribution, "The Project(ion) of 'Civilization' and the Counter-Transferences of Whiteness." Tißberger demonstrates how resistant (German) psychology still is to a critical understanding of Whiteness as a privileged subject position.

3   Nado Aveling in "More than Just Skin Color: Reading Whiteness across Different Locations" explores notions of Whiteness across age and place. Collecting data from conversations she conducted with White university-educated Australian women in their mid-thirties, White Australian school children (both male and female) aged 12 to 17 and White German university students in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties on White subjectivity and racial privilege, she was continually being confronted with the groups' power-evasiveness, colour-blindness, and the general difficulty of speaking about Whiteness. Especially the group

of German students repeatedly attributed their paralysation in the face of race, racism and Whiteness to the history of Nazi ideology and German post-war education on it.

4   Jana Husmann-Kastein's article on "Schwarz-Weiß. Farb- und Geschlechtersymbolik in den Anfängen der Rassenkonstruktionen" examines the European tradition of black and white imagery and deconstructs it as a gendered system of thought and representation that is fundamentally linked to a specifically occidental dualism. Those symbolic traditions are at work in European racist discourses, which construct the colors black and white as anthropological categories. Focusing on the 16th up to the 18th century Husmann-Kastein explores the implications of these color symbolics for a gender-specific racism.

5   In her text "Weiße Körper als Fetisch: Konsequenzen aus der Ausblendung des deutschen Kolonialismus," Isabell Lorey focuses on the problem that gender still largely constitutes the primary category in much of German feminist research. The failure to properly address Germany's colonial past has also helped to conceal White women's status as accomplices. Feminist research has centered so exclusively on the "fetish" of the devalued White female body that it has neglected to understand its hegemonic position in terms of race. Drawing on Foucault's theory of gouvernementality, Lorey seeks to develop a feminist perspective that does not mourn the purported devaluation of the body but that accounts for the different functions of its valorization.

6   Sabine Broeck's remarks on "The Subject of Enlightenment: Notations Towards an Epistemology of Slavery, Gender and Modernity" delineate some of her theoretical assumptions as part of an extended research project to deal with slavery, gender and modernity. Broeck criticizes the implications of White Western gender theory in the self-articulations of transatlantic (post)modernity. Moreover, she demands a self-critical reflection of the epistemological premises of White feminist and gender theory, which in her view uncritically employ a concept of the modern enlightened subject that is deeply entangled in colonialism, slavery and racism.

7   Daniela Hrzán's essay on "Re(Discovering) FGC: Anthropology, Whiteness, Feminism" analyzes discourses on Female Genital Cutting in US-American cultural anthropology concentrating on their relevance for the genealogy of debates around this issue. Also, she investigates the roles of categories such as Whiteness and gender in the production of knowledge on FGC.

8   In her reading "Rassendiskurse in den Nachkriegszeit: Winnetou in Bad Segeberg" of the immensely popular theatrical representation of the *Winnetou* novels by the German author Karl May, Kathrin Sieg demonstrates how the "Bad Segeberg Festspiele" helped to re-

establish a German national identity in post-WWII Germany. Sieg focuses on how a German White male identity was purged from the collective guilt by being portrayed as the brother and defender of North-American Native Americans. She also discusses the "heterosexualization of the 'Wild West'" that is required to successfully establish this idealized brotherhood between the races. By importing an American model of heroic masculinity German masculinity could thus be re-centered.

9   Michaela Wünsch examines the *Halloween* horror movie series. Her text "The Horror of Invisibility in the Stalker Film," explores how the usually Black encoded horror villain (such as the monster or vampire) is replaced by a new White protagonist. The stalker horror genre has brought forward an explicitly White protagonist: Michael Myers, the killer whose face is hidden behind a white mask and around whose gruesome resurrection the series is constructed. In this context, Whiteness becomes a powerful "empty signifier" (172). Wünsch explores filmic techniques such as the subjective camera, the cutting and slicing of the image as a means to depict this specific "horror of whiteness."

10   Vron Ware's "Mothers of Invention: Good Hearst, Intelligent Minds and Subversive Acts" combines a reading of Lillian Smith and Malcom X's autobiography with Spike Lee's movie *Malcom X* and the positions put forward by the editors and contributors of *Race Traitor* for inquiring into the possibility of practices abolishing Whiteness as a system of dominance. Ware demands that theoretical insights gained by Critical Whiteness Studies must have the potential for transformative and interventionist social practices and should speak to and from a specific history of "political responses to race-thinking by those categorized as white" (182).

11   Nanna Heidenreich's "Von Bio- und anderen Deutschen" starts with a reading of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Angst essen Seele auf* (*Ali: Fear eats the Soul*). She is concerned with the visibility of *Ausländer* (foreigners) in German cultural discourse. In this context, Heidenreich speaks of a "deutschen Ausländerdiskurs" (203). Germanness and being White are equated time and again, thereby producing fatal blind spots.

12   Finally, Gabriel Dietze reconstructs the history of Critical Whiteness Studies and proposes her model of Critical Occidentalism as a mode of hegemonic self-reflection that might be more applicable to a deconstructive analysis of European and especially German practices of racist Othering.

13   All in all, *Weiß - Weißsein - Whiteness* is a recommendable and significant contribution to the relatively young field of German Critical Whiteness Studies. In a short time span a number of important books, such as this collection (but also the 2006 collection

Mythen, Masken und Subjekte. Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland. Maureen Maisha Eggers, Grada Kilomba, Peggy Piesche, and Susan Arndt, eds. Münster: Unrast, 2006) prove that Critical Whiteness Studies are an expanding field of research. The price of 42 Euros might not make the book easily attainable for some, but it is definitely a must read for (German) scholars focusing on Whiteness, racism and gender theory as well as on reflections of scientific knowledge practices and academic genealogies. Especially its critical focus on the intersections of race and gender make this book interesting both from a gender perspective as well as from a Critical Whiteness perspective.

List of Contributors

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