UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

What's Past is Prologue: A Revolutionary Approach to Adaptations Studies

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Suzy Woltmann

Committee in charge:

Professor Meg Wesling, Chair
Professor Alain J.-J. Cohen
Professor Sara Johnson
Professor Charles Thorpe
Professor Nina Zhiri

2020

The Dissertation of Suzy Woltmann is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2020

EPIGRAPH

Books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.

Umberto Eco

Most everything is a knockoff of something else. Once you get the idea, everything you see, read, taste or smell becomes an allusion to it. It's the art of transforming things.

Richard F. Thomas

One who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together.

Gerard Genette

What's past is prologue.

William Shakespeare

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my committee members for their endless support and help. I appreciate you all so very much.

Chapter 1, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *The Diary as Literature Through the Lens of Multiculturalism in America*, 2019, Suzy Woltmann. It is also, in part, a reprint of the material as it appears in *Language, Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2018, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

Chapter 2, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, 2020, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

Chapter 3, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Marvels & Tales*, 2020, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

Chapter 4, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Postcolonial Interventions: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 2019, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

The Conclusion, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Woke Cinderella: 21st-Century Adaptations,* 2020, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

VITA

2020 Doctor of Philosophy: Literature, University of California San Diego

2014 Master of Arts: Literature, University of Central Florida

2010 Bachelor of Arts: Literature, New College of Florida

PUBLICATIONS

2020
Woke Cinderella: 21st-Century Adaptations, Lexington
"'Beneath it all Something as yet Unnamed was Coming into Focus': A Queer Reading of Malinda Lo's *Ash*," *Marvels & Tales* Fall 2020
"'This is My Gift to You': Aesthetic Value and the Search for Utopia in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*," *MEJO: The MELOW Journal of World Literature* 4: 14-21
"'Wicked Persons': *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Witchcraft, and Colonial Law," *The Journal of Dracula Studies*
"'Transformation is the Rule of Life': Environment and the Search for Utopia in *The Hungry Tide*," *Environment and Postcolonialism: A Literary Response*, Lexington
2019
"Appetite, Anatomy, and Desire in Caroline Era Poetry and Theatre," *Humanities* 8.2 special issue *Regulation and Resistance: Gender and Coercive Power in Early Modern Literature*: 89-107
"*Annie John*, the Postcolonial Palimpsest, and the Limits of Adaptation," *Postcolonial Interventions: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 4.1: 138-170
Tidbits: One-Page Stories, ed., Smashwords.
"'Pointless, Ridiculous Monster': Monstrous Abjection and Event in 'The House of Asterion' and *Grendel*," *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 9.1
"Third Gender Agency and Voice: Ideological Diaspora and the Hijra Community," *South Asian Review* special issue *Growing Up in the Diaspora: South-Asian Children*
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"Postmodernity in *It Follows*: Sexuality and Simulacra," *British Fantasy* 19: 35-42.
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"'She Did Not Notice Me': Gender, Anxiety, and Desire in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*." *Humanities* 7.4: 104-128
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Cinderella in America: The Evolution of an American Fairy Tale. NCF Collection

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

What's Past is Prologue: A Revolutionary Approach to Adaptations Studies

by

Suzy Woltmann

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California San Diego, 2020

Professor Meg Wesling, Chair

In this dissertation, I argue that adaptations studies can intersect with more traditional forms of literary theory, and that transformative adaptations are themselves a form of literary criticism. Using a revolutionary approach that interweaves different literary theories – African-American, psychoanalytic, queer, postcolonial, and postmodern – I make an intervention in contemporary scholarship (headed by Linda Hutcheon, Thomas Leitch, Julie Sanders, Cristina Bacchilega, Jack Zipes, and others) about adaptations studies to demonstrate its unlimited intertextual potentialities. Adaptations disrupt canonical hierarchies and create new forms of subjectivity that make possible different forms of empowerment and mastery than is present in their source texts. The transformative process takes place when an author changes a text by adapting it; however, it also occurs between texts, and from author to reader. *Transformative* indicates the ongoing process of these adaptations. Through revisionism, they affect the fundamental nature of their source text(s) and open authoritative narratives to questioning. The

texts addressed in this dissertation are Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone*; Jorge Luis Borges' "The House of Asterion"; John Gardner's *Grendel*; Malinda Lo's *Ash*; Aime Cesaire's *A Tempest*; Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*; Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*; and an assortment of parallel novels. These texts enact the transformative process through the rhetorical tools of collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality. They demonstrate the significance of intertextuality and the capabilities of literature as a form of empowerment. Reading the shifting meanings of these texts *as adaptations* shows the ideological transformations each undergoes and how they encourage an interactive readership. Adaptations that rewrite their source texts in a transformative way create a discursive web that allows for revolutionary approaches to literature and literary analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change. – Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* 4

Some stories stay ingrained in the literary imagination. These stories are shared time and again, subject to changed characters and altered plot points that still leave the narrative recognizable. From intertextual retellings to transmedia reimaginings to genre (and gender)-bending reboots, adaptations possess cultural capital rooted in the peculiar intersection of nostalgia and subversion. In this dissertation, I claim that some adaptations are *transformative*. I choose this term deliberately because I wish to differentiate these adaptations from those that simply alter mediums or retell a story for a contemporary audience. The term transformative indicates the ongoing process of these adaptations – that they alter something already written in a way that creates unlimited potentialities. Transformative adaptations affect the fundamental nature of the source texts they address to open authoritative narratives to questioning. They revise their source texts in a way that exposes the process of adaptation as something that changes the way readers approach literature. My methodology extends contemporary adaptations studies in a revolutionary way that argues for its intersectional potential. I make an intervention in traditional adaptations studies to show how it can intersect with more traditional approaches such as African-American, psychoanalytic, queer, postcolonial, and postmodern literary theories. Further, adaptations are a sort of literary criticism themselves. A transformative adaptation acts as a critical evaluation of its source text(s), analyzing and problematizing its tropes and authority by writing it anew. Reading an adaptation is therapeutic; visiting new possibilities for a known narrative allows readers to reconceptualize and destabilize their interpretation of and relationship to that narrative.

We must return to the idea of adaptation-as-process, and therefore reading-as-process, in order to tease out all its exciting potentialities. It is necessary to restore to adaptations "a genuinely celebratory comprehension of their capacity for creativity, commentary and critique" (Sanders 225). The highly personal nature of creativity, commentary, and critique encourages an empowered readership. Reading a fairy tale adaptation with a queer protagonist may mean more to someone in the queer community than it does someone else. Similarly, twisting and fleshing out the colonizer/colonized relationship will open up highly personal forms of empowerment for someone who has intimate experiences with colonization. By encouraging readers to take a second look, and then a third, and a fourth, at any given text, adaptations create more possibilities for their authors, protagonists, readers, and the world. They take popular canonical literary texts and work to reconceptualize representations of identity, gender, sexuality, race, and power present in these texts. I argue that they do this through collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality: the ways transformative adaptations create something new through collective knowledge, alter other texts, and allow for a proliferation of voices.

Transformative adaptations rewrite known stories through different perspectives, which implies that fictional history is emplotted and that all narratives can and should be questioned. At the same time, they create empowerment for the lives of characters who are marginalized in their source texts. These characters' oppression in source texts is usually because they are seen as Other, often predicated on their gender, sexual, and racial identities. Transformative adaptations respond to the sources they adapt from to demonstrate the impossibility of any authoritative narrative. Instead of simply subverting the stories in their source texts, transformative texts open up a world of possibility by exposing gaps, silences, and oppression and the voices that might fill

these spaces. By troubling the representation of identity and identity-based practices in canonical texts, these adaptations imply a fluidity of citational practice. They question stereotypes in their source texts and in doing so encourage readers to question these stereotypes as well. These works respond to their source texts as well as the contemporaneous historical moment in a way that signifies yet updates older material. My core questions in this dissertation include: How are power relations construed in transformative adaptations? What positions do gender, sexuality, and race hold, and how do these representations intertextually communicate with past texts? What are the theoretical foundations and rhetorical devices that allow for compelling adaptation? How are these texts living documents, and how do they (re)conscribe portrayals of gender, sexuality, and race to allow empowerment? My main objective is to identify the myriad ways in which adaptations create a dialogic, intertextual web that responds to source texts, historical moments, and even each other. This is critical to understand a shared literary tradition.

Adaptations that transform their source texts through the process of revisionism may respond to a perceived lack of voice or agency for a marginalized character; subvert the narrative to expose oppressive forces, particularly sexist and racist apparatuses; or expand our understanding of what it means to be Other, even within a completely fantastical narrative. Reading an adaptation relies on a thirst for knowledge about the recursive nature of art and literature. One must be interested in how literature (re)produces literature (Sanders 15). There is no origin and therefore no end to the adaptive process. Of course, just as no man is an island, no text is created in a vacuum. The danger of adaptations studies is that it may give way to a never-ended search for genealogy and intertextual reference points, or the "reproductive dimension of appropriation" (15). I explore the potential for this danger in my fourth chapter, which considers the limits of adaptations studies. However, while keeping in mind the possibility of reductive and

self-affirming literary practices, I contend that theorizing adaptations produces powerful analyses that would be impossible without thinking of them *as adaptations*.

Recent scholarship from Linda Hutcheon, Julie Sanders, Thomas Leitch, Robert Stam, and Cristina Bacchilega explores adaptations' cultural, historical, aesthetic, and political possibilities.[1] This epistemology engages explicitly with the creative capital of adaptation. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon posits that much of the joy of reading an adaptation derives from "the pleasure of repetition with variation" (4). Historically, adaptations studies has dealt with this juxtaposition through the lens of fidelity. A good adaptation, it was believed, paid homage to its textual benefactor by remaining true to it. Otherwise it risked, as Virginia Woolf avowed, being deemed a "parasite" to its literary "prey" (309).[2] The fidelity standard relies on the belief in literary hierarchies and subjugation to authority: if the author of an adaptation does not submit to the authority of a so-called origin text, they are found lacking. Since its early days of focusing on fidelity, however, adaptations studies has taken a turn to investigate instead the stakes of adaptation. Important questions include "how and to what uses" do adaptations function (Bacchilega ix)? And "what are the stakes, and for whom" of adapting a text (ix)? The crux of adaptations studies lies within the process of adaptation itself – the what, who, why, how, where, and when, as well as the adaptive medium. By thinking about how texts are being adapted, for what purpose, and to what end, readers attain a more rewarding understanding of the significance of these adaptations. I argue that much of what should be considered about adaptations lies in shifting power dynamics and forms of hierarchy and subjugation. Transformative adaptations

[1] See Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*; Julie Sanders' *Adaptation and Appropriation*; Thomas Leitch's *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*; Robert Stam's *The Dialogics of Adaptation*; and Cristina Bacchilega's *Fairy Tales Transformed.*

[2] Woolf expresses her agitated interest in cinema as an art form that mimics other art forms. She further asks, "If it ceased to be a parasite, how would it walk erect" (309)?

alter these dynamics to encourage readers to reconsider what they believe they know about their source texts. The three main ideas that I see driving transformative adaptations are collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality. In each chapter, I show how these are used to encourage interactive readership.

The significance of any given text – adaptation or not – lies within its ability to empower its readers by introducing them to new perspectives and ways of thinking. *Collaborative originality* is a revisionist process that encourages interactive readership. Collaborative originality is different from traditionally-defined originality, which relies on independent creativity. Instead, collaborative originality is the collective process that creates something new out of previously known works. Theorists of adaptations studies argue that originality is founded in the new ways we approach known subjects and texts rather than in the nebulous quality of original production itself.[3] Authors of adaptations do not create original work completely anew; instead, they combine previous works in a newly original way. This pushes back against more traditional literary theory that highly values the originality of a text. When reading an adaptation, readers are comforted to recognize a story that they know, and simultaneously thrilled by the change. The most satisfying element of adaptations lies in the interplay between the known and unknown. The change means that adaptations do not lose the Benjaminian aura,[4] since they are not mere reproductions (4). Instead, the variation on form demonstrates an investment in transformation, which then encourages readers to invest themselves in the process as well. The very act of reading an adaptation causes readers to become re-writers; readers are aware of an adaptation's literary predecessors and so start to create connections through the process of

[3] As early as 1919, T.S. Eliot questioned the "tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else" (37).
[4] In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin says that the aesthetic value of art, or its aura, is devalued through reproduction.

reading. Roland Barthes calls engaged readers "writers of the text" (142), which implies that reading is itself an act of re-writing. Texts, particularly adaptations, encourage re-interpretation instead of simple passive reception. As Barthes and Julia Kristeva claim, there is no singular author – rather, any text is created through a combination of other texts, events, linguistic deviations, and so on (Barthes 143). This is further mirrored through Michel Foucault's take on authorship, which similarly argues for writing as its own good.[5] Literature itself is a kind of discourse, which means that text is something that functions within a series of interweaving signs, a system of interpretation that functions in relation to itself.

It is more so the process of revisionism, rather than the product, that matters when it comes to the notion of originality. New modes of collaborative originality inherent in a recently highly technologically-connected world means that readers are even further removed from the notion of truly original creation and static meaning. T.S. Eliot and others have questioned the inclination to reject works that are seen as unoriginal because they are informed by other texts,[6] and Edward Said says that the writer should not be concerned with originality but rather with rewriting.[7] I extend this argument to show that the significance of an author's text comes from how the text encourages readers to reconsider their perspective. The meaning of the text is in its relation to the world rather than how it reads as an extension of the author. Since text represents a complex, dialogic plurality of interpretation, it encourages active reader response. By engaging with the text, readers (re)produce the meaning.

[5] In "What is an Author?" Foucault notes that "we can easily imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author" (314).
[6] Eliot says in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that "no poet, no artist, of any art, has his complete meaning alone" (38).
[7] In "On Originality," Said says "the writer thinks less of writing originally, and more of rewriting" (135).

Transformative adaptations also engage interactive readership through *intertextual queering*, or the ways that they alter their source texts. All adaptations are inherently palimpsests, texts that bear the traces of other texts.[8] This means that other works are being intertextually hailed, and that the act of writing itself is metatextually established. When readers recognize a character, event, or trope in an adaptation, it encourages them to think about their interpretation of that figure based on previous knowledge. For example, discovering Antoinette's traumatic backstory in *Wide Sargasso Sea* asks readers to reconsider how her character is portrayed in *Jane Eyre*. The transformative adaptation intertextually communicates with its source text(s) and in doing so advocates for interactive readership. The term intertextuality is attributed to Kristeva, who argues that texts are dynamic, active works that change meaning with each reading and therefore encourage interpretation instead of simply providing information.[9] Kristeva calls texts "mosaics" that rearrange pre-existing structures (66). Texts are not static constructions, but instead represent dynamic conflict and change between ideology and culture, author and readers. Adrienne Rich,[10] Harold Bloom,[11] Homi Bhabha,[12] and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.[13] establish that all writing is in some way informed by its literary predecessors. This

[8] In *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, Gérard Genette distinguishes between five different types of transtextual relationships. Hypertextuality is the relationship between secondary text and the hypotext, or source text. Paratextuality is the relationship between the text and writing that surrounds the main body of the text (titles, footnotes, etc). Metatextuality is one text making critical commentary on another text. Architextuality is the relationship between a text and its genre. Finally, intertextuality is any relationship between texts.
[9] Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue and Novel" says that intertextuality is "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*" (Kristeva 85).
[10] In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision," Rich notes that "we need to know the writing of the past and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (369).
[11] Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* discusses the overwhelming anxiety authors feel to be in thrall to the influence of past writers and their works. He argues that all writers in some way adapt or revise previous texts and compares this to the Oedipal complex to show how literary sons feel the need to battle their forefathers.
[12] Bhabha discusses the concept of hybridity to show that certain motifs are "repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition" (207).
[13] Gates, Jr. discusses the intersection of black vernacular and African-American literature to show how authors signify on black tradition and on each other's works. See the following chapter for a more in-depth discussion of Gates, Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey*.

contention is shared by Jacques Derrida, who finds that writing never refers to just one thing but rather an infinite web of influences.[14] This infinite web of hybridity encourages readers to produce meaning by making connections between texts. Contemporary adaptation theory builds on these past theories of intertextuality to argue for the importance of looking at the space between texts.

Through intertextual queering, transformative adaptations change the perception of source texts instead of simply repeating their narratives. The dynamic purpose of intertextuality is to create meaning; the adaptor salvages a past text in order to transform it into something new. Looking at adaptations intertextually, with double vision, allows readers to see the work and text, or process and product, at the same time. Readers view the source text and its implications at the same time as interpreting the adapted text, and in this liminal space the potency of adaptation explodes with meaning. Or as Sanders rephrases Hutcheon, the pleasure of the adaptation "exists, and persists, then, in the act of reading in, around, through and on (and on)" (31). Extending Stam's move away from the fidelity standard for adaptations studies, Leitch proposes that the most productive way of understanding adaptations is to focus on intertextuality and the process of adaptation itself: the ways that adaptations might extend, challenge, or explore ideas brought up in their source texts. I use the approach espoused by Leitch, Hutcheon and others to focus on the value of the adaptation itself instead of constantly comparing it to – and necessarily finding it lesser than – an authoritative source text. Instead, especially as explored in my final chapter, I focus on the value of the transformative process of adaptation itself.

This process is especially potent in texts that intertextually queer their source texts. The transformative adaptations I theorize queer their canonical source texts in two ways: 1) they

[14] Derrida says that "the desire to write is the desire to launch things that come back to you as much as possible" (157).

portray non-normative genders and sexualities, and 2) they re-portray a known story in a topsy-turvy way (thereby queering the known tale). In doing so, these texts disrupt the patriarchal impulse of authoritative canonical texts. This process offers a "queer invitation" to investigate the liminal space between adaptations and source texts (Orme 87). Transformative adaptations offer a queer invitation because they imply that there is not a single narrative truth but instead a web of dialogic sources that each have something to offer. This implication destabilizes the notion of an authoritative canon and opens up both adaptations and sources to queer potentiality, or a disruptive force that pushes against normative readings and encourages alternative ways of understanding. Further than this methodological queerness, however, the texts I address in this dissertation also all invite a queer intertextual reading because of their non-normative representations of gender and sexuality. These adaptations include trans-species desires; monstrous sexuality; gay and lesbian sexualities; and children's burgeoning desires, amongst other non-normative depictions of gender and sexuality. I argue for the significance of intertextual queering throughout this dissertation but most explicitly in my chapter on *Ash*, where I use it as my theoretical foundation.

Another tool that creates a transformative adaptation is *perspective plurality* – providing many perspectives on a given topic. Transformative adaptations empower readers to question what they think they know about source texts by showing that there are other ways to consider the topic. They often do this by providing voice to characters who are largely voiceless in their source texts. For example, reading Grendel's description of the events of *Beowulf* does not erase his portrayal in the epic poem but instead adds texture to the known tale. Perspective plurality is also often achieved through heteroglossia, or many voices, which encourages readers to think about the plurality of perspectives in any given narrative. Heteroglossic language focuses on

linguistic interaction and diversification and thus produces more complex possibilities. Mikhail Bakhtin, who created the term heteroglossia, says that the heteroglossic text produces meaning through relationships between voices.[15] Similarly, in a dialogic text, meaning is found through interrelations and interactions rather than through access to a single viewpoint. Dialogism allows for multiple voices instead of a single oppressive/authoritative one. Looking through multiple lenses creates a more complex series of interpretations than simply submitting to the author's singular ideological view. In my conclusion on the parallel novel, I argue this point further with a more refined scope. Much of the power of transformative adaptations lies within their ability to produce a plurality of perspectives.

Perspective plurality even takes place metatextually in adaptations studies; there is almost an unlimited vocabulary of terms used within the field. Leitch identifies the categories of celebrations (which entail curatorial adaptation, replication, homage, heritage adaptation, pictorial realization, liberation, and literalization); adjustment (comprising of compression, expansion, correction, updating, superimposition); neoclassic imitation; revisions; colonization; analogy; analogue; parody; pastiche; and allusion (100-23).[16] While these categories were meant to clarify previously muddled types of adaptations, Leitch admits that they are "embarrassingly fluid" (123). These categories build on Gennette's, Hutcheon's, Stam's, and Sanders' approaches to adaptations categorization. The adaptations I analyze fit at different times within the scope of different strategies but match up most closely to what Leitch calls colonization and what Sanders

[15] Bakhtin says that "the novel senses itself on the border between the completed, dominant literary language and the extraliterary languages that know heteroglossia" (67).

[16] Celebrations are adaptations that try to remain as true as possible to their source texts. Adjustments make a prior text more suitable for film. Neoclassic imitations borrow from the past to demonstrate something about the present. Revisions rewrite the original in more extensive ways than adjustments. Colonizations imbue past texts with new meanings. Analogies depart from the source text's meaning simply for the sake of creating new art, and analogues use prior formulas to inform their texts. Parodies satirize their models, while pastiches, perhaps the most difficult to define, mimic without relying on satire. Finally, allusions are brief intertextual references.

deems appropriation:[17] texts that purposely transform the way readers think about the source text(s) and therefore transform readers themselves. Adaptations studies' varied perspectives on its topic of study mirrors how transformative adaptations provide readers with a plurality of perspectives to represent a more complete picture.

My dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter 1, "Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Intertextual Haunting in *The Wind Done Gone*" explores how *The Wind Done Gone* parodies *Gone with the Wind* to retell the story from the point of view of an enslaved woman on Tara Plantation and demonstrates an African-American authorial tradition of worrying the line through signification. I rely on African-American literary theory to argue that *The Wind Done Gone* intertextually parodies the portrayal of stereotypes and sexuality found in *Gone with the Wind* and worries the line of African-American literary tradition through its use of the rhetorical tools of irony, signposting front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents found in slave narratives. By doing so, the adaptation illustrates the continued haunting presence of slavery in today's cultural imagination and pushes against its ideological effects. African-American authors often rely on signifying past works as a sort of literary tradition that highlights racist discourse. In my argument, I modify the current theoretical discussion about postmodern adaptation, which posits that reworking something that already exists intervenes in the previous political moment as well as the contemporary one to bring a new set of knowledge. This applies to *The Wind Done Gone*; however, I argue that reworking and parody have a specific function that intersects with African-American literary criticism.

[17] In *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*, Leitch says: "Colonizing adaptations, like ventriloquists, see progenitor texts as vessels to be filled with new meanings. Any new content is fair game, whether it develops meanings implicit in the earlier text, amounts to an ideological critique of that text, or goes off in another direction entirely" (110).

In Chapter 2, "Monstrous Abjection and Event in 'The House of Asterion' and *Grendel*," I investigate how these adaptations of traditional legend take notions of the monstrous abject in the popular imagination and recreate the Beowulf epic and the myth of the Minotaur, respectively, from the point of view of the monstrous Other. Using psychoanalytic theory, I argue that "The House of Asterion" and *Grendel* transform the monster to be an insidiously empathetic and thus ultimately more sublime representation of the abject. They intertextually invoke their parent texts and explore the monster's own maternal parentage, which leads to their eventual (and Evental) demise. First-person narration in these adaptations about the abject forces us to empathize with the monstrous Other. By reading these texts as adaptations, we reconsider the depictions of myth and legend that we know. Myth creates a system of representation that allows us to discuss what makes us human; and some of what makes us human is inherent monstrosity.

Chapter 3, "A Queer Reading of Malinda Lo's *Ash*," argues that *Ash* adapts the Cinderella story in a way that pushes against heteronormativity and opens it up to queer potentiality. Using queer theory as a foundation, I argue that *Ash* extends the heteronormative idealism of the "Cinderella" story to queer potentiality by creating a recursive queer time of fairy tales and dreams and representing non-heteronormative framing and relationships. Writing queer subjects who operate in queer time allows Lo to reconfigure the heteronormative hierarchies of the traditional fairy tale. In doing so, she challenges assumptions about gender and sexuality and asks readers to rethink what they believe about the "Cinderella" fairy tale. By shifting narration from an authoritative space (the "once upon a time" tale that has always been around in some incarnation or another) to a personal one, *Ash* and other transformative adaptations encourage

readers to empathize with the heroine and question traditional narratives. Through this process, the hierarchies of authoritative texts become destabilized.

In Chapter 4, "The Postcolonial Palimpsest and the Limits of Adaptation," I claim that *Annie John* adapts *A Tempest* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, themselves adaptations of *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre*, and so explore the limits of adaptations studies. Drawing from postcolonial theory, I claim that *A Tempest* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* adapt their source texts in a way that exposes colonial ideology by shifting narration to the colonized subject and location to the Caribbean. *Annie John* further responds to this practice of Caribbean revisionism by signifying not only *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre*, but also their most prominent postcolonial Caribbean adaptations. This shows that the process of revisionism, rather than defining the result, is what matters when it comes to adaptations studies. In this chapter, I show how adaptations studies can provide ways to think about texts that themselves are not adaptations-as-such.

The conclusion, "Rhetorical Strategies of the Postmodern Parallel Novel," further argues that the rhetorical strategies that allow for a transformative adaptation at the cross-section of the genre are collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality. This chapter elaborates on the claims made in this introduction to apply specifically to the parallel novel. Using postmodern theory, I contend that the notion of literary ephemerality, or the inability to name or otherwise grasp potential narrative concepts, demonstrates the project of the postmodern parallel novel: to question, destabilize, and show how there might be a variety of perspectives for any otherwise authoritative narrative. This is significant because these strategies ask readers to question how literary worlds are constructed and connected, thereby also encouraging postmodern critique. Viewing patterns at the cross-section of the genre gives a more

comprehensive view of just how these strategies work – and therefore, the work they accomplish. Finally, I provide a system for the taxonomy of transformative adaptations.

Chapters move from examining adaptations one-to-one (*The Wind Done Gone* to *Gone With the Wind*) to two-to-two (*Grendel* and "The House of Asterion" to *Beowulf* and the myth of the Minotaur) to one-to-several (*Ash* to many "Cinderella" variations) to several-to-several (*Annie John* to *A Tempest* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, themselves to *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre*) to a broad overview at the cross-section of the genre (many parallel novels and their source texts). This progression is meant to demonstrate the expansive potentiality for adaptations studies: not only is adaptations studies able to intersect successfully with a variety of other traditions of literary theory (African-American, psychoanalytic, queer, postcolonial, postmodern, and surely more), but it also provides a useful foundation for literary investigation through a web of discursive texts and analyses.

The transformative (inter)texts I analyze all destabilize notions of narrative authority in their source texts. Their source texts have through time and popularity become imbued in the cultural imagination as authoritative narratives, often cemented further through popular film variations. Rather than seeking a singular narrative truth, however, these adaptations instead advocate that there are often many truths functioning simultaneously, and that they are each worth addressing. Looking at any piece of literature as standing alone denies its significance. Instead, exploring literature's dynamism teases out potentialities and discursive literary processes. Relying on different literary theories for each chapter demonstrates that adaptations studies itself is transformative through its reliance on collaborative originality, intertextual queerness, and perspective plurality. The adaptations examined herein all reframe narratives in order to present possibilities for previously silenced literary subjects to have story and voice even

in the context of severely constrained agency. By infusing previously thingified characters with the density of individuality and humanity, adaptors engender a shifting consciousness. Transformative adaptations encourage readers to reconsider what they think they know about any given narrative; and this process is critical to keep them curious, to keep them questioning.

CHAPTER 1

Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Intertextual Haunting in *The Wind Done Gone*

Mammy is my mother. I think of her more as the days pass. I can't pass away from her. – Alice Randall, *The Wind Done Gone* 161

Towards the end of Alice Randall's 2001 novel *The Wind Done Gone* (*TWDG)*, readers are confronted by an epistolary inclusion: the narrator's mother, Mammy, writes from beyond the grave to negotiate a marriage proposal for her daughter. Mammy's voice is clear. As Cynara, the narrator, says when she reads a letter written by Mammy to advocate for her daughter's marriage, "syllable and sound, the words were Mammy's" (Randall 162). *TWDG* retells the history of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (*GWTW*), and so the inclusion of Mammy's voice and identity as something far beyond just a source of support for *GWTW*'s protagonist, Scarlett, is jarring and even revolutionary. Randall gives voice to characters who lack agency in *GWTW* and in doing so infuses them with complex personhood. *TWDG*'s heteroglossic approach signifies other literary works, especially its source text and slave narratives. I argue that *TWDG* intertextually parodies the portrayal of stereotypes and sexuality found in *GWTW*, and worries the line of African-American literary tradition through its use of the rhetorical tools of irony, signposting front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents found in slave narratives; by doing so, the adaptation illustrates the continued haunting presence of slavery in today's cultural imagination and pushes against its ideological effects. This matters because as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Cheryl Wall, Avery Gordon, and others show, African-American authors often rely on signifying past works as a sort of literary tradition that highlights racist discourse. In this chapter, I modify the current theoretical discussion about postmodern adaptation, which posits that reworking something that already exists intervenes in the previous political moment as well as the contemporary one to bring a new set of knowledge. This applies to *TWDG*; however,

reworking and parody also have a specific function that intersects with African-American literary criticism. This is essential since in Mitchell's iconographic text filled with nostalgia about the enslaved South, Cynara could not write her own text. There is no singular original she is referring back to, but rather a multitude of previous texts along with slavery's haunting legacy. *TWDG* responds in an original way not only to the romanticized view of the Confederate South created in Mitchell's immensely popular epic, but also to recurring race and gender issues in the years since its publication.

Randall's entire literary project is a self-proclaimed "unauthorized parody" that seeks to "explode" the mythos of its source text (cover). As Gates explains, African-American authors often respond to racist discourse by signifying on "white racism through parody" (102). The exaggerative effect of parody can hyperbolize problematic beliefs to the point of ridiculousness. *TWDG* accomplishes this by telling the story of Tara (here Tata) Plantation from the point of view of one of its enslaved people and reversing the racist paradigmatic and benevolent paternalism set up in Mitchell's text. In this adaptation, Scarlett is herself part black through a Haitian ancestress, and she and Cynara are half-sisters through Mammy's affair with Scarlett's father. This sort of intertextuality through "embedded signification" was viewed as copyright breach by Mitchell's estate (Gates xxxi). Embedded signification is "revision through recontextualization" (xxxi). It creates something anew by referencing past works in a way that makes the adaptation become part of the original as much as the original becomes part of the adaptation (xxxi). Since Mitchell's estate saw Randall's choice to kill Scarlett as ending the potential for future adaptations, they took Randall to trial to prevent publication. Although the court found too many similarities between the texts to find Randall's work unrelated, her claim for the social significance of parody (particularly for African-American authors) allowed for the

novel's publication. The case rested on the notion that *TWDG* is a "transformative work" (Grossett 1125). Much of this transformative work occurs in the novel's use of countercultural voice that resists *GWTW*'s known narrative. *TWDG* democratizes the authoritative resonance of *GWTW* and demonstrates that there are other voices that exist in tandem with the canonical tale. These voices include marginalized characters from *GWTW* as well as a history of African-American literary work, which populates *GWTW*'s story world with a plurality of perspectives and intentions. By relying on a countercultural approach, Randall creates a dialogic text that destabilizes the notion of a dominant perspective. This matters because it puts forth an argument that all stories matter, not just the ones we have heard the most.

While *TWDG* was published nearly two decades ago, it has been the subject of little literary scholarship beyond an insightful book review by Lovalerie King, who briefly notes the text's practice of signification; an article by Nicole Argall, who defines Cynara's journey as "Africana womanist" (231); an article by Bettye Williams, who argues that the impetus of parody "is that the appropriation fuels a critical commentary on the original" (313); and a chapter devoted in Richard Shur's *Parodies of Ownership*, in which Shur applies what he calls hip-hop aesthetics, or a new theory of signification as it relates to hip-hop, to *TWDG*. Most other analyses of the novel focus purely on legality issues surrounding the copyright battle brought forth by Mitchell's estate that sought to prevent publication of the adaptation. These responses use language from the court case and imagery from the novel as jumping off points to discuss larger issues of intellectual property, first amendment rights, the public domain, parody, and piracy. However, while *TWDG* has not been given much scholarly attention, it is important to do so because of the way it demonstrates African-American literary tradition and signification through the lens of adaptation. This expands the theoretical approaches of Gates, Wall, and others that

show how adaptation is integral to this tradition. The lack of scholarly attention given to *TWDG* is not correlated to its lack of popularity, however. The novel caused quite a stir at its (eventual) publication: it reached several bestseller lists and was even nominated for the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work. Perhaps the adaptation has not been given much scholarly attention because it reads as a literary criticism itself, pointing out historical inaccuracies, broad assumptions, and racist ideology permeating *GWTW*. Randall stated in a 2001 interview that part of the inspiration for her parody novel was the pervasiveness of the phrase "I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' babies" she often heard used in the Southern United States (qtd. Kirkpatrick 4). This phrase is used by the slave Prissy in the film version of *GWTW*, and Randall grew tired of hearing white people using it as an indicator of ignorance (4). While much scholarship has pointed to the racism inherent in the portrayal of slaves and romanticized view of slaveholder culture in *GWTW*, Randall tries a different tactic and revises the novel itself. Her writing invokes many specific moments from the source text but reframes it to give black characters much more agency – and, of course, to add some titillation.

TWDG reflects an ongoing historical dialogue about African-American experience, so I use African-American theoretical criticism to help unpack the novel. In particular, I rely on African-American feminist discussions of intersectionality, Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s theory of African-American literary criticism, Cheryl Wall's study "worrying the line," and Avery Gordon's discussion of haunting in the sociological imagination. African-American feminist scholars argue that oppression takes place through racism, sexism, and classism, and that these categories cannot be parsed. The experience of being a black woman cannot be broken down into just race or gender but must be understood intersectionally. Traditional feminist theory does not account for the experience of black women in America; literature is inextricable from culture so

the vigilant scholar must consider variable heteroglossic interactions even within the same community (Carby 17). "Multiply-burdened," black women are often left out from both antiracist and feminist politics since these cannot account for the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw 140). Since "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (140). Oppression occurs concurrently. This means an impoverished woman experiences the world differently than a wealthy woman or impoverished man does, and so on. Kimberle Crenshaw advocates using a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to the politics of racism and sexism, which would "develop language which is critical of the dominant view and which provides some basis for unifying activity" (167). In *TWDG*, Randall develops language critical of the dominant view by representing Cynara's intersectional first-person narrated experiences. Cynara encounters systematic oppression due to both her race and her gender, and these categories must be addressed in tandem.

As Gates claims, signification and literary parody are used by African-American authors to "create a new narrative space for representing the recurring referent of… the so-called black experience" (121). He argues that African-American authors signify and parody other texts to push back against dominant narratives. In *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, Gates asserts a theory that argues for the importance of signification, or meta-discourse that involves doubling and re-doubling signs through repetition and revision (52, 57). He draws a parallel between African-American rhetoric and mythology to demonstrate that while this repetition and revision does respond to Western discourse, it also has roots in African history. Although African-Americans often signify by responding to Western criticism, it also

takes place a priori to this criticism. African-American literary tradition is not some monolithic entity, argues Gates, but rather a systematic approach to rhetoric through signification. Authors refer to other authors and their works and reuse thematic elements and motifs in order to signify upon them to create new rhetorical approaches to meaning. This extends Zora Neale Hurston's argument that "originality is the modification of ideas" rather than creating something entirely anew (42). Gates actually devotes an entire chapter to Hurston's acts of signification, which include formal revision of Frederick Douglass, Frances E.W. Harper, and Jean Toomer; later, Hurston's own work would be signified on by Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and others. By referencing these specific acts of signification, Gates demonstrates the potency and continuity of a literary tradition long ignored in Western discourse. He gave a statement for Randall when she went to trial against Mitchell's estate, saying:

> Scholars have long established that parody is at the heart of African-American expression, because it is a creative mechanism for the exercise of political speech, sentiment, and commentary on the part of people who feel themselves oppressed or maligned and wish to protest that condition of oppression or misrepresentation . . . and 'Transformative Uses'/*TWDG* is only the most recent instance of a long and humorous tradition ("Declaration").

This assertion demonstrates the significance for African-American authors specifically to use parody as a subversive response to oppressive discourse.

Similarly, Wall traces intertextual practices in the works of black women writers. She shows how African-American women writers play with literary tropes to stake a claim in a new tradition that represents collective experience in individual ways. In blues music, worrying the line is an expression to describe changing the meaning or pitch of a melody; in African-American literary tradition, worrying the line is similar to the signification and revision-as-process advocated by Gates and refined by Wall. In *Worrying the Line: Black Woman Writers,*

Lineage, and Literary Tradition, she argues that the concept of lineage works differently for African-Americans, whose families were often torn apart due to slavery. Literary depictions of the African-American experience are "complicate[d]" by troubled lineage, as well as forms of hierarchy and subjugation such as gender and class (6). Instead of writing about traumatic interracial encounters like many black men writers do, she contends, contemporary black women writers often write instead about intimate relationships (6). In doing so, these writers show that the best defense against racist oppression "is the formation of a cultural identity derived from an understanding of history" (6). Wall shows how stories by black women writers are negotiated intertextually and intergenerationally to recount past narratives. Through repetition, revisions, and allusions, these writers show the impact of cultural memory. She notes: "A worried line is not a straight one. Writing in and across diverse genres, contemporary black women writers revise and subvert the conventions of the genres they appropriate, whether the essay, the lyric, the memoir, or the novel" (13). This means that black women's writing, such as Randall's, is inherently intersectional and should be examined as it correlates with several literary traditions. *TWDG* explores the intimacy of Cynara's troubled familial and romantic relationships as they coincide with systematic racism; it does so by revising and subverting the novel's conventions while simultaneously signifying a shared history of black women's experiences. Randall uses these intertextual interactions to invoke the literary precedent and authority of *GWTW* but also a tradition of African-American literature.

African-American experience is also accounted for through the sociocultural phenomenon of haunting. In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery argues that the living death of slavery continues to haunt not only African-Americans but also people from all modes of life. Gordon shows how people are connected through complex

personhood, a concept which "means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward" (104). This entanglement allows for shared cultural memory and dialogic histories. Avery also contends that "complex personhood means that even those called 'Other' are never never that" (4). By writing the story of an enslaved woman with complex personhood in *TWDG*, Randall reveals that Cynara is "never never" Other. She calls Scarlett the tongue-in-cheek title "Other," which ironically demonstrates her awareness of the significance of complex personhood. Randall further signifies collective African-American experience by showing how slavery haunts the cultural imagination and by alluding to other slave narratives.

While some have found fault with Randall's zealousness in her project to queer the legacy of *GWTW*,[18] zealousness is a large part of what makes for productive parody. Randall uses what Bakhtin deems internally persuasive discourse, which invites dialogic response because it is "half ours and half someone else's" (Bakhtin 582). She not only parodies her source text but also self-parodies via "extraliterary heteroglossia" through critique of the racist ideology set forth in Mitchell's view of the Reconstruction South (Bakhtin 7). *TWDG* does not make the argument that Mitchell's version of events is incorrect and only the adaptation provides the true, right story. Rather, it puts forth the notion that there may be more than one story operating at any given time, and that "truth" is discovered through shifting individualisms rather than being a static category. Authoritative discourse gains its power from existing removed from the individual; it comes from no-place, no-time, and infinite power. Though readers know that Margaret Mitchell wrote *GWTW*, the distance in time between its composition, subsequent filmic

[18] New York Times book reviewer Megan Harlan calls the novel "spare, flat and oblique" (*New York Times* "Books" 1 July 2001).

popularity, and contemporary readings grants it a certain static power. Conversely, internally persuasive discourse invites dialogism because it is "half ours and half someone else's" (Bakhtin 582). By rewriting an authoritative narrative, Randall calls for readers to question their own notion of cultural truth and to consider the haunting presence of *GWTW*'s authority throughout the American ideological imagination.

GWTW is a vast bildungsroman that tells the story of charming but temperamental Scarlett O'Hara alongside the backdrop of the South throughout the Civil War. The book romanticizes a lost Southern culture through its focus on social etiquette, love entanglements, and a sympathetic view of slavery. Its main theme lies within the struggle for survival, however: Scarlett seduces multiple men and breaks with ladylike tradition in order to stay alive and keep her land. In *TWDG*, the narrator Cynara shows a different view of growing up on Tata Plantation. Her mother Mammy still dotes on Scarlett (here Other) as she does in *GWTW*, but in *TWDG* this attention is seen as vengeful. Mammy cultivates Scarlett's personality in an attempt to have revenge against white men. Cynara is sent away from Tata because the plantation owner and Scarlett's father, Planter, wants Mammy to focus her full attentions on Other without the distraction of her other child there. Mammy dies, and Cynara and Rhett (R.), who she has been having an affair with, move to Washington. In response to this, Other drinks herself to death. While this moment is somewhat anticlimactic in the text, it signifies Randall's true break with the world of *GWTW*. In another contentious move, Randall also fashions Scarlett's love interest Ashley (Dreamy Gentleman in *TWDG*) and the prostitute Belle (Beauty) as queer. The novel is overtly parodic, but the implicit critique in *TWDG* works to problematize intersectional racism in *GWTW*.

Randall shows the plurality of voices in any given authoritative narrative and historicizes her characters in a way that signifies *GWTW*. The characters in *GWTW* reference many literary works, including several of Shakespeare's plays and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and also dozens of historical figures and events. In *TWDG*, Cynara similarly references her awareness of and occasional interaction with historical figures, including Edmonia Lewis (Randall 25), Dredd Scott (28), Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Tubman (50), Sally Hemmings (78), Francis Cardozo (78), and others. Cynara even goes to visit Frederick Douglass at his house at one point in the text. This appeal to authority through inclusion of real people who could vouch for her presence intertextually parodies *GWTW* and also mimics how many autobiographic slave narratives were introduced through someone else, usually a socially privileged white person. Cynara also demonstrates her familiarity with the English/American literary canon through a vast array of allusions including those to Calypso/Odysseus (13), Hansel and Gretel (37), Moses, Mary and Martha (50), and three of Shakespeare's plays: R*omeo and Juliet, Cleopatra*, and *Othello* (90), which extends Scarlett's allusions to *Julius Caesar, The Tempest,* and *Macbeth* in *GWTW*. Cynara even references Daphne du Maurier's famous opening line to *Rebecca*, published just two years after *GWTW*, when she says that "Last night I dreamed of cotton farm" (13). The shift from vast English estate to forced place of servitude is ironic while also showing that Cynara is a contemporary construction meant to show the ways that slavery continues to haunt us today.

TWDG also demonstrates this kind of intertextuality and haunting by problematizing several stereotypes about African-American women, in particular the Mammy and Jezebel stereotypes. Randall challenges racism specifically as it intersects with gender, embodiment, and sexuality and demonstrates the oppressiveness of these stereotypes. By appropriating and

twisting stereotypes about women and sexuality, she also responds to stereotypes about women and sexuality that take place in the source text, particularly those produced through an oppressive lens. Patriarchal narratives in the antebellum south elevated white female purity and prudence while casting black women into sexual tropes; they were either the Mammy, an unsexed older woman who was often considered part of the family, or the Jezebel, who was believed to have a voracious sexual appetite. As Patricia Hill says, the Mammy stereotype was purposely "created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women's long-standing restriction to domestic service" (qtd. Sewell 310). *GWTW* helped to solidify the Mammy trope in a kindhearted but passionless flat character who tries to teach Scarlett the rules of courtship.

In *GWTW*, Mammy's only desire lies within her simplistic and unquestioning love for the O'Hara family. She is depicted as old, black and elephantine: she is "a huge old woman with the small, shrewd eyes of an elephant... shining black, pure African" (Mitchell 30). Yet despite her blatantly nonsexual portrayal, Mammy is oddly entwined with Scarlett's sexuality. While Lady O'Hara does not see through Scarlett's veneer of gentility, Mammy does, and takes it upon herself to chastise her charge when she feels she is behaving improperly. Mammy is also in control of Scarlett's main means of attracting suitable mates – dressing in finery and lacing her tiny waist – and dictates rules that Scarlett should follow in order to properly enter society. Rhett recognizes her position as "real head of the house" (1212), and yet Mammy has little if any agency. She instead sacrifices her own individuality and sexuality for the O'Hara family, even to the extent that she keeps working for them after Emancipation.

TWDG undermines this dominant narrative but shows how it still haunts by satirizing Mammy as an overtly sexual creature with complex maternal inclinations all while keeping her

title of "Mammy." The juxtaposition of blatant sexual behavior with her sexless name parodies her positionality in *GWTW*. Here, despite her name, Mammy does not fit into the Mammy stereotype. By aligning a black mother character with subversive sexuality, Randall also invokes other neo-slave narratives that accomplish similar projects.[19] A discourse shift takes place in *TWDG*: Mammy's character is the only one to still be called by her name from the source text, but her characterization is vastly different, thus problematizing any preconceived notions about what constitutes a Mammy. In *TWDG*, Mammy is driven and not very stereotypically maternal, which plays on stereotypes that still haunt the American imagination. She purposely sets out to seduce Planter in order to produce mixed children. In historic depictions of the Mammy stereotype, she was a "direct juxtaposition" to the Jezebel, and her largeness contrasted white beauty ideals (Sewell 310).

In a subversion of her character's portrayal in *GWTW* and with the historical stereotype, however, Mammy's sexual attractiveness in *TWDG* is founded in her blackness rather than denied because of it. She is everything physically that Planter's wife is not and this is why he finds her desirable. In fact, Mammy's nights with Planter were of "passion" while Lady's were "civil rape" (Randall 49). This subverts the normative mode of understanding slaveholder/slave sexual encounters and also satirizes the O'Hara's relationship in *GWTW*, a passionless marriage with a 28-year age gap. Gerald O'Hara in *GWTW* is portrayed as a tender man who "could not bear to see a slave pouting under a reprimand, no matter how well deserved" (Mitchell 29). In *TWDG*, however, Randall makes Planter somewhat monstrous, which shows that slavery corrupts absolutely, and a person cannot be tender-hearted while owning slaves. Mammy uses her supposed love for the family to hide her secret project, turning Other into a revenge

[19] For further reading on African-American mothers and subversive sexuality, see Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman's "'The Strangest Freaks of Despotism': Queer Sexuality in Antebellum African-American Slave Narratives."

apparatus to take down white men. She and Prissy also kill white children born to the plantation in order to protect slaves from future slaveholders. This act violently rejects the attributes imposed onto her character in the source text, and Randall depicts this moment to show the many errors in assuming truth in one authoritative narrative. Mammy refuses to adhere to the passiveness imbuing her character in the source text, and this refusal takes place in as shocking a space as possible. In order to take care of her black children and family, Mammy commits infanticide upon white children. This means *TWDG* provides an intertextual interpretation of sexual Otherness and problematizes dominant constructions of sexuality.

Randall also invokes but complicates the Jezebel stereotype through her portrayal of Cynara and Belle/Beauty. Racist beliefs about black savages and their uncontrollable sexuality was a myth used by slaveholders and colonialists to perpetuate systematic oppression and control over black bodies. Black women in particular were often conflated with hypersexuality and wantonness. Their sexuality was conscripted as inextricable from their race. The Jezebel was the "hypersexual, unrapable black woman" who signified all of the unrestrained lust of white masculinity (Leath 196). As Collins says, since "jezebel or the hoochie is constructed as a woman whose sexual appetites are at best inappropriate and, at worst, insatiable, it becomes a short step to imagine her as a 'freak'" (83). The black women in *GWTW* are written as predominantly nonsexual. However, Mitchell portrays the prostitute Belle, a woman who cannot contain her sexual excess, as "white trash" like the Slatterys (12), a family looked down on by the O'Haras and their slaves because they are poor and reside in the swamp bottom. The Slatterys have typhoid, which they pass to Scarlett's mother when she attempts to care for them. They are correlated with disease in a way analogous to Belle's sexual disorder. Since white trash are viewed as equal to or even below "darkies" in the novel (795), hypersexuality and racial

dynamics become conflated. Further, while Mitchell does not explicitly include a black Jezebel character in her text, by writing such a strong Mammy stereotype she implies the existence of the flip side of the coin. A means by which authors literarily respond to the Jezebel stereotype and diminish her "freakiness" is by writing characters who make use of the erotic to create more complex personhood. *TWDG* accomplishes this by telling Cynara's sexual encounters through her own voice so that readers empathize with her, and by rewriting Belle as a queer black woman.

In *TWDG*, Cynara has an ongoing sexual relationship with R., which would put her in the position of Jezebelian sexual excess if she were written as a flat black stereotype character. Yet her sexuality here is something that brings her agency because she is able to reclaim sexual embodiment from dominant white culture. Cynara says "my body becomes my place to play. I become my own playing ground" (Randall 29). It may seem counterintuitive, but she locates her sexual freedom in her own body though it has been so long conscripted by enslavement. While she is having sex with R., she closes her eyes and sees Other (Scarlett) (13). As a young girl, Other made a claim to Cynara's mother's breast that even her daughter was not allowed. Cynara sees this reflected in her later sexual liaisons with a rich white man, a representative of the patriarchal racism that allowed for the sexual commodification of female bodies. Cynara says: "Sometimes when we are in bed and he's sucking on one of my breast, pulling hard and steady so the pull only brings me pleasure, sometimes when he's nursing on me, I smile, because he can't get what he wants here" (16). This correlates with her frustrated desire to suckle at her mother's breast and parallels her impossibility to nurse. R. "can't get" what he wants from sucking on Cynara's breast, just as she could not get what she wanted from her mother. Her smile is a self-reflexive admission of this correlation. While the normative way to escape the

Jezebel stereotype would be through the apparatus of marriage, Cynara ultimately rejects this in order to pursue her own sexual agency. R. asks her to marry him several times over, but Cynara chooses a life of being a wife-sanctioned other woman with an African-American Congressman instead. Marrying R. might have saved her from being considered a Jezebel to the remnants of slaveholder culture ideology, but Cynara demonstrates she chooses to move past that dialectic into a more progressive paradigm.

Randall also shows how stereotypes about black women and sexuality are constructed through the ideologies of slaveholder culture when Planter says that Cynara will become a "trusted Mammy" one day (39). Though she is young and lithe when he says this, Planter displays knowledge that there are only two possible positionalities for black women, at least in the eyes of people like him: the Jezebel or the Mammy. Once Cynara transverses out of the Jezebel stereotype, the only thing left for her to become is a Mammy. This shows how stereotypes are reproduced through social rhetoric and the lingering effects of slavery. Randall's employment of non-normative sexuality and satirical representations of stereotypes therefore does more than one form of work: it exposes problematic racist beliefs in its source text while also worrying the line by alluding to an African-American tradition of engaging in the same process through signification.

TWDG also intertextually responds to *GWTW's* exploration of the sexual dynamics of the antebellum south, which dictated that a woman who delayed engagement and sexual activity held the power in a relationship. This power diminished, however, when she accepted the suitor's proposal (Richardson 53). This courtship-driven public romantic life was heavily informed by the patriarchal expectation that young women defend their virginity and only acquiesce to the right man within the confines of marriage following a long courtship (53). As Mitchell asserts in

GWTW, "before marriage, young girls must be, above all other things, sweet, gentle, beautiful and ornamental" (56). It was the young woman's duty to exude these qualities but also to fend off improper suitors and make the proper suitor wait long enough to realize her worth. Thus sexuality and its consequences lay largely in the female domain. *GWTW* epitomizes this view of sexuality through Scarlett's interactions with men; she indicates the pervasiveness of these rules by undergoing social consequences when she "flouts" them (54). Scarlett learns how to act seductively, but "most of all she learned how to conceal from men a sharp intelligence beneath a face as sweet and bland as a baby's" (58). Her charming qualities make her desirable to nearly every man she meets. However, she "learned only the outward signs of gentility" and has no interior gentility to support her veneer (58). For example, in an attempt to entice Ashley after she hears about his engagement to Melanie, Scarlett flirts with every man at a social gathering, which demonstrates her ability to charm while also exposing inherent problematic desire. Even her fantasies of winning Ashley indicate a desire to flout social convention. She imagines that he asks her to marry him but that "she would have to say then that she simply couldn't think of marrying a man when he was engaged to another girl, but he would insist and finally she would let herself be persuaded" (71). Scarlett believes in giving the appearance of gentility but does not feel the need to actually partake in it, which suggests that Mitchell similarly held a critical view of gentility.

In *TWDG*, Randall intertextually satirizes portrayals of female sexuality found in *GWTW* by depicting several modes of non-normative sexuality. These include the implication of female sexual agency that would be impossible in *TWDG*'s textual predecessor, many interracial couplings, and Ashley and Belle rewritten as queer. Cynara thinks she can possess the African-American congressman she becomes involved with, which means she can maybe also possess R.

She wields sexuality as a potential weapon and means of entrapment, which shows appropriation of the normatively masculine realm. She simultaneously recognizes the intersections of oppression, however; she says that "one way of looking at it, all women are niggers. For sure, every woman I ever knew was a nigger – whether she knew it or not" (Randall 179). This shows Cynara's understanding that patriarchal oppression mirrors racial oppression. If black people are seen as lesser-than in slaveholder patriarchal society, then women are too, whether they recognize it or not. Cynara implies that her identity as a black women makes her more aware of the inescapability of these oppressive categories, whereas many white women rely on the false construct of paternalism to believe themselves free. *TWDG* also includes a series of love letters between Lady O'Hara and her cousin which allow the cousin, who is a black slave, to have his own textual voice, and in doing so intertextually parodies Lady's past love life in *GWTW*. In *GWTW*, Ellen O'Hara had loved her cousin, Philippe Robillard, who is "black-eyed" with "snapping eyes and... wild ways" (Mitchell 41). He leaves her, however, so she ends up in a passionless marriage with Gerald. Randall signifies Philippe's black eyes by making him entirely black. Cynara reads these letters and comments that it is the "same story, different tellers; only the fact of death remained" (Randall 126), which self-referentially indicates this signification. If Randall is telling the "same story" as Mitchell, just with a "different teller," then it must still end in death (126).

TWDG also parodies *GWTW*'s representation of sexuality through its depiction of queerness. In *GWTW*, Gerald O'Hara tries to dissuade Scarlett from her obsession with Ashley by telling her that the Wilkes are "queer folk… not crazy… but queer in other ways, and there's no understanding" their queerness at all (Mitchell 33-4). Here Gerald expresses his dissatisfaction with Ashley's bookishness and solemnity, but Randall capitalizes on his use of the

term to rewrite Ashley as a queer figure. Astute readers of *GWTW* will notice the parodic intent in this palimpsestic moment. Similarly, Randall satirizes transgressive sexuality through Cynara's homosocial relationship with Beauty, an old brothel madam. In *GWTW*, readers first view Belle through Scarlett's parochial gaze. After Uncle Peter refers to Belle without using an introductory "Miss" or "Mrs.," Scarlett states reprovingly that she "must be a bad woman" (Mitchell 150). Here Belle is a clear foil to Scarlett, who knows the rules for being a good woman but who is forced into badness by circumstance and survivalist tendencies. Mitchell constructs this foil at several points throughout the novel through linguistic and behavioral similarities. Scarlett is the "belle of five counties" (59), the "belle of the barbecue" (102), "a delicately nurtured Southern belle" (195), the "belle of the County" (219), and so on. Belle, on the other hand, is the "most notorious woman in town" (248); and yet, Scarlett wants to feel "superior and virtuous about Belle" but cannot, since she is "on the same footing" with her and "supported by the same man" (557). Belle signals her wantonness through her dyed red hair, inappropriately vivid clothing, and, most obviously, her business as a prostitute. She represents what Scarlett could become if she keeps eschewing Southern belle tradition: calculating, shrewd, and purchasable. The boundary between the two blurs especially in the iconic scene when Scarlett dresses herself in drapery in an attempt to seduce Rhett into giving her money to save Tara. Though reluctantly, Scarlett puts herself up for sale in a way that mimics Belle's more explicit prostitution. Mitchell seems to assert a naturalistic view here. Belle and Scarlett are not so different after all, and only the social environment that shapes them allows for different circumstances. This paradoxically critiques the very system Mitchell seems to valorize, therefore reinforcing Cynara's idea that women are oppressed whether they know it or not (179).

In *TWDG*, however, Beauty is more fleshed out than simply being a foil to another character. Randall rewrites her as a queer black woman who sleeps with R. and other men for profit but whose main labor entails nurturing other women. Beauty owns a brothel that she fills with girls she has purchased from slaveowners, and she has intimate relationships with many of them. Cynara kisses her and also another girl "for Beauty's sake" (Randall 34), in an effort to thank her for her many ways of assisting young women. Beauty does not have to adhere to the religious norms of society and so "didn't wait for Sunday for communion" or wait for river baptism (23); instead, she creates her own religion simply by consuming, sharing, and cleansing each morning with her cup of coffee. She has a sort of mysticism and mystery about her, as she "isn't young" yet attracts suitors (23). Her dyed hair and painted face represent an attempt to pass as white rather than visual wantonness, and her reliance on feminine powers gives her a sort of potency not found in other characters. In fact, talking to Beauty causes Cynara to go "straight crazy" and to remember images of her mother, R. and Other (25). Beauty comes out by appropriating masculinity in a European fairy tale – Cynara's dream reminds her of Hansel and Gretel, and when Cynara asks if she's "the witch or the grandmother" Beauty replies "Baby, I'm Hansel" (35). Beauty refuses to identify with either the villainous witch or the vulnerable girl, choosing instead a textual position that would seem unavailable to her as a woman. This intertextual twist of gendered sexual expectations further cements Randall's recursive project.

TWDG also highlights the continued haunting presence of slavery in the sociological imagination by showing how contemporary literature can be used to call forth the ghosts of past slave narratives. The novel is palimpsestic, both as an adaptation and as a text written in the African-American literary tradition. The book heavily alludes to its source text and also to many other narratives about black experience, meaning that the act of reading *TWDG* also implies

remembering or rereading these past texts. It intertextually invokes slave narratives by employing several of their most potent rhetorical tools: irony, signposting front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents.[20] These tools made slave narratives palatable to a primarily white (and often female) audience while still subversively exposing the horrors of slavery. Slave narratives have historically relied on a mix of visceral imagery that describe the horrors of slavery with some sort of appeal to authority or spirituality. These narratives, much like the discipline of sociology, combine autobiographic, ethnographic, and historic elements to further a political agenda. However, the political nature of these narratives required that they be not only believable but also consumable. To mediate this, slave narratives often told two tales: one that the author actually wanted to tell and one that was coded for a white audience. The slave narrative "forgot" many things in order to expose the horrors of slavery and its dehumanizing, objectifying nature while simultaneously constructing the author as human and, despite suffering through slavery, as being not too different from the intended audience.

The slave narrative meant to demonstrate how slavery Others while contradictorily constructing the slave as sympathetic non-Other. By doing so, the authors of these texts hoped to create a dialectic between readers and enslaved person "so that, in the best of narratives, the nexus of force, desire, belief and practice that made slavery possible could be exposed and abolished" (Gordon 143). For example, in order to appeal to a white abolitionist audience, both Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs use Christian imagery in their slave narratives in order to show how religion was often used as justification for cruelty but also to prove that the author was "civilized" through religious indoctrination. This is an explicit act of double consciousness: these

[20] See Nicole Aljoe and Ian Finseth's ed. *Journeys of the Slave Narrative in the Early Americas*, Harry Owen's ed. *Perspectives and Irony in American Slavery*, and Lynn Casmier-Paz's "Slave Narratives and the Rhetoric of Author Portraiture."

authors appeal to the ethos of Christian authority while also exposing its limitations. Because of this double consciousness, autobiographic slave narratives often create ironic distance between narrator and text. The identity of the enslaved person is often created in terms of their oppressor; paradoxically, complex personhood is often located through a complicated identification with one's oppressor and their space of privilege (Casmier-Pas 97). Slave narratives often attempt to write a free (and therefore white) person's story while still showing their racially oppressed position. In response, authors adapt power in order to deny that very power and assimilate to escape. The conception of "free" to enslaved people writing their narratives, Vince Brewton argues, "both draws from and contributes to the identity model of the white slaveholder... in an honor culture" (708). That is, the idea of freedom is connected to the idea of respect so integral to white slaveholder culture. Slave narratives were constrained by the ideological boundaries of white abolitionist readers both in what they would find believable but also in what they would find not too different, too Other, from their interaction with the world. In writing a slave narrative, the slave writes himself into subjecthood (Davis and Gates xxiii). Literacy became the means by which "the African would become the European, the slave become the ex-slave, the brute animal become the human being" (xxvii). To an enslaved person, learning to read and write was, itself, subversive. To gain mastery of language was to break the rules. By mastering the language of the oppressor, enslaved people who wrote narratives were able to fight for subjecthood in a society that tried to render them objects. Any system of slavery rejects the enslaved person from belonging to dominant hegemonic society, and so the experiences people had while enslaved were meant to deny them subjecthood. Writing their narratives represented an attempt to reclaim this subjecthood.

A prominent example of this subversive undertaking, Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* uses ironic language and humor to try and avoid the trap of forming his identity around the values instilled in him by the hegemonic dominant social class of white slaveowners. He relies on ironic subversion and humor to undercut the oppressive system his words must fit into. Face-level irony includes when Douglass writes of the "luxury of whipping slaves" (61), the "natural good qualities of Mr. Covey" and his talent at deception (100, 104), and that the slaves had similar qualities as "slaves of political parties" (57). These ironic statements set the tone for the entire text, wherein Douglass regularly juxtaposes positive and negative imagery, as evidenced in his original depiction of the kind-hearted Mrs. Auld who soon becomes cruel. Finally, there is textual irony, as when Douglass discusses the instruction his master gives him that reading is important and his fight with his overseer Covey. Douglass first attributes the win to a magical root, but then calls it an ignorant superstition (119). The language of the fight is mellifluous and lifting, while the violence it describes dark and jolting. This creates an ironic distance between text and experience. Perhaps the most ironic gesture Douglass makes is his stance on Christianity. While his text is informed by scripture, he portrays Christianity as bad when wielded by the ignorant or evil, which it almost always is in his narrative. His appendix claims his denigration of the religion is only when it is practiced by these evil people. This ironic subversion shows that Douglass is very aware of the limitations of writing within a dominant system and has some tools with which to demonstrate agency even within that system.

In *TWDG*, Randall signifies the restraints used in autobiographic slave narratives such as Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* by taking an ironically different narrational stance. She employs many of the same rhetorical tools used in autobiographic slave narratives, but Cynara is direct in

a way that could never take place in those texts. While still an ostensible act of self-fashioning and self-reflexivity, Cynara's writing takes place in diary form. She does not expect anybody besides herself to ever read it until her later desire to sell her account, and so she gives a no-holds-barred glimpse into her life. Readers join Cynara as she has sexual encounters with several men and women. They are privy to her darker thoughts, including wishing evil on Scarlett and denying faith in God. At one point, she even claims that R. was her God for some time and still should be (Randall 148), but that she no longer believes in his saving powers. Cynara's irony is also self-referential. When talking about the power of reading and writing to create new interpellations, she says that "Othello's just a creation. Maybe just like me" (118). This depicts a sort of postmodern existential irony, which is further established when Cynara angrily writes to "you," her diary, later in the text after the black Congressman reads it (185). "You" refers directly to the diary, but the sudden second person narration reads as a fourth wall break that also hails readers as responsible for Cynara's experience. With this "you," Randall seems to imply that readers are all responsible for the shared cultural memory of slavery. By giving a more robust view of an enslaved black person's thoughts than provided in autobiographic slave narratives, Randall mimics the ironic rhetoric imbued throughout these narratives but twists it for a postmodern audience. Readers see how Cynara hides parts of herself and her thoughts from R. and other white people in a similar way to how slave narrative authors hid parts of themselves. Cynara writes an ostensibly personal diary that she later seeks to get published, which ironically shows how intimacy is put into circulation for money in a way that mimics Scarlett's and Belle's emotional and physical prostitution in *GWTW*. Since Cynara lives in a world controlled by white men, harnessing this intimacy for financial profit is one of the few ways she can gain social mobility. This ironic mimicry also shows how authors of autobiographic slave narrative

attempted to claim subjecthood but had to remain at an ironic distance from their work and demonstrates how *TWDG* worries the line of these narratives and argues for their continued haunting presence.

Like Frederick Douglass, Cynara learns the power of language and irony. R. teaches Cynara how to read and write so that she can read her own slave sale notice and letter. The document upsets her. Even though Planter asks her new owner to treat her well, he still calls her "thing" (Randall 36). She later writes that "I'm still playing pronoun games. Who is object; who is subject; is it me, or am I it?" (141). Haunting shows that language is powerful and can invoke ghosts. This is perhaps best exemplified in Cynara's refusal to call Rhett and Scarlett by their full names. Instead, she refers to them as R. and Other. The mulatto is "unspeakable" Other (Gordon 222), but Cynara voices the unspeakable when she calls Scarlett, a mulatto in *TWDG*, Other. By projecting otherness onto Scarlett, Cynara is able to name herself. She says that "they called me Cinnamon" (Randall 1), indicating that the slaveholders call her that but she does not accept this identity. Instead, she calls herself the name her mother gave her, Cynara, and only tells R. her real name as she is leaving him. She necessarily rejects many of the impositions placed upon her by her master, who is also her father, and in doing so affirms her connection to her problematic mother. As such, she refuses the enslaving patriarchal gaze, since she literally denies her father's name. Denying his name means denying the hold slaveholder culture has on her. Instead of the sweet, consumable spice Cinnamon, Cynara asserts herself with a strong, secret name. The English poet Ernest Dowson's "Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae" says in its most famous line:[21] "I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind" (13), which inspired the name

[21] The title of Dowson's poem is taken from Horace's *Odes* Book 4.1

of Mitchell's novel. By rejecting Cinnamon and retaining Cynara, the narrator of *TWDG* demonstrates an intertextual power of naming that still resonates.

Randall also shows the multitude of ways in which heteroglossic voice can enter the popular imagination by ironically disrupting, and therefore revising, normative discourse. Cynara writes that her thoughts and language often feel disjointed because of her fragmented identity. She puts them into some kind of order through her writing and through song. Cynara's writing is how she ultimately begins a relationship with the congressman, who reads her diary and feels the power of her subversive words. Cynara accepts his reading of her diary because he can understand the reasoning behind her linguistic choices, but when members of the dominant white class attempt to understand her language she is defiant. Planter says he heard her "making up little rhymes to sing" to herself (Randall 3). He attempts to control her song: "'Cindy, come sing, come sing! Ain't you my Cinnamon…?" (3), yet Cynara responds to this with reluctance. Her song is her own type of transgression from normative modes of discourse, and when her enslaver wants her to perform it for him she goes silent, refusing to grant him that power. When Cynara is put up for auction, she hears her mother call to her in terms of pastiche (re)collected song: "Forgetting is to forgiving as glass is to a diamond, mockingbird. If that golden ring turns to brass, Daddy's going to buy you a looking glass, mockingbird" (31). She alters the popular song in a way reminiscent of Douglass's ironic revision of Christian discourse.

Another tool Randall uses in *TWDG* that is taken from slave narratives is the use of a cover portrait to signpost something about its author. Cover portraits were often included in slave narratives in order to provide a "graphic point of reference" for the author's embodied existence (Casmier-Paz 91). This framing gives readers a point of reference for the slave as human. Even though Harriet Jacobs hides her corporeal form at the beginning of *Incidents in the Life of a*

Slave Girl in order to literarily deny her abuser's sexual harassment, readers are aware that at some point the text will have to come back to reconstruct the body as it appears on the cover. And when implied addressee abolitionists complete the slave narrative, they are faced once again with the irrefutable personhood of the embodied author in the front cover picture. The picture creates a textual dialectic: it adheres to anticipated beliefs about the slave narrative by revealing the author's race, but simultaneously subverts these beliefs by illuminating what would be read as the author's civility. This follows in the tradition of sentimental literature front cover portraiture yet simultaneously satirizes it. By prefiguring a specific visual picture and embodied identity, autobiographic enslaved authors transgressively deny the power of the implied abstract image of slave. As Lynn Casmier-Paz puts it, this is not the picture of a member of a "subservient class of servile human beings" (107). It is a picture of someone with complex personhood.

Randall invokes Jacobs' portraiture in her choice of cover art, thus worrying the line of African American women's literary tradition by referencing autobiographic slave narratives like hers. I am not necessarily arguing here that Randall specifically cites Jacobs, but rather uses and plays with similar techniques. In her portrait, Jacobs stares straight ahead into the eyes of readers as if to confront them frankly with her personhood. Her hands lie folded in her lap, perhaps to indicate that she is done with being forced to work. The person (assumed to be Cynara) on the cover of *TWDG* sits, similarly to Jacobs, but looks to the side as if looking back not only on *GWTW* but also other slave narratives. The vector of the gaze signifies that Cynara no longer needs to directly confront the public about the horrors of slavery, but instead looks back to examine how past events can affect current ideologies. Rather than resting, Cynara is at work writing and reinscribing a problematic historical emplotment. Her glance backward and the way

she seems to be hiding her words with one hand also reinforce the notion that her act of writing was meant to be a secret recording of her true thoughts. Further, Cynara's portraiture is on top of what appears to be a leather-bound journal, which is confirmed in the introductory "notes on the text" that declares it as a found document discovered among the effects of a certain "Prissy Cynara Brown" (Randall vi). The placement of a picture atop a journal on the cover of *TWDG* creates a frame-within-a-frame-within-a-frame effect. This recursive mise-en-abîme offers a framing metaphor for how literary "truths" come to be; Cynara's process of writing is not a pure representation but rather intertextual signification between and through texts. This implies that a single authoritative story will never tell the whole story. Instead, narrative truth is approached by exploring a variety of texts from a multitude of perspectives.

Randall also worries the line of African-American literary tradition through her inclusion of confirmation documents, including an allusion to a slave advertisement. In Jacobs' *Incidents*, her assertion of agency and subsequent construction of a new identity is exemplified when she revises the advertisement posted for her capture. This advertisement advertises her body as an escaped slave. It indicates the last time she allows herself to be defined by the oppressor; the advertisement is written by Dr. Flint and represents an embodied Jacobs already in the past. However, her rewriting of Dr. Flint's original posting emphasizes her intelligence and includes certain details, such as the decayed spot on her tooth, missing from Dr. Flint's description. *American Beacon*'s July 4, 1835 advertisement in Norfolk, Virginia says:

> $100 REWARD WILL be given for the apprehension and delivery of my Servant Girl HARRIET. She is a light mulatto, 21 years of age, about 5 feet 4 inches high, of a thick and corpulent habit, having on her head a thick covering of black hair that curls naturally, but which can be easily combed straight. She speaks easily and fluently, and has an agreeable carriage and address. Being a good seamstress, she has been accustomed to dress well, has a variety of very fine clothes, made in the prevailing fashion, and will probably appear, if abroad, tricked out in gay and

> fashionable finery. As this girl absconded from the plantation of my son without any known cause or provocation, it is probable she designs to transport herself to the North ("Advertisement").

This advertisement plays up her agreeable nature while reducing her abilities to frivolity. It ignores her intelligence and distinctive physical traits, which Jacobs writes in her revised advertisement:

> $300 REWARD! Ran away from the subscriber, an intelligent, bright, mulatto girl, named Linda, 21 years age. Five feet four inches high. Dark eyes, and black hair inclined to curl; but it can be made straight. Has a decayed spot on a front tooth. She can read and write, and in all probability will try to get to the Free States. All persons are forbidden, under penalty of the law, to harbor or employ said slave. $150 will be given to whoever takes her in the state, and $300 if taken out of the state and delivered to me, or lodged in jail (Jacobs 149).

Jacobs also triples the bounty on her head and emphasizes her reading and writing abilities. This emphasis further aligns her with her intended readership. Her alterations to her advertisement indicate that Jacobs now has the power to manipulate dominant discourse and assert her own constructed identity. With this "ekphrastic self-portrait" (Blackwood 109), Jacobs conclusively denies Dr. Flint and slavery the power to define her. She portrays an image of herself as woman, not slave; the subject now has a body to go along with her persona. It is not coincidental that this advertisement is placed quite nearly at the epicenter of the text, since the moment when she decides to escape is the climactic moment of the narrative. This advertisement and depiction of her bodily form divides the text into enslaved and escaped, incorporeal and material.

Similarly, *TWDG* includes a description of "words on paper, a bill of sale written out at the slave market in Charleston, a name and a price" (Randall 80). This bill of sale defines Cynara as a slave, yet her decision to include it in her narrative (also at nearly the exact center of the text) demonstrates that she feels some kind of power over her own identity at the time of her writing. While Jacobs includes her slave advertisement as a sort of exaltation of her escape from

enslavement, for Cynara the bill of sale threatens to define her as slave. She ultimately uses it as a confirmation of identity, however, and her identity is further established through confirmation documents similar to those found in autobiographic slave narratives. These narratives usually open with a preface written by a white abolitionist of some repute that confirm the author's identity and also make a case for why their narrative should be read. This preface gives reassurance to potential readers that the author of the narrative is telling the truth about the horrors of slavery yet somehow has not been corrupted by it. For example, *Incidents* is introduced by Jacobs' white editor, who claims that "those who know [Jacobs] will not be disposed to doubt her veracity" (11). Similarly, Cynara's diary is prefaced with "notes on the text" written by an anonymous source who refers to Cynara as an "elderly colored lady" (Randall vi), thus signifying themselves as not a person of color.

Another confirmation document included in *TWDG* is a synopsis of Cynara's medical history, which places the narrator's health issues as directly related to the success of *GWTW*. Cynara was hospitalized coinciding "with the publication and movie premiere of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*," but otherwise lived a productive and fruitful life, "frustrated only by her inability to get [her] diary published" (Randall vi). By correlating the canonical text's notoriety with illness and frustration, Randall provides a useful metaphor of racist ideology as a sickness. The form of Cynara's text as diary directly contrasts that of *GWTW*, which is told from the third-person omniscient point of view and grants the narrator authoritative voice. Readers do not question the story's events because they are given no reason to believe the narrator would mislead them. While Randall's court case rested primarily on the notion of parody as transformative, this inclusion seems a direct knock to Mitchell's slaveholder-sympathizer opus while also somehow calling into play the question of veracity: Mitchell's

version of events is incorrect, Randall implies, but the events themselves still happened in some way. At the same time, Cynara's diary is also corroborated by the introduction's assertion that pressed into it were a picture, a fabric token, and the poem by Ernest Dowson that inspired the title of *GWTW*. This series of confirmation documents reflects the intertextual recursive theme of Randall's work. The material items in *TWDG* represent a sort of cultural production that confirms Cynara's version of a tale Americans have come to accept at a cultural, ideological level while simultaneously calling to mind the multitude of autobiographic slave narratives that were written before this novel and continue to haunt shared cultural memory.

Finally, Randall's revisionary intertextual technique parodies GWTW and invokes the African-American literary tradition of past slave narratives through Cynara's own sense of being haunted. Randall writes Cynara's version of the story to remind us that the ghosts of slavery still haunt today, and this is reinforced through Cynara's own experiences with haunting. Sometimes these ghosts are positive; for instance, Cynara can make Mammy's recipes from memory (Randall 29), demonstrating the staying power of a woman no longer alive. Cynara says she is "more afraid" of her past with every passing day (30), and that she thinks of her mother more "as the days pass" (100). This indicates that Cynara knows the past is never actually over, and simultaneously calls upon readers to reckon with slavery's ghosts. As a freed slave, Cynara does not have the option of looking the other way when slavery's trauma continues to haunt her. Conversely, R. "doesn't choose to remember," as he would rather not see the residual trauma caused by slavery (30). Mirroring Randall's own project, Cynara ultimately takes on the purpose of reminding her oppressors about this trauma. After Mammy dies, Other tries to mourn with her but is frightened off when Cynara says "boo" (44). This scene alludes to the "boo" attributed to ghosts, especially as it takes place on Mammy's literal deathbed. Cynara implies here that only

she can properly mourn her mother since, like her mother, she must grapple with the haunting nature of enslavement. Other is scared because she cannot comprehend the terror of being enslaved. Later, after Other drinks herself to death, Cynara thinks of her as a perpetually youthful ghost whose beauty will bloom "forever" in R.'s mind, in a way that makes her live "forever" (100). By making the slaveholder occupy a haunting position, Randall ironically equates a memory of beauty that will haunt forever with a memory of ugliness that will haunt forever.

TWDG is just one example of how the intertextuality of neo-slave narratives and adaptations can showcase the ubiquitous nature of oppressive ideologies. Because of the difficulties in penetrating dominant (white) discourse, African-Americans have often turned to different forms of rhetoric in order to preserve traditions, rituals, and legends (Donaldson 267). This rhetoric often uses irony, wordplay, signification, and lyricism in order to subvert authoritative discourse into language the oppressed could wield (267). Texts like *TWDG* that write back to dominant discourse find silences in its literature and "retrieve them from the realm of the forgotten and give them voice" (268). In fact, Susan Donaldson and others identify *GWTW* particularly as a "master narrative" that defines popular ideology regarding the antebellum South and slavery (268). While there are other neo-slave narratives that write against this tradition, such as Edward P. Jones' *The Known World* and Valerie Martin's *Property*, in her unauthorized parody of *GWTW* Randall more explicitly demonstrates that heteroglossic dialogue and the reclaiming of voice can work to question racist beliefs, and simultaneously shows how pervasive the residual trauma of slavery is in the American cultural imagination. *TWDG* parodies stereotypes and portrayals of sexuality found in its source text and alludes to slave narratives through the use of irony, front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents. In doing so, it problematizes embedded cultural beliefs depicted in its source text that still exist today. This

kind of problematizing is necessary if we are to ever move past hateful racist rhetoric and inequality; by pointing out its flaws and satirizing its effects, authors like Randall provide a call to action for readers to look inward at their own interpellations and to challenge oppression. Further, seeing *TWDG* as transformative adaptation allows readers to explore the text in terms of its transpositional properties and to see potential applications for parody. The next chapter looks at two texts that also parody their source texts but do so in a way that creates empathy for the monstrous.

Chapter 1, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *The Diary as Literature Through the Lens of Multiculturalism in America*, 2019, Suzy Woltmann. It is also, in part, a reprint of the material as it appears in *Language, Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2018, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

CHAPTER 2

Monstrous Abjection and Event in "The House of Asterion" and *Grendel*

Pointless, ridiculous monster crouched in the shadows, stinking of dead men, murdered children, martyred cows. (I am neither proud nor ashamed, understand. One more dull victim, leering at seasons that never were meant to be observed.) – John Gardner, *Grendel* 6

Heroes need monsters, just as monsters need heroes. Each depends on the existence of the other. The hero must confront the monster, and this confrontation likewise confirms the monster's identity. But what happens when readers experience this confrontation from the monster's point of view? In this chapter, I examine reimaginings of myth and legend that subversively address this confrontation by recreating the villainous monster as protagonist. These texts disrupt the Self/Other binary by forcing monstrous identification, which consequently positions readers in a state of empathetic abjection with the monster. As Julia Kristeva argues in *Powers of Horror*, encountering the abject creates a vortex of attraction and repulsion: people are drawn to that which disgusts them. Slavoj Zizek parallels this argument to say that during certain potent moments, or Events, even the most "sublime majesty" becomes "obscene abhorrent monstrosity" (19). Jorge Luis Borges' "The House of Asterion" (1947) and John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971) adapt the myth of the Minotaur and the *Beowulf* epic, respectively, from the point of view of the monstrous Other. In doing so, they recreate the monster as an insidiously empathetic and thus ultimately more sublime representation of the abject. Readers metatextually knows how the adaptation must end, which encourages a final Event. Borges and Gardner rely on mythic and folkloric profanation to (re)write abject monsters. They intertextually invoke their parent texts and explore the monster's own maternal parentage, which leads to their eventual (and Evental) demise.

All adaptations alienate readers from the known quantity of the original work. However, defamiliarization of myth holds particular gravitas, since myth is itself already alienated from its meaning. Myth is unique in that it is a "second-order" semiological system (Barthes 113). Myth functions as a constantly-sliding scale of slippage between the three realms of signifier, signified and sign. While Jacques Lacan finds that language is the ultimate interpellater and creator of the subject, Roland Barthes argues that the language-object is simply a tool of the metalanguage of myth. The metalanguage is a second language used to speak of the first (114). Since mythology is used to talk about language, it requires different terminology to differentiate the slippages. Myth is constituted through concept, and form indicates the endless ways in which concept may be described. Concept is repeated through various forms, which allows us to figure out the myth: "it is the insistence of a kind of behavior which reveals its intention" (120). However, unlike with other semiological forms, myth does not distort the space between form and concept. The signification is the myth itself (122). Instead, the concept alienates the meaning, a notion otherwise known as defamiliarization. This doubled defamiliarization parallels the slippage between sign and signified, and between language and the metalanguage of myth. By having readers identify with but be repulsed by the monster from original myths, Borges and Gardner perpetuate the profanation of mythology but with a newly aesthetic, historicized twist.

Borges and Gardner rewrite myth and legend as aesthetic rather than spiritual endeavors. This extends the process of profanation, or the transformation of sacral plots to profane ones. Myth becomes folklore by detaching ritual from the plot accompanying it; and, I argue, this migration continues down the line as adaptors rewrite myth and legend with the stamp of individual authorial assertion. The story of the Minotaur is considered myth since it is accompanied by a ritualistic storytelling process that connects its listeners to the gods. *Beowulf* is

a wondertale, a specific subset of folkstory, since its literariness detaches itself from the necessity of ritual. Adaptations of myth and legend are a continuation of the profanation process, since they assert a specific authorial and aesthetic claim to what was once a sacral plot. Mythology, legend, and other forms of folkloric production may appear to be ahistorical but are founded in temporal politics. Vladimir Propp's *Theory and History of Folklore* explores this concept to look at the ways in which the past produces a tale, thus grounding it in historical reality. Propp uses narratology to break down the morphology of the folktale. Through a linear approach, he finds that there are recurrent figures in folkstories and therefore recursive principles and a distinct narrative grammar that permeates these tales: stories show us the rules that we govern ourselves by. Propp argues for historical relevance to the wondertale, since its composition is not a psychic or aesthetic construction but rather "lies in the reality of the past" (117). Each initiation rite or death ritual of the wondertale is grounded in historical precedence, and we can trace specific historical moments by the changes to individual motifs that appear in wondertales. Further, myth gives us a "living link" between story and historical lived reality (120).

My reading of Borges' and Gardner's mythological profanation that leads to abjection and Event relies on a Lacanian understanding of the real. For Lacan, the most important part of human experience is the language through which the self and interactions with others are constructed. Infants have an abstract, disjointed reality until they see themselves in the mirror (or against their mother) as whole image (Lacan 44). This image becomes the idealized self, and the ego is built around this and other illusions and images that make up the imaginary. Lacan sees desire as being rooted in the child's wish to be the object of the mother's desire, and later, the Other's desire. The individual is created out of a series of refracted images of himself, through

reflections and interactions, or méconnaissance: a misrecognition of the self.[22] This differentiates from other schools of modern psychoanalytic thought because these schools focus on what Lacan found to be the mirage, whereas he was interested in the real itself. We organize our experiences into stories that keep us from recognizing true meaning, and only by removing ourselves from this sort of subjectivity can we access a glimpse of this meaning – the unconscious subject. This is because, to Lacan, the subject is constructed through language and its imaginary and symbolic boundaries. The Lacanian model breaks down the world into three subsects: the imaginary, the real, and the symbolic (93). The imaginary is a symptom of the narcissistic imagination; the real is beyond human comprehension but is sometimes accessible in moments of the traumatic or the sublime; and the symbolic is the realm in which we apply elements of the external world to the internal world through systems of representation, interpellation, and ideologies. Symbolic order intervenes and denies access to the real. However, we attain glimpses to the real through extraordinary events, such as the sublimity of abjection.

Borges and Gardner rewrite legend and myth through a lens of abjection and sublimity. Readers recognize the text as adaptation, therefore realizing its removal from the sacred; and by writing from first-person narration that forces readers to empathize with the monstrous Other, Borges and Gardner ironically expose this binary. Abjection induces horror but at the same time allows access to the sublime. The abject is anything that challenges normative existence. It may be anything from a hated food item to a corpse, which causes us to respond with revulsion, expulsion, and the awareness that the boundary between Self and Other is an ideological construct that can be easily dismantled. As a primordial abstraction, the abject is neither object nor subject, and yet it is still "opposed to I" (Kristeva 1): like myth, it exists before the

[22] See Lacan's "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function" for further elaboration on this subject.

application of symbolic order. Abjection is a concept that we understand through various endless forms. Though the abject is configured before symbolic order, the abject attempts to make the self Other, which "will seem tenable only if it ceaselessly confronts that otherness" (3). It causes horror precisely because we desire for it to be Other yet it remains uncannily familiar and as such reminds us of our inextricable connection to madness, misery, death. Abjection is, and makes us, monster. Beyond the abject lies the sublime, "a *something added* that expands us, overstrains us, and causes us to be both *here,* as dejects, and *there,* as others and sparkling. A divergence, an impossible bounding. Everything missed, joy—fascination" (Kristeva 12). For example, the process of childbirth is abject, but the impossible love for a child is sublime (144). Sublimation is "the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal" (11). The abject breaks down human boundaries, while the sublime is an otherworldly phenomenon that paradoxically reinforces these boundaries.

Since the abject, like the sublime, is unnameable, the two become dualistically entwined, leaving us "sublime and devastated" (Kristeva 3). The abject is undefinable, neither subject nor object, and so refers to something beyond the symbolic order that defies naming or any other type of categorization. The abject is part of the real and is also a form of myth, a metalanguage that defies translation into normative language. Kristeva says that the process of separation from the mother is abjection: the child rejects the semiotic world of their mother and enters the symbolic structured world. However, to Kristeva the subject is perpetually in a liminal state of becoming, therefore forever in the process of moving between the semiotic and the symbolic. The abject is necessary for us to understand our position in the symbolic order since it allows us to separate ourselves from that which we find abject. The repulsion of the abject allows us to create a border that we need in order to constitute ourselves in terms of the Other: "we may call

it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it – on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (9). By naming the abject, we access the sublime. Kristeva sees motherhood as inherently entwined with abjection since subject-becoming entails breaking away from others, and the infant's "attempts to release the hold of maternal entity" is a continuous process of negotiating the self as autonomous subject by rejecting the mother but simultaneously identifying with her (13). This process of constant identification and rejection is abjection.

The moment of confrontation with the abject can be understood in terms of Zizek's theory of Event. Zizek theorizes that Event is "the effect that seems to exceed its causes" and "a change of the very frame through which we perceive the world and engage in it" (1, 5). Event changes how we think about the real, which normatively exists beyond the symbolic. I connect it to abjection here since the abject is lined with the sublime, and the real can sometimes be accessed through experiencing the sublime. Zizek refers to this as the "imaginary real," the "unfathomable 'something' that introduces a self-division into an ordinary object, so that the sublime dimension shines through it" (82). Not coincidentally, the de-reification of the real mimics the profanation of myth and legend into authored, specifically historicized story. Event and encounters with the abject thus have something in common: they both undermine what we believe to be normative and forcibly reposition the subject in relation to some sublime incarnation. Zizek frames the concept of Event as a journey which is at once momentary yet continuous, always-already occurring and perpetually sought. That is, "things emerge when the equilibrium is destroyed, when something goes astray" (42). Event happens in the adaptations examined in this chapter both intertextually, as authorial intervention destroys the equilibrium of known wondertale and myth, and metatextually, as readers foresee the monster's death. Zizek

discusses Evental encounters with the monstrous specifically as regarding sexual monstrosity: the lover presumed to be female who reveals a penis, or the younger lover who reveals himself to be the estranged child. This encounter with the monstrous abject is so shocking, so inconceivable until after it has already occurred, that it invokes the sublime and constitutes Event. Event is not as simple as mere Good and Evil but requires something beyond those binary spheres in order to take place. The abject and correspondingly the sublime allow Event to occur precisely because they are beyond Good and Evil and any other nameable mode. Zizek even cites Borges as coming up with a similar philosophical concept to Event: "Or as Borges the Argentinian writer, as he put it in a wonderful concise way, truly all authors, writers have predecessors. A truly great writer in a way creates his own past, his own predecessors so that yes, there are people who influenced him but you can see this influence only once he is here" (Zizek "Events"). This can be seen in Borges' reliance on myth to in turn mythologize himself; by rewriting the myth of the Minotaur in terms of Event, he creates his own past that allows him to subject-become.

"The House of Asterion" does not indicate that the narrator is the Minotaur of myth until the final lines of the story, precisely because Asterion is unaware of his own monstrosity. In the original myth, the Minotaur (called Asterion in Crete) is the result of a cursed coupling. After ascending to the throne, Minos asks the god of the sea, Poseidon, to send him a snow-white bull. Minos is supposed to sacrifice the bull but is so struck by its beauty that he kills one of his own bulls instead. In retribution, Poseidon makes Minos's wife, the queen Pasiphae, fall in love with the bull. Soon she is pregnant with the Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man but the head of a bull. The Minotaur takes to eating people for sustenance, so Minos has a labyrinth built to contain him away from society. Minos sends seven Athenian young men and seven young women regularly to be eaten by the Minotaur. By the third sacrifice, Theseus offers to kill the

Minotaur. He is helped by Minos's daughter Ariadne, who provides him with a ball of thread so he can trace his way through the labyrinth.

The myth of the Minotaur has been regularly adapted. It has been represented through Ovid's Latin transcription, Dante's *Inferno*, and several other literary, filmic, gaming, and artistic renditions, including a 2017 novel by David Elliot that gives Asterion a complex backstory. However, these other adaptations do not provide the mythic connection to the real through abjection and Event explored in "The House of Asterion," in which Borges turns readers' previous understanding of the tale's hero on its head. Theseus comes to redeem Asterion by slaying him, but this is not presented like the epic struggle of myth. Instead, as told through a sudden switch to third-person narrator, Asterion does not even fight back. This shift finally names Asterion as the Minotaur for the first time, as Theseus says, "the Minotaur scarcely defended himself" (Borges 169). Through this process, Asterion is finally freed from his labyrinth, placing readers in the position of emancipator. Although Asterion's identity as the Minotaur is foreshadowed through the title "The House of Asterion," the Event of true recognition occurs at the end of the story. Martin Tilney argues that this confirmation of Asterion as mythic archetype elevates him "to a higher realm that can only be perceived by the reader" (171). Asterion does not recognize himself either as a monster or as myth, and yet his heightened narcissism sets him apart as abject. Some theorists argue that Asterion is supposed to represent the Everyman as he navigates through a convoluted world,[23] or instead use the myth of the Minotaur as a configuring tool to investigate a character like Grendel: someone who chooses a path of evil to have some semblance of purpose in their life but is imbued with melancholy and self-loathing. I find the narrative lies somewhere in between the two. Readers empathize with

[23] For further discussion of this, see Jaime Alazraki's essay "Jorge Luis Borges."

Asterion, as encouraged by the first-person narration, but ultimately reject him at when his abjection as Minotaur is exposed.

Asterion's understanding of the self is largely based around his parentage. At its most simplistic level, this means both monsters understand themselves as offspring of their parents. This relationship also signifies the relationship between adaptation and parent text: "The House of Asterion" and *Grendel* are the hybrid monstrous offspring of the myths of the Minotaur and *Beowulf*. Yet their focus on the monster's relationship with his mother indicates that these are not bastard children, but rather a form of extending the lineage of their parent texts and inducing abjection by exploring maternal semiotics. Borges' story begins: "And the Queen gave birth to a child who was called Asterion" (169). By beginning with "And," Borges indicates a sense of continuity and emphasizes the recursive nature of stories. The Minotaur's story was already begun through the myth and its various adaptive incarnations, and this specific one is simply a continuation of an already-begun tradition. Further, because the story starts with the Queen and humanizes the Minotaur as a child and not a monster, readers are invited to empathize with the child and realize the importance of his heritage.

Asterion begins his narrative with a paranoid assessment of what others think of him. While readers are tempted to empathize with him, this establishes a dynamic between the persecuted Asterion and a group of people whose intentions are not yet known; like the people at the meadhall in Grendel, readers soon learn that they set themselves apart from Asterion as a form of self-protection. Asterion sees it instead as indicative of his extraordinariness. He feels the need to set the record straight: according to him, he is not the arrogant, misanthropic, mad prisoner that the people see him as (Borges 169). Instead, he sees himself as superior to mankind, a supernatural and powerful being who causes people to react with vehemence when they see

him: the people "prayed, fled, prostrated themselves; some climbed onto the stylobate of the temple of the axes, others gathered stones" (169). Readers encounter this description and recognize that these people likely fear Asterion – but why? He thinks it is due to his otherworldly power, since "not for nothing was [his] mother a queen," and he "cannot be confused with the populace" though his "modesty might so desire" (169). Readers ultimately realize Asterion is a monster, but by this point are tempted to believe his narrative that he is so princely that he cannot be conflated with mere mortals. Yet his isolation is tinged with sorrow and performativity. He speaks of another Asterion who he imagines comes to visit him (169), but this other Asterion is just a mirror image: even his attempts at community are performed through the lens of an isolated self. He knows nothing of himself except his maternal heritage and how people react when they see him, and so has developed an identity simply in terms of identification and opposition with no liminal space between. He defines himself in terms of his royal mother, but also as opposed to the people who react with fear when they see him. This mix of binary oppositional identifications forms him into a narcissistic yet intensely lonely being.

Borges codes his tale through Asterion's narcissism; the monster depicts his house as "like no other on the face of this earth" and his spirit as "prepared for all that is vast and grand" (169). Asterion also tells of the games he plays to pass the time and shares his belief that one day a redeemer will come to save him. Though readers may begin the story unaware that the narrator is a monster, he is still situated in the realm of the abject. Asterion claims to be aware that "they" accuse him of "arrogance, and perhaps misanthropy, and perhaps of madness" (169), yet does not say who these others are or how he is aware of their accusations. Stuart Davis situates Asterion as "objectified through the effect of horror and therefore as part of the abject" (140). His inability to perceive himself as well as readers' failure to configure him as monster is abject.

He is the monster who believes well of himself, "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 4); and readers empathize with the monster and thus experience the blurred lines between Self and Other that informs abjection. They confront the "otherness of the monster" before naming him as such (Davis 139). A creature both man and bull "disturbs identity, system, order… does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva 4). The abject is that precisely because it defies normative categorization. The Minotaur's hybridity means he is not man nor beast but some horrific amalgamation of the two. Asterion "embodies the abject, outside of the dominant economy of the law and representative of the bestial nature of humanity that is a threat to the symbolic order" (Davis 145). Marginality "is always dependent on the position of the onlooker" (145), and so only through the dominant Other are the abject made as such. Yet in terms of the monstrous abject, their presence is necessary to allow the dominant Other access to the moment of sublimation through abjection – a mythic Event.

Asterion is especially concerned with his place of residence, as emphasized by the title of his story. The abject asks "'Where am I?' instead of 'Who am I?'"; it is "the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is never one, nor homogeneous, nor totalizable, but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic" (Kristeva 4). The Minotaur is renowned more for the labyrinth than his monstrous appearance and corporeal hybridity. The claustrophobic fear of the labyrinth is triggered by discovery of the horrifying Other-that-is-Self, or what Zizek calls the "unknown knowns" that so often anticipate an Event (11). At any moment after a man enters the labyrinth, he may encounter the murderous Minotaur and thus come face-to-face with abjection itself. Yet it is more so the entrapment of the labyrinth than the Minotaur's violence that creates the foundation for abjection in this story. Asterion believes his ritual slaughter of nine men every nine years delivers them from evil. Even his self-identification is dictated in terms of the abject:

his game showing another (an "Other") Asterion around his house makes him unsure if he is creator, created, or both (169). Perhaps most potently, Asterion does not recognize himself as monster or Minotaur. In the standard telling of the mythological tale, Theseus defeats the Minotaur and escapes the labyrinth by using a ball of thread to trace his path. The ball of thread is given to him by Ariadne, Minos' daughter, and precipitated by the Event of her falling in love with him, and "love, too, is Evental" (Zizek 4). While this Event is not indicated in Borges' retelling, we read it into the text after we discover Asterion's identity as Minotaur. This omission is significant because it displaces the focus from the hero of legend to the lonely, narcissistic monster yet simultaneously implies that the events of the story remain true, even if the perspective has shifted. Love has no place in Asterion's isolated universe, but remains in the world at large, nonetheless.

Asterion's understanding of the self through the mother-relation is shown to be false when the Lacanian mirror-stage "I" is articulated in terms of the dominant Other. Asterion wants to believe that he is not only special but also *seen* as special since he deserves this recognition through his mother the Queen. However, his "strong identification" with his mother and her status belies that humans react to the "horror of the abject" rather than with respect to his supposed status (Davis 143). In the Minotaur legend, Asterion's mother's obscene bestial desire is signified through her child, who embodies the tangible consequence of his mother's baseness. The minotaur also represents Minos's weakness, since he could not kill the bull. "The House of Asterion" opens with the mother, the source of the narrator's original abjection, a "queen" who "gave birth to a child who was called Asterion" (Borges 169). In this retelling of the myth of the Minotaur, his misconception of who – or what – he is makes his abjection that much more involved and involving; he believes his mother's blood makes him better than other men, when it

really makes him monster. A monster is never just a monster, but he is still always a monster. Asterion may believe that he has royal blood from his mother, but that he refuses to consider his father indicates a sort of willful ignorance that renders him incapable of transcending his position. However, through the act of writing and recreating the monster, Borges allows Asterion to transcend through another type of monstrous progeny that extends the myth's legacy. Just as readers liberate Asterion from the labyrinth through the act of reading, so does the act of writing a mythic adaptation metatextually allow the Minotaur to finally transcend his named space.

The literal physical house of Asterion is a complicated, claustrophobic chronotype that likewise transcends notions of space and time. The labyrinth is a confined space and yet its seemingly endless twisting hallways give the false impression of infinite expanse. Its inclusion in myth allows it to simultaneously exist across several times: time immemorial, where myth originates; the time when readers first heard the myth of the Minotaur; the time Borges wrote "The House of Asterion"; the time it is read; and all the temporal liminalities connecting these time-spaces.[24] The notion that the labyrinth has always in some way existed and will always continue to exist reflects its mythic nature and represents the labyrinth's physicality through a temporal lens. The labyrinth is always there. It twists and turns and leaves one somewhere/some *time* that was never expected, which mimics the myth's own process of profanation that is both historically grounded and also, paradoxically, timeless. Nothing is certain in the labyrinth. It repeats itself infinitely so that "any place is another place," and Asterion calls the house "the world" (Borges 170). Time is repetitive and confusing, defined only by the ritual sacrifice of nine men every nine years. Asterion uses this ritual to try and assign order to his world. It allows him to process time in a structured way, and he uses the dead men's bodies to differentiate

[24] Borges also addresses the hall of mirrors and temporal labyrinths in other works including "The Garden of Forking Paths" and "The Library of Babel."

between the labyrinth's otherwise indistinguishable rooms. In this way Asterion's humanness, his mother's true legacy, becomes legible. Unlike Grendel, who thrives on chaos, Asterion attempts to assign some sense of order to his world, the overarching trait of the humans in *Beowulf*. Here Asterion's desire to have order is both a reflection of his humanity and a metatextual signifier about the properties of myth itself, since myth has historically been a way we try to make our world make sense to ourselves. Asterion's ordering impulse indicates his hybridity as well as some sort of innate awareness that he exists within an already-ordered story that must end in the Event of his death.

Asterion shows awareness of the Event of his predestined fate through the lens of prophecy. One of the men he killed "prophesied, at the moment of his death, that some day [Asterion's] redeemer would come" (Borges 171). This redeemer comforts Asterion and keeps him from being pained with loneliness, because his redeemer "lives and he will finally rise above the dust" (171). The prophet names the Event that necessarily must happen to the monster. When he asks what his redeemer will be like he hints at some self-awareness; his redeemer will be "a bull or a man," "a bull with the face of a man," or "like" Asterion himself (171). Yet it is exactly this self-awareness that instigates the moment of Asterion's great Event: in the next line, his narrative voice is removed from the tale, as he has been slain by Theseus. To the townspeople, the Minotaur is the abject human-animal hybrid, and to himself he is abjection itself; he gazes inward and recoils from the monster he sees enough to create a new identity. Theseus is Asterion's "redeemer who can free him both from his existential suffering and from the labyrinth" (Davis 144). He is redeemed through the abjection and sublimity of death, and readers perpetuate this Event through the act of reading and releasing the Minotaur from his labyrinth.

Published nearly a quarter-century after "The House of Asterion," Gardner's *Grendel* engages in a similar profanation process that retells the tale from the monster's point of view for an Evental conflation of sublime and abject. *Grendel* retells the *Beowulf* legend from the perspective of Grendel, the monster who continuously attacks King Hrothgar's mead-hall and murders townspeople until Beowulf destroys him. In the epic poem, Grendel is one of three monsters, along with his mother and the dragon, that Beowulf ultimately defeats to become the hero Hrothgar's kingdom needs. Gardner's retelling portrays Grendel as a being who philosophizes as much as he terrorizes. Born to a gluttonous animalistic mother and shaped by an identification process that situates him as Other, watching mankind and realizing the difference between their actions and their beliefs, and discovering the dragon and his nihilistic ideology, Grendel is an embodiment of the abject in this text. Critics have differed in their readings of Grendel – either the monster is a new absurdist antihero and Beowulf the crazed antagonist, or alternatively Grendel represents everything negative about existentialist philosophy and so is merely altered to a more discursive other than tangible, corporeal horror.[25] Though readers understand Grendel and his philosophy as monstrous and abject, their ability to empathize with him represents precisely the deconstruction of the binary self-Other distinction. Grendel as portrayed in the *Beowulf* legend is explicitly bestial, but Gardner's existential Grendel invokes a more complex monstrosity as he breaks down the understood liminal space that separates us from the abject; the abject is in us and of us. Gardner forces readers to identify with Grendel, which leads to empathetic abjection. The abject then deconstructs the meaning between what is believed to be subject and object; it forces readers to confront the horror of the "impossible real" (Kristeva 11). In *Grendel*, the titular protagonist's positioning as abject is understood from the

[25] Robert Merrill reads Grendel as an interpretation of modern fables, while W.P. Fitzpatrick finds the monster an absurdist hero.

commencement of the text. Though he defines himself as "pointless, ridiculous monster . . . dull victim . . . sad one, poor old freak" (Gardner 5), he does not see himself as either worse or more noble than other beings but instead simply separate. His abjection is articulated through his ambivalence, as even moments of extreme desolation and murderous rage are "mostly fake" or "no matter, no matter" (6-7). Gardner ironically mocks Sartrean existentialism while exploring Grendel's indifferent response to his own existential crisis.[26]

When Grendel is young, he lives "as do all young things, in a spell" (Gardner 16). This spell is constitutive of the Lacanian pre-mirror stage. A variety of creatures encounter Grendel – firesnakes, his mother, a bull, vultures – and though he attempts to identify himself in terms of each it is not until he meets men for the first time that the self that necessarily opposes the other is conceived. The men see Grendel stuck in a tree and do not even understand at first that he is a sentient being or anything beyond "some beastlike fungus" (26). Their misrecognition mirrors Caliban's (mis)perception in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: like Caliban, Grendel is so Other that he cannot be interpreted through the normative human symbolic order. Instead, Grendel is indefinable, mythic, abject. After close examination the men determine he is a spirit, which further asserts the mythic slippage. Grendel's first moment of initiating the sublime through his abjectness is when one man tries to figure out what he eats. Gazing upon Grendel's beastlike form, the man smiles "suddenly, as if a holy vision had exploded in his head" (26). This holy vision is a sublime Event, albeit a minimal one in terms of the text. It defines Grendel for the first time as something that can arouse sublimation through the abject. This moment turns quickly to fear as the men become frightened of not understanding Grendel or his desires, and he is saved just in the nick of time from certain death by the appearance of his mother.

[26] In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre famously says "Being is. Being is in-itself. Being is what it is" (29).

Grendel fully understands himself as abject when a harpist he calls the Shaper comes to Hrothgar's kingdom and sings a song that has the power of reshaping the world. The Shaper's song is about the Biblical creation of the world, and this signifier allows Grendel's next stage of self-identification: even if it means being a monstrous descendant of Cain, he accepts this identity because it means he *has* an identity. Grendel is aware of the Shaper's eternal presence, "knew him *when*!" (Gardner 46) – but he is unable to claim intimate awareness because he is ultimately alone. The Shaper manages to change the world simply by singing it different. His song is Event because it wholly alters the means by which the world is understood; he "stares strange-eyed at the mindless world and turns dry sticks to gold" and creates a "projected possible" (49). This projected possible is vast, nameless, and mythic, and makes Grendel emotional enough to enter the kingdom begging for friendship, but he is met with vehement violence. The townspeople react to him as a monster, which makes him become obsessively upset at the Shaper's song and influence. The Event of the Shaper's singing precedes and leads to that of Grendel's always-foretold death. The Shaper represents both the author and the poet, which reminds us that the tale exists concurrently in the past (*Beowulf*'s time and creation) and present (of the space-time of the novel, when it was written, and the reading of it). The Shaper's song makes Grendel want to believe in the legend, even if it means he "must be the outcast, cursed by the rules of his hideous fable" (55). Grendel's real has been erupted. He now understands what must be done – that he must be monster – in order to access the final Event in his life: his death.

Upset at the Shaper's song, Grendel seeks out and talks with the dragon, a nihilistic being who has been "expecting" him to come (Gardner 55). This expectation is Event since it is "a manifestation of a circular structure in which the Evental effect retroactively determines its

causes or reasons" (Zizek 4). The dragon experiences and can see all time at once, and so for him Grendel's arrival is always going to happen, is always happening, and has always happened, just as Grendel's death at Beowulf's hand is for readers. The dragon further emphasizes the disparity between Grendel and human and argues that Grendel gives his own life and, by extension, the human world meaning. He needs the opposing dominant Other to understand his abject selfhood, just as the Other necessitates his dichotomous abjection to achieve access to the sublime. It is a symbiotic and at times mutually destructive cycle of dependence. Grendel asks, "What will we call Hrothgar-Wrecker when Hrothgar has been wrecked?" (Gardner 79): he defines himself only in terms of his monstrous actions and cannot imagine a different future. As Hrothgar-Wrecker, Grendel enacts several murderous raids on Hrothgar's kingdom. He kills men and feels nothing, then decides killing the queen is "the ultimate act of nihilism" (93). If this beautiful creature can be made abject as she is destroyed, then nothing matters any longer and the dragon is correct that the Shaper's song is a lie. The scene in which Grendel attacks the queen is visceral and vicious:

> I slammed into the bedroom. She sat up screaming, and I laughed. I snatched her foot, and her unqueenly shrieks were deafening, exactly like the squeals of a pig . . . I decided to kill her. I finally committed myself to killing her, slowly, horribly. I would begin by holding her over the fire and cooking the ugly hole between her legs . . . I would squeeze out her feces between my fists. I would kill her and teach them reality (106-7).

Here Grendel renames the queen as abject and so questions the labels and challenges the borders created as part of a signifying system. After all, the queen is just another body: alive she produces the "shit . . . what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death" (Kristeva 3), and dead she would be abject as a corpse. By situating the queen as abject, or perhaps more accurately as *able to be abjected*, Grendel conflates his monstrous self with the human subject; he is acting abjection. His desire to harm the queen shows a vacillating identification process. He wants her to be abject like him so that he can better identify with her,

but through reducing her to abjection she no longer exists for him to relate to. The desire to cook the "ugly hole between her legs" is gendered violence (Gardner 110). He wishes to destroy that "through which the world enters the body or emerges from it" (Bakhtin 26). Grendel was first moved by the queen's beauty, but in realizing that even beauty can be destroyed he ruins his chance at redemption. In destroying that which produces life, he simultaneously destroys his own world in a frenzy of nihilistic violence.

Further, Grendel projects his feelings of connection and expulsion from his mother onto the queen. He ruminates at length on her beauty and her presumed desires, and it is because of this displaced Oedipal desire that he wishes to kill her. Although his positioning as abject Other is created through the Events of his first encounter with man, hearing the Shaper's song, and talking with the dragon, it is also articulated through his relationship to his (m)other. Young Grendel has only his mother to construct his identity for and against. He perceives his mother as guilty "of some unremembered, perhaps ancestral crime" (Gardner 11). It is because of his mother that Grendel is who, or what, he is. Grendel's experience with his mother is recounted through a lens of abjection that paints his mother as even more monstrous than himself but simultaneously relates that monstrosity to her humanness: "She must have some human in her," Grendel adds parenthetically to his description of his mother as a "life-bloated, baffled, long-suffering hag" (11). Grendel's death is an Event that readers foresee as a necessary conclusion to his confrontation with Beowulf. His birth is also Event, since his mother's copulation with an unknown being led to the necessary conclusion of Grendel's existence. Like the other monsters Beowulf battles, Grendel needs to exist for the hero Beowulf to exist. His existence is then the retroactive determination of a cause (Zizek 4). And as a monster, Grendel's Evental manifestation necessities a state of abjection. His identification with – but rejection of – his

monstrous mother demonstrates maternal semiotic abjection. He uses many words to attempt and describe his mother because she is truly indescribable, occupying a space somewhere beyond the symbolic order. Grendel's missing father emphasizes this distinction. Grendel seeks to understand his existence in terms of his mother but as a marginalized subject, her influence on his self-construction only adds to his abjection. Grendel's view of his mother mimics the mythic concept. He cannot understand her monstrous form but there is something ancient and terrible about her. Grendel used to ask how they came to live where they do to try and place himself outside of his mother, but he is unsuccessful because his mother cannot tell him why he exists as abject. She was a very part of the formulating process and so cannot recognize him as such: the abject is defined in opposition to the dominant Other.

Gardner's pastiche of contemporary psychoanalytic theory with medieval legend further extends the profanation of the legend and therefore implies the impossibility of accessing the real while simultaneously and ironically invoking it through abjection. When Grendel reminisces on his earliest memory of his mother, he says:

> We were one thing, like the wall and the rock growing out from it. – Or so I ardently, desperately affirmed. When her strange eyes burned into me, it did not seem quite sure. I was intensely aware of where I sat, the volume of darkness I displaced, the shiny smooth span of packed dirt between us, and the shocking separateness from me in my mama's eyes. I would feel, all at once, alone and ugly, almost- as if I'd dirtied myself – obscene (Gardner 17).

Because he cannot define himself against her, Grendel feels that he and his mother were one. Yet this identification is destructive. Grendel's mother stares at him "as if to consume" him; her maternal love is possessive and gluttonous, desirous of making Grendel "a part of her flesh again" (Gardner 17). He reads this desire as obscene because it negates the few identification boundaries he has. If Grendel is just a part of his mother, then his horror is part of her own; but if

he is separate, he is terribly alone. In his mother's eyes, Grendel is "some meaning I myself could never know and might not care to know" (23). He is at once too close yet also too distant from his creator to be understood in opposition to what she is. Mute and monstrous, she becomes increasingly insane and protective as Grendel ventures out further from under her care. He describes her as "pitiful, foul . . . waste" so that what was once the mother is also the abject (15). When Beowulf finally confronts Grendel and deals the final blow that will kill him, the monster's response to the Event is to reach out to that which originally creates abjection – the mother. Grendel cries out to her that he is dying, "but her love is history" (163). He finally separates from maternal horror in the sublime moment of death during which he questions: "Is it joy I feel?" (163). This terminal scene of abjection – by losing the self, in rejecting the mother, through becoming a corpse – allows Grendel to finally achieve sublimation. His death is the main, metatextual Event of the retelling, because readers only understand the fable in terms of Grendel being killed by Beowulf. Grendel is always going to die, and everything in *Grendel* can only lead to this ultimate abjection and sublimation: the Event of his predestined death.

Grendel equates the unusual with the monstrous. Grendel is found to be monstrous precisely because he is not human. He only starts to define himself after encountering humans, and only settles on affirmative monstrosity after hearing his story told by the Shaper. Yet his obvious intelligence and self-awareness positions him between the humans and the "true" monsters, his mother and the dragon. Grendel's mother is animalistic, incapable of even simple speech acts or anything beyond beastly biological drives. The dragon is a truly supernatural creature who confounds the normative space-time continuum. In Gardner's vision, Grendel is neither animal nor truly supernatural, which makes his monstrosity all the more pitiable. Instead of always-already being a monster, Grendel seemingly chooses his monstrosity. This is just an

illusion of a choice, however, since while Grendel may be unaware of his destiny, readers know how his story will conclude. In *Grendel*, Beowulf is portrayed as nearly monstrous himself. He is bigger and crueler than other men, with somewhat supernatural gifts. This may be Gardner's play on the interpretation of "aglæca," a word used to describe both Beowulf and Grendel's mother in the original Old English poem. The most popular translation equated the term to mean "monster" for Grendel's mother and "warrior" for Beowulf, but medieval scholars like Gardner would recognize that it might apply equally to both. While most contemporary readings reconfigure the term to apply warrior or killer to Grendel's mother, Gardner twists the meaning to radically rewrite Beowulf as a monster. However, like Grendel himself, Beowulf is ineffectual and functions more as an interpellating device for readers than an actual antagonist to Grendel. As a poet who dictates worlds and fates, the Shaper is clearly a stand-in for the author. The Shaper "reshapes the world . . . so his name implies. He stares strangeeyed at the mindless world and turns dry sticks to gold" (Gardner 48). The Shaper represents Gardner, whose adaptation mimics but profanes legend and in doing so shows how far removed we are from the sacral. This reminds readers that they are reading an adaptation and that everything has already been decided and destined by *Beowulf*'s anonymous author. Gardner, like the Shaper, is simply *re*shaping a world that has been provided to him.

All this serves to make Grendel's monstrosity more pathetic and therefore all the more abject. He is a hybrid of human and monster, protagonist and antagonist, hero and anti-hero. His familiarity is what makes readers reject him, just as it is the recognizability of the self in the corpse that fills us with disgust. His rejection from the meadhall and therefore human companionship demonstrates the drive to categorize the real in the symbolic order. Grendel's fatalistic worldview finds comfort only in chaos, and it is the nature of humankind to try to find

order in things, even where there is none. By banishing Grendel from human contact, the people of *Grendel* attempt to draw an orderly line between self and Other, even though that line is an imaginary figment. This is ironically affirmed through the novel's separation into twelve chapters, representative of the signs of the zodiac and the months of the year. Even though Grendel's ideology is based in entropy, Gardner imposes meaningless order onto the narrative, and the Shaper into it. When Grendel dies, he says:

> I understood that the world was nothing: a mechanical chaos of casual, brute enmity on which we stupidly impose our hopes and fears. I understood that, finally and absolutely, I alone exist. All the rest, I saw, is merely what pushes me, or what I push against, blindly—as blindly as all that is not myself pushes back. I create the whole universe, blink by blink.—An ugly god pitifully dying in a tree! (Gardner 21-22).

This reaffirms the antagonistic dynamic between Grendel and the Shaper/author. Grendel believes that he creates the universe, when in fact it has been created for him. Gardner's choice to write the story of the first monster in *Beowulf* is significant here; Grendel thinks that this is the end of the world, but really it is just the end of *his* world. By looking intertextually, readers know that Grendel is only part of a larger narrative. Life goes on without poor Grendel.

Asterion and Grendel both embody the monstrous double who must be sacrificed to sustain ritual. They are doubled intertextually, as readers encounter each adaptation as palimpsest alongside the source text(s). Further, they are doubled through readers' empathetic identification with the monster. This identification places readers in the position of sacrificial victimhood, and the knowledge of the monster's/their impending death creates a state of abjection that lends itself to cumulative Event. As argued in Rene Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, law and religion (part of Lacan's symbolic order) are how we separate ourselves from our own violence. Indeed, we cannot confront the "naked truth" of our own violence without giving in to it entirely (Girard 82). Ritualistic sacrifice of a surrogate victim allows us to access our violence without needing to

feel the terror that accompanies understanding it. Through mythological thinking, we attribute our violent drives to external forces rather than facing the darkness within. Girard qualifies the Lacanian notion of the symbolic order by showing how cultural order removes us from the sacred (249). The way we mythologize violence only further separates us from the instinct that produces it. Ritual "requires the sacrifice of a victim as similar as possible to the 'monstrous double'" who belongs "to both the interior and the exterior of the community" (272). The monstrous double is both self and Other, human and monster, abject and sublime.

Kristeva's notion of the abject leads to Event in the retellings of the myth of the Minotaur and *Beowulf* because these adaptations represent an Event in and of themselves; readers become aware of the Event as always coming to be once realizing Asterion's abject identity as Minotaur or are metatextually certain of the necessary conclusion that Grendel must die for the hero to be. The climactic scene of the monster's death is cyclical and totalizing, yet by providing insight as to the monster's own view of the universe, these retellings expand the narrative tradition. Instead of understanding the abject monster as Other in opposition to the dominant self, the abject is self as defined by the dominant Other. This subversion shows how interdependent the abject and the self are in transcendental moments of accessing the sublime through Event. By viewing these texts as adaptations, readers are reminded of mythic concepts through glimpses of the real and create their meanings anew. The meta-language of myth gives us "an accessible code to discuss and communicate complex issues" (Sanders 99). Myth creates a system of representation that allows us to discuss what makes us human; and some of what makes us human is inherent monstrosity. Even though monsters in these adaptations remain just that – monstrous – readers' empathetic identification with them makes them perversely realize that they have some of the monstrous in themselves. Borges and Gardner intertextually queer myth and legend by

encouraging empathy for the monstrous abject. In the next chapter, I analyze a text that takes intertextual queering even further to rewrite a canonically straight character as queer.

Chapter 2, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, 2020, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

CHAPTER 3

A Queer Reading of Malinda Lo's *Ash*

...she did not believe that *wrong* was an accurate description of her feelings. Perplexed, yes; uncertain, yes; but beneath it all something as yet unnamed was coming into focus. – Malinda Lo, *Ash* 187

Malinda Lo's 2009 young adult novel *Ash* retells the "Cinderella" fairy tale, but with a twist: the titular heroine is portrayed as what the author calls "a lesbian Cinderella" ("Is Ash Lesbian"). However, Lo's project to queer the "Cinderella" story does not end there. My queer reading of the novel is predicated not only on the obvious – Lo's revision of Cinderella as a lesbian – but also on the representation of queer characters, temporality, and sociopolitical structures. Queering a fairy tale destabilizes normative cultural assumptions about gender and sexuality, thereby queering more than just the tale itself. Lo grants her Cinderella a plurality of options beyond escapism through heteronormative romance, while retaining the tale's focus on magic and masquerade. In my analysis of Lo's adaptation, I focus most intensely on the driving force of the narrative: questioning gender roles and normative sexual behavior, particularly for women. *Ash* challenges the "myth of heterosexual complementarity" of many fairy tales, in which a man and woman are driven to happily ever after by forces seemingly beyond their control (Seifert, *Fairy Tales* 102). Many "Cinderella" stories, especially the vastly popular 1950 Disney animated film, reaffirm this myth. Alternatively, *Ash* extends the idealism of the "Cinderella" story to queer potentiality by representing non-heteronormative relationships and creating a recursive queer time of fairy tales, dreams, and the carnivalesque. Further, the novel depicts the complex structural privileging of certain gender and sexual identities that take place at the intersection of politics, wealth, and class, even within queer communities.

Despite a recent trend of queer revisionings of traditional literary fairy tales, queer theory has only minimally intersected with fairy tale studies. In *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms*, Kay Turner and Pauline Greenhill argue that seminal source fairy tale texts remove most overtly sexual, deviant, and class-inappropriate encounters; however, "awash in perverse possibilities, they beg for a queer(y)ing" (119). A queer reading looks at the complex notions fairy tales portray that might suggest multivalent desires (145). The fairy tale and its conventions create a sort of structural queerness based on the acceptance of magic, fantasy, and ambiguity as they penetrate reality: "queerness and temporality uniquely meet in the fairy tale" (186). The queer time of fairy tales asks readers to engage with the world of magic, therefore inviting queer potentiality (199).[27] In his discussion of queer potentiality Jose Esteban Munoz says that "we may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality" (25). This potentiality "becomes the prism through which to re-examine what it means to belong/not belong to... racial/national community" (120). Munoz's idealist statement means that while we hope for a future that accepts and even embraces queer identities, in the present queerness is often negated by structures that value reproduction above most other impetuses. Queer potentiality is used as a disruptive force that pushes against these structures and allows for new modes of belonging (Wallace 60). In doing so, it is a "form of defiance that bolsters actions that resist heteropatriarchy" (62). While the surface story of a traditional fairy tale might appear to portray conservative, restrictive gender/sexuality values, its "deep structure, represented by the realm of enchantment," implies inherent queer potentiality (Turner and Greenhill 199).

[27] Anne Duggan calls this phenomenon "queer enchantments" (7).

Ash fits within a rich tradition of contemporary "Cinderella" retellings and does so in a transformative way. Transformative adaptations expand the story world of their source text(s) instead of simply responding to it. Adaptations that simply reverse relations in their source texts, or what Karlyn Crowley and John Pennington call to "add women and stir" (301), make for an unsuccessful transformative retelling. A failed transformative tale (what Crowley and Pennington call a "feminist fraud on the fairies") is an essentialist piece that sees gender as a singular entity to subvert (301). Alternatively, a true transformative tale retells gender and genre as "complex, intersectional, and multifaceted" (302). Indeed, "powerful feminist fairy tales, ones that are descriptive and self-reflexive, do not seek to simply subvert stereotypes—replace the old with the new; rather, they rattle the foundational cages of the tale where the power structures reside" (304). Recent "Cinderella" adaptations that "rattle the foundational cages" include texts that, like *Ash*, also open up the tale to queer potentiality. Most recently, Sony signed on Billy Porter, a gay Black actor and activist, to play the fairy godmother in their upcoming *Cinderella* film (2021). Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical adaptation of *Cinderella* (2019) has a Prince Charming whose romantic interest is a Duke. *Cinder Ella* by S.T. Lynn (2016) portrays a Black transgender Cinderella whose mistreatment and humiliation by her stepfamily is steeped in transphobia. Marisa Meyer's *Cinder* (2013) creates a cyborg Cinderella, who is queered by her separateness from the rest of human society. In *The Rose and the Beast* (2000), Francesca Lia Block rewrites "Cinderella" in a way that allows for modern, freeing gender possibilities. Emma Donaghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) has a lesbian Cinderella who romances a mysterious stranger old enough to be her mother. Of these queer "Cinderella" adaptations, however, Lo's novel engages in the most worldbuilding. The extensive textual space

spent setting up the novel's intricate social structures demonstrates how social interpellation happens within intersections of politics, wealth, class, gender, and sexual identity.

Literary fairy tales are often used to enforce certain modes of sexual behavior (Zipes xi). Alternatively, as shown in these transformative adaptations they can also be used to challenge heteronormativity. Challenging heteronormativity is inherently queer: Alexander Doty defines queer as "contra-, non-, or anti-straight" (xv), and Steven Angelides calls queer "an umbrella category for the sexually marginalized" (165). These definitions take the concept beyond just gay and lesbian identity politics to open up queerness to a range of gender and sexual identities. Transformative adaptations invite a queer reading by incorporating multivalent desires to show that there is not just one authoritative fairy tale but instead a discursive web of fairy tale knowledge that allows for queer potentiality. A queer reading of a fairy tale revision sees the ways that modes of gender, sexuality, and desire problematize the moralistic lessons of the source text (Orme, "Wolf" 87). Portrayals of gender and sexuality in fairy tales and their adaptations creates tension "between the language of heteronormativity and the languages of transgressive and queer desires" (Bacchilega 20). Certain figures, reorderings, and intertexts offer a "queer invitation" to take another look at the relationship between hypo- and hypertext (Orme 87). By "perverting" source fairy tale texts (88), revisions like *Ash* that trouble the concepts of gender and sexuality allow the opportunity for queer (re)reading.

Ash tells the story of a young girl who must choose between the fairy world and the world of the living. It bears the normative archetypes of the Cinderella tale; the story centers around an orphaned, beleaguered protagonist, whose moniker aligns her with ashes. After her mother dies, her merchant father marries Lady Isobel, a woman with two daughters. Ash's father soon becomes ill and also dies, leading her stepmother to sell their home to attempt and mediate

his extensive debts. Lady Isobel decrees that Ash will be an indentured servant until these debts are fully paid. Ash finds comfort only in her mother's old book of fairy tales until one day she meets the dark fairy prince Sidhean. She later meets and falls for the Huntress Kaisa, who invites her to the King's Hunt and later the royal ball. Ash asks Sidhean for supernatural assistance since her stepmother will not allow her to attend. He agrees, but for a price: Ash must promise to join him eternally in the fairy kingdom. Ash's stepmother catches her sneaking back home after the ball and confines her in the basement. Sidhean frees her and tells her that her mother put a curse on him to fall in love with a human girl, and that he is in love with her. Ash goes to see Kaisa again before meeting Sidhean to settle her debt. At her request, he only makes her stay for one night in the fairy world. The next day she meets with Kaisa as a free woman. Lo does not explicitly discuss the dichotomy of the ideal prince versus Ash's other relationship options, but instead proposes Ash's relationship with the Huntress as a solid, equal relationship.

Ash opens by depicting a gender-based binary: Philosophers, who are always men, are in contention with Greenwitches, who are always women. The Philosophers use authoritative argument, supported by science and old manuscripts, to protest that "fairies are mere fictions" and that they "deal in the truth" (Lo, *Ash* 11). The Greenwitches believe in magic, fairies, and alternative healing practices. They are slowly pushed out when the Philosophers realize they can use internally persuasive dialogue to convince people not to believe in magic. Instead of insisting that there is no such thing as magic, they begin to suggest that perhaps it is no longer around. This suggestion makes the townspeople believe that they think these things themselves. From a metatextual standpoint, then, Lo indicates the power of encouraging new ways of believing and dismantling authoritative voice. Even though the Philosophers are shown as overly pedantic and

not attuned to the magical realm like the Greenwitches, their ability to open people to new ways of thinking grants them power.

Lo further intertextually and metatextually hails past "Cinderella" fairy tales. Ash is a much more human Cinderella who gets angry at her situation and the position her stepfamily forces her into. Her mother dies suddenly at midsummer after becoming ill so quickly that "some of the villagers wondered if the fairies had come and taken her, for she was still young and beautiful" (Lo, *Ash* 2). This intertextually cites past "Cinderella" variations that begin with the mother's death. It also ironically evokes the moral of Charles Perrault's tale, that "beauty in a woman is a rare treasure that will always be admired" (44). In Lo's adaptation, however, the admiration of beauty can lead to early death. The villagers speculate that the fairies took – and therefore killed, since humans cannot live in the fairy realm – Ash's mother *because* she is beautiful. Instead of being a saving grace, beauty is depicted as subversively dangerous. Like other Cinderellas, Ash is treated badly by a cruel stepmother. Her only respite is consuming fairy tales, which she does ravenously in an attempt to escape her environment. The inclusion of these fairy tales is significant, as it metatextually reminds readers that they too are reading a fairy tale.

By including supernatural creatures from British Isle Faerie lore but weaving them into a revision of a literary fairy tale, Lo queers the fairy tale genre and its conventions. She says that while the fairies "are the ultimate otherworldly, foreign, strange, queer folk," she "wanted to evoke an old-school fairy tale feel with *Ash*, and that involves spelling *fairy* the way it's spelled in Grimms'" (Lo, "On the Meaning"). This spelling encourages readers to consider the fairy's place in a transformative adaptation of a fairy tale. Further, Lo uses fairies to queer the normative racial depiction of fairy tale princesses (or princesses-to-be) as white by juxtaposing Ash's physical depiction with the fairies. The fairies are "pale," "translucent," and "like nothing she

had ever seen before" (Lo, *Ash* 33). While Lo does not go into extensive detail about Ash's physical traits, the fairies' description as alien Other implies that Ash is not white. Lo, who is Chinese American, says that she always imagined Ash and Kaisa as having Asian features, even though in the world of *Ash* there is no Asia (Lo, "Asianness"). She does not explicitly depict what she calls the "trappings of exoticism" because the human realm "has to contrast significantly" with the fairy realm, and she wants "the fairy realm to seem totally foreign" (Lo, "Avoiding"). Relying on British Isle Faerie lore but presenting it as Other allows Lo to turn normative representations of exoticism on its head. In the world of *Ash*, it is the British-signifying white realm that is exotic. This responds to the representation of Cinderella as blonde and blue-eyed especially as takes place in the Disney canon. Ash's obsession with fairies and their tales becomes dangerous when she is sworn to Sidhean, who wants to take her to the fairy realm for eternity. Lo self-reflexively cites other fairy tales but also shows the potential destructive power of their interpellation by literalizing Ash's escape from reality with a fairy. Sidhean represents the idyllic romanticized love perpetuated through the retelling of fairy tales, and yet Ash ultimately realizes that this type of escapism is unhealthy.

The dialectic in *Ash* that expands past heteronormative relationships moves from structural to personal. Part I of the book is called "The Fairy," and Part II is called "The Huntress" (Lo, *Ash* 2, 128). This shows Ash's move from desiring a straight (though transbiological) relationship with Sidhean the fairy to a queer relationship with Kaisa the Huntress. Lo plays with language here: fairy is a word sometimes used to describe gay men and hunting is often associated with masculinity. This structure, along with the novel form, queers the teleology of the "Cinderella" fairy tale by introducing new heteroglossic possibilities. As opposed to monoglossic (single-voiced) texts, heteroglossic (many-voiced) texts show a range of

voices, points of views, and desires (Bakhtin 67). Portraying multiple desires, including non-normative ones, creates a "heteroglossic proliferation of desires" that allows queer potentiality by disrupting heteronormative structures (Orme, "Happily" 2732). These heteroglossic desires take place in *Ash* by showing many romantic possibilities for its heroine. She can potentially become romantically entangled with Sidhean, the Prince, or Kaisa. The structural set-up posits both the fairy and the huntress as the primary locuses for desire.

Ash represents queer relationships as equally possible as straight ones for its characters – and for some, not only possible but preferable. Ash is regularly interpellated into heteronormativity but acts in a space of resistance. Normative desire is represented through the servant girl Gwen, who "even dressed as a boy" for a festival appears "unmistakably feminine" (Lo, *Ash* 101). She invites Ash to go with her to find a "handsome young lord" (105), but Ash is more intrigued by seeing two women smile and kiss. To Gwen, marriage is something only achievable with a man. Ash's stepfamily represents toxic desire, as her stepmother teaches her daughters how to catch a man using tricks and deceit. To her, marrying a man of nobility or at least wealth is worth any sacrifice or deceit. Ash recognizes this as dangerous and tells one of her stepsisters she has other options and that she "would be false" if she took her mother's advice (184). Although queer interactions are present at occasional intervals throughout the text, they are not seen as unusual until Ash's romantic revelation. Despite these transient queer possibilities, Ash is mostly pushed towards straightness until she makes her own decision to transgress, since her stepfamily and Gwen rely on the ideology of compulsive heterosexuality in their interactions with her. Ash's desire is ultimately innate and yet is also an active choice she makes.

Lo also queers several "Cinderella" tropes in *Ash*, including reconfiguring and regendering the fairy godmother character. Readers familiar with Perrault's version of the "Cinderella" story – further cemented in the cultural imagination by Disney's animated musical depiction – retain a certain mental image of the fairy godmother figure. Namely, she is represented as a benign elderly woman whose supernatural abilities are used only for assistance. Lo subverts this paradigm by emphasizing the fairy godmother figure's supernaturality to the point of danger and writing Sidhean as a male potential love interest. Across European fairy tale tradition, the wise woman/fairy godmother character "is a signifier heavy with meaning" as it indicates a referentiality between womanhood and the practice of magic (Goldstein 1111). Over time, the fairy godmother character developed "into a kind of composite character that embodies certain cultural binaries," including between magic and medicine and women in the public or private sphere (1162). However, Lo destabilizes the normative representation of the fairy godmother by having the sinister, desirous Sidhean fulfill the part.

Even though it seems that the Greenwitch Maire Solanya will fulfill the part of fairy godmother, instead an ominous fairy with his own agenda grants wishes and gives Ash the dress, shoes, and carriage she needs for the ball conditional on her indebtedness to him and the stroke of midnight. The Greenwitch, who believes in the use of magic to cure ailments, is introduced on the first page. This would seem to set her up as the fairy godmother character, since she is a wise woman who uses magic and wants to help Ash. By perverting expectations that the Greenwitch will be the fairy godmother, Lo further invites readers to question the tale they think they know. The fairy godmother's unasked-for and unpaid assistance suddenly appears suspect. This also alters the locus for female bonding in the source text – in many "Cinderella" versions, the only positive female relationship is between Cinderella and the fairy godmother. At best, she is

antagonized by her stepfamily, and there are no other women in her life. In Lo's transformative retelling, Ash has several positive female relationships: with the Greenwitch, Gwen, Kaisa, and even ultimately one of her stepsisters. With this twist, Lo indicates that supernatural forces are not necessary for female friendship.

The fairy Sidhean's transbiological desire for the human Ash queers the trope of compulsory heteronormativity. The word trans is linked to transformation, and trans studies often intersects with issues of monstrosity.[28] By depicting Sidhean as a monstrous fairy with transbiological desire for Ash, Lo invites a queer reading of what initially appears to be a heterosexual relationship. Transbiology theory "demonstrates the awkward knottiness/naughtiness of the boundary between human and non-human" (Turner and Greenhill 311). Desires between humans and non-humans in fairy tales "interrogate" heteronormative structures and show how queer bonds might "transcend species divisions" (Jorgensen 1637). Transbiology includes the "made and born" relationships between human and non-human species (Franklin 171). There are no tranbiological romantic/sexual relationships in most "Cinderella" stories, and Lo writes several (always fairy/human) into *Ash*. As a fairy, Sidhean's desire for Ash is transbiological, and this makes him a queer subject: "queer insists that the power of the myth of the normal, dominant, and natural is very much indebted to its opposing myth of the abnormal, minor, and perverse" (Orme, "Wolf" 92). Fairies and humans cannot reproduce in the world of *Ash*. As Lewis Seifert argues, anything that "embodies a negativity, an end to a self-reproducing, self-justifying heterosexual future" represents also "a disruption to the familial order and the kinship ties that are supposed to be guaranteed by marriage and children" ("Queer Time" 34). While queer, however, Sidhean's desire is based on a structure that mimics

[28] Susan Stryker discusses the conflation of the transsexual/transgender subject with monstrosity.

compulsory heteronormativity. The fairy ultimately confesses that he was cursed to love a human girl, and he has no control over a desire that was forced on him by other people.

Alternatively, Ash's own attraction to Sidhean is not sexual or romantic. Instead, she is attracted to what he represents – a return to her mother, escape, and death. Initially, Sidhean represents a continued relationship with her mother, since Ash thinks he can help bring her mother back from the dead. This is brought full circle when Sidhean ultimately confesses that Ash's own mother cursed him to fall in love with a human girl as a punishment for his callous meddling in human matters. Ash's mother did not know that the recipient of the curse would be her own daughter. The curse is one-sided: Sidhean loves Ash as much as a fairy can feel love, but Ash does not love Sidhean. Although society regularly pushes her towards heteronormativity, Ash is only intrigued by Sidhean so far as he symbolizes escape and the reality of magic. Ash's view of Sidhean recognizes his queer transbiology and conflates him with ethereal otherness. His face is "strangely disturbing," and his name is "foreign and exotic" (Lo, *Ash* 82). He exudes a "cold strangeness" (97), and his scent is of "night-blooming roses that had never felt the touch of a human hand" (110). He is a "wild, ancient creature" whose "inhumaneness" marks him as queer other (122). Ash initially views this otherness as superior to human relationships, since the only humans she encounters after her father's death are cruel and, ironically, inhumane. She wants to leave the binds of humanity to be with Sidhean because he represents an escape from reality. However, ultimately Ash realizes that her love for Kaisa transcends her escapist idealism. Through this choice, Lo writes a queer potentiality that can happen in the here and now instead of some utopian future.

By wearing a dazzling dress and mask to the ball, Ash starts to live out the happy ending of traditional "Cinderella" stories. This attire makes Ash look ethereal, as if she were a fairy

herself: “she looked, she thought, like a fairy woman” and has to touch her face to “make sure she was still flesh and blood” (Lo, *Ash* 209). This once again shows the objectification of beauty prevalent in source texts. Cinderella becomes nothing but her beauty, and this is what the Prince falls for. The Prince invites her to dance, but instead of being awestruck at his socioeconomic status she feels uncomfortable, “as if she had slipped into someone else’s skin, and it did not quite fit” (212). She initially balks because she does not know the dance steps, but the slippers magically lead her. Rather than being pleased by this, Ash feels like her humanity is slipping away and is uncomfortable that “her shoes knew more about dancing than she did” (212). This exposes the problematic dynamic in traditional “Cinderella” stories, in which feminine beauty and manners correlate to goodness and desirability. While the Prince does desire Ash, she realizes that she does not feel comfortable in her own skin when she is being controlled through artifice.

Significantly, Kaisa sees beyond heteronormative facade and magic masquerade to the true Ash. She says that while Ash looks beautiful, the dress “looks like it is suffocating” her (Lo, *Ash* 217). The dress and shoes simply do not fit Ash symbolically even if they do fit her literally. This feeling of not fitting reflects the difficulty of fulfilling a heteronormative ideal while retaining queer desires – something is not quite right with Sidhean’s gift and with a dance with the Prince, and Ash knows it. Kaisa recognizes it, too. She says that Ash looks beautiful “but the dress does not suit you” (216). Instead of being fooled by the mask of opulence, Kaisa wants the real Ash. Kaisa’s desire for Ash is also nonnormative, but Lo’s portrayal of this desire shows it as not only natural but also essential. At the second ball, Ash shows up with shorn hair and a work dress, and she and Kaisa finally dance. This shows that Kaisa accepts Ash even and especially without supernatural accoutrements. While the Prince in “Cinderella” stories is usually

drawn first to Cinderella's dazzling outfits and beauty, Kaisa's love for Ash needs no false refinery. Alternatively, Ash's work dress represents what Kaisa wants more than any ball gown could: someone hard-working, practical, and *real*. When considering her feelings towards Kaisa, Ash feels "perplexed, yes; uncertain, yes; but beneath it all something as yet unnamed was coming into focus" (186). This something as yet unnamed is Ash's own queer desire. There is no need for enchantment when Ash and Kaisa are together. When dancing with Kaisa Ash feels "as if every aspect of her being was reorienting itself to this woman" (251). This reorientation demonstrates her move towards queer, same-sex potentiality. Queer potentiality "focused what had once been a blur; it turned her world around and presented her with a new landscape" (251). Ash's interest in the Huntress supplants her previous escapist idealism and ties her to queer potentiality. Along with Ash's rejection of both Sidhean and the Prince, her increased engagement with Kaisa subverts the way that escapism takes place in "Cinderella" source texts. In these versions of the "Cinderella" story, the titular character always (and only) escapes her cruel stepfamily by marrying what is essentially a stranger. Lo queers this narrative by providing alternative actions for her heroine.

Along with queer relationships, Ash also experiences queer time. Jack Halberstam argues that queer time takes place on a separate plane from heteronormative (reproductive, familial) time. In doing so, it celebrates the now, exists "outside of the logic of capital accumulation" (Halberstam 10), and shows "little or no concern for longevity" (152). As Seifert contends, queer potentiality can stem from temporality, the way time is used in narrative to both "construct and undermine normative social plots of sexuality and kinship" ("Queer Time" 22). In heteronormative temporality, time "unfolds 'naturally' through a series of cause-and-effect sequences to produce particular forms of personhood with foreordained roles to play in the larger

sociopolitical order" (22). These roles are based on presupposed goals, including sexual ones. Queer time, alternatively, resists these goals and what Elizabeth Freeman calls "chrononormativity" to cast doubt on mandated futures (3). *Ash* casts doubt on these futures through its transfiguration of the linear time Sylvia Plath deems "the caustic ticking of the clock" inherent in the "Cinderella" story ("Cinderella" line 14). A traditional Cinderella must always be attuned to linear temporality because she will be exposed as an impoverished servant when the clock strikes midnight. This will presumably end her chances as a marriageable prospect for the Prince. In *Ash*, however, the enchantment still ends at midnight, but it is not based in her desire for marriage and secrecy. Instead, Ash just wants to be with Kaisa and sees the balls as the only way to get close to her.

Ash's regular forays into dreamtime and the fairy realm and her pushback against the institution of marriage mediates celebration with a desire for queer futurity in the hope for being with Kaisa. This mediation creates queer potentiality – the disruptive force of the celebratory, carnivalesque now juxtaposing a queer utopian future. Like the fairy tale itself, dreams provide alternative realities, invite metaphor, and contradict what is known to be true. This means that dreams and their representation within fairy tales are doubly ripe for queer interpretation since they challenge normativity and because "sleep is a time unto itself" (Seifert, "Queer Time" 32). Ash's first queer dreamtime happens right after her mother dies, which causes her to experience a recursive dream within a dream. She awakens from dreams of "tall, thundering white horses with foaming mouths and slender, wraithlike riders" (Lo, *Ash* 5), only to continue hearing the horses as she cries at her mother's grave. These figures foreshadow her later relationship with Sidhean the fairy and tie him to queer time and to Ash's mother. She wakes up later in her own bed, a smattering of gold dust on her windowsill the only proof of her dreams. The people of

Rook Hill believe that gold dust means a fairy was there. With this dust, Lo implies that dreams and reality are easily interchanged in queer temporality. Ash's dreams are often uneasy, but she is even more concerned when she cannot remember her dreams. Her inability to access her dream state indicates a simultaneous inability to act in her waking hours. Ash feels that her initial encounter with fairies seems "more like a dream than reality" (55), since she can never fully access her memory of it. She relies on Kaisa to ground her memory, since "if anyone could confirm what she had seen, it would be her" (55). This shows that Ash realizes that wish projection in dreams means nothing without tethering it to reality. To her, the Huntress represents something real but still enchanting, while dreams are impossible phantasms.

Ash's dreams make her question the binary between fantasy and reality. She has one recurring dream that happens during her thirteenth year in which she walks down a path that leads from the Wood to her mother's grave under a hawthorn tree.[29] Although she can see the grave-marker, she can never fully reach her mother's headstone. Eventually Ash decides to act out her dream. This leads her through a mysteriously enchanted Wood until she reaches her mother's tombstone, falls asleep on it, and for once does not dream. When she wakes up, Sidhean is there. Ash immediately asks him to resurrect her mother, but he refuses. He returns her to her house on a journey that signifies her previous dreams. They ride a giant, wild horse, ride under a mysterious city, and encounter intoxicating scents, including one that seems "as if space were being compressed on their journey" and another "indefinable – perhaps it was the smell of magic" (Lo, *Ash* 67). Ash falls back to sleep while in this surreal space and dreams of the tall cities and intoxicating scents she just experienced. Readers never truly know what is dream and what is reality, which leads to what Seifert calls "temporal condensation" ("Queer

[29] This intertextually signifies the tree that grows from Cinderella's mother's grave in the Grimm variation.

Time" 32) – transportation back and forth through time, therefore making the experience of time itself unpredictable. By making Ash's recurring dream lead to a dreamlike reality signifying even more dreams, Lo creates an ambivalent temporal space. This ambivalence also takes place later when Ash has the dream again after meeting the Huntress. The dream changes shape, though, and she finally reaches the end of the path only to find that her mother's grave is terrifyingly empty. The empty space represents what Ash has finally come to accept: that her mother is actually dead and not coming back. In her dreams, she finally accepts that even permanently joining the fairy world will not bring her mother back, and this dream realization begins to permeate her actions in reality.

Dreams and their queer temporality also hold significant space in the fairy tales told within *Ash* and in Ash's relationship with Kaisa. In one fairy tale told in the novel, a young girl named Kathleen falls in love with a fairy. A local Greenwitch tells her to burn three leaves of mugwort every night so that she can dream of the fairy world. Obsessed with the fairy world, Kathleen wastes away and ultimately falls into an eternal sleep since "she only truly lived when she slept" (Lo, *Ash* 77). Reality and fantasy become interchangeable; linear, straight time and existence is challenged by a queering of temporality. This also happens when Ash finds her mother's journal, which says that mugwort can be used "sparingly" to cause lucid dreams (77). The scientific notation seems to imply that Kathleen's story may have been true – that, actually, all fairy tales may bear a ring of truth. This implication opens up a world of possibility. If things that happen in dreams may be real, then the real world may simultaneously be fantastical. The queer temporal intertwining of dreams and reality also instigates Ash's same-sex relationship. Ash dreams about meeting the Huntress for the first time in the Wood. In this dream, Kaisa looks to Ash and says: "You've found me" (88). This scene is portrayed as a dream, yet later when

Kaisa and Ash meet again the Huntress references their encounter in the Wood, meaning that the dream occurred in some sort of reality beyond just Ash's dream world. Ash's dreams about Sidhean and the fairy realm are marked by the exotic scent of jasmine, while her dreams about Kaisa are denoted by the setting of the Wood. She has several dreams about both, which are signified by the intersecting figure of horses (magical horses ridden by the fairies and natural horses used by Huntresses) and the overwhelming feeling of having to make a choice. While it takes place in fantastical dream-time, this choice becomes grounded in reality as Ash must choose between what Sidhean represents, escapism and death, and what Kaisa represents, love and life.

Lo further explores queer temporality through depictions of the carnivalesque. Texts can be ontologically queer, or queer by nature, while in some texts queer is "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (Sedgwick 8). In particular, the topsy-turvy world of children's and young adult literature exists at the juncture of ontological and "open mesh" queerness. This "confluence of asexual oddness with sexual nonnormativity… tweak[s]" readers' expectations but also implies a subsequent return to normativity (Pugh 218-9). This aligns with Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, in which normative social structures are overturned but ultimately reinstated in a way that reasserts these standards (219). In *Ash*, the Royal City celebrates Yule through a week of banquets and balls culminating in a royal masque. Ash dresses as a page boy for the masque and sees herself in carnivalesque terms. She "looked like a stranger… unrecognizable" (Lo, *Ash* 102). This unrecognizability indicates a space in which anything can and does happen: gender-bending, drinking, "revelers in costumes of all colors and

kinds," dancing, musicians dressed as jokers and horses dressed as eagles, and even two women kissing (104-5). After the festivities, however, Ash must return to her life of indentured servitude. The city returns to normativity since the carnivalesque nature of the Yule celebrations are a government-licensed allowance to engage in revelry, cross-dressing, and masquerade. While the carnivalesque nature of the festival allows the people of the city to release their inhibitions, it is a temporary reprieve until the return to usual social behavior.

However, in a uniquely queer twist, Lo retains her focus on sexual nonnormativity by having Ash realize her feelings for Kaisa even after the festivities are over. Lo queers even the notion of the carnivalesque by depicting another space that inhabits the spirit of carnival. The Wood is an "otherworldly" place "thought to be the home of dangerous beasts and the most powerful of all the fairies" and "where the old magic lingered" (Lo, *Ash* 6, 9, 10). The topsy-turvy world of the Wood is thus a space where anything can and does happen and there is no mandatory return to normative social hierarchies and behaviors like after the festivals. Ash's encounters with Sidhean and her initial meetings with Kaisa all take place in the Wood, demonstrating its queer enchantments (Duggan 7). Ash's choice to leave the Wood's fairy realm behind and go find Kaisa shows her hope that she can extend the queerness of the Wood to the modern city. Since "she knew, at last, that she was home" after finding Kaisa (Lo, *Ash* 264), it seems that her hope for queer potentiality is a promising one.

Ash's one night in the fairy realm also represents an extreme topsy-turvy world, but she ultimately returns to a normalcy that subversively embraces queerness. Although as I have argued Sidhean's transbiological desire for Ash is inherently queer, her one night with the male character who desires her is still analogous to a one-night stand. However, Ash's one night with Sidhean happens in queer time. She says that "time seemed to be compressed," and Sidhean tells

her that one night in his world is not the same as one in hers (Lo, *Ash* 253). She sees the Wood that night as "changing, shifting, as if a veil were being lifted and she was finally allowed to see what was behind it" (253). This veil represents tradition and compulsory identities and desire. Ash then asks, "Will I die?" to which Sidhean responds "only a little" before taking her to the fairy realm for the night (253). Rather than re-asserting heteronormativity, this allusion to orgasm (la petite mort) shows the lengths Ash is willing to go to be with Kaisa. That she is required to take part in a one-night encounter with a male benefactor before fully embracing her queerness ironically exposes, albeit in a surreal, carnivalesque manner, the reliance of women in her society on male suitors to support their existences.

Queer characters and temporality in *Ash* function within a larger matrix of intricate socioeconomic structures. Lo portrays three separate but intersecting social realms: Ash's home, symbolized by her folkloric, proto-feminist mother and the Greenwitches; the Royal City, with its Philosophers, patriarchal structuring, and marriage market; and the supernatural Wood. Lo's depiction of the Royal City shows how politics, wealth, and class intersect with gender and sexuality in ways that privilege certain identities while devaluing others. As argued by David Eng and others, queerness exists in different ways through time, space, and place.[30] A poor queer person of color likely experiences queerness and belonging in a very different way than a wealthy white person. The way queerness is perceived is codified through trade and labor, or "queer value": the dualistic domains of "the psychic realm of desire and the material realm of accumulation and exchange" (Wesling 107). Certain desires are attributed value and therefore are visible, while others are rendered invisible and unviable.

[30] In *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Initimacy*, Eng shows how "queer liberalism" benefits some gay and lesbian-identified people economically and politically.

In the Royal City, visible desires are primarily heteronormative and transactional. Lady Isobel's anger towards her stepdaughter is reframed to be predicated on the dissolution of her reliance on marital mobility. She marries Ash's father, a seemingly successful merchant, only for him to die after having spent her inheritance on risky business ventures. Lady Isobel finds Ash, the remaining representative for her father, culpable for the economically unstable position he leaves her in. She blames patriarchal lineage for this economic devaluing and tells Ash, "You are not my daughter; you are your father's daughter, and you are going to pay his debts" (Lo, *Ash* 57). Later, Ash says she "must go settle [her] debt" to Sidhean (251), mimicking her earlier indebtedness to Lady Isobel. Both debts are founded in socioeconomic structures that leave a person of lesser wealth and power in thrall to another. Alternatively, Kaisa offers to help Ash settle her debt, saying, "You would owe me nothing... but it is your decision to make" (219). Unlike most people in Ash's life, Kaisa wants Ash to make the choice herself and to not remain in a position of debt. Although inherently queer, Sidhean's hold over Ash is similar to her indebtedness to her stepfamily. This shows that the story-world's structural hierarchies function within queer time as well as outside of it.

In *Ash*, nearly every female character sees marriage to a man of higher social and/or financial status as the only way to achieve any sort of mobility. Wealth (and poverty) is transferred through patriarchal apparatuses in the Royal City: with one exception, seemingly all women without financial or social status through their fathers or marriage are servants and domestic workers. However, the Huntress position represents a rare potential for escape from patriarchy's structural oppression. Before meeting Kaisa, Ash interacts with another Huntress who comes by the house with a gang of men who she treats like children. While this could be read as maternal and therefore normative, the Huntress's ability to give orders to men and attain

high status without relying on marriage challenges the gendered oppressive structures of the Royal City. When Ash meets this first Huntress, she feels "as though the Huntress had suddenly called her into being" (Lo, *Ash* 50). Foreshadowing Kaisa's later influence, the first Huntress shows Ash that there is more than one way to be a woman.

While I argue that *Ash* invites a queer reading, not everyone agrees. Jon Wargo analyzes the adaptation from a children's literature/queer studies intersectional approach to assert that it actually is "not all that queer" (46). He claims that "Lo's juxtaposing mirror image worlds of magic and reality complicate a queer reading, ultimately restricting the story to one of compulsory heterosexuality and leaving bisexuality at the periphery of such a fantasy" (46). However, Wargo's argument is contingent on an errant reading of Ash's one-night compromise with Sidhean. Wargo says Lo projects "shame onto the body of the bisexual, letting shame act as the disruption to a lesbian existence and the zenith of individuation" (49). He follows this by saying that "Aisling's lesbian existence becomes secondary to the previous tryst with Sidhean. Like a wedding ring, Sidhean's brand and ring fastens Aishling to heterosexuality" (50). I do agree that Ash's night in the fairy realm implies a reliance on heteronormativity to show that – while Ash is ultimately free to follow her feelings for Kaisa and therefore disrupt the traditional ending of "Cinderella" stories – she still does not reside in a queer utopia. However, I disagree that Ash's one night fastens her to heterosexuality, since Ash's night with Sidhean instead represents her farewell to the mourning that has so infused her since her own mother's death. Ash's encounters with Sidhean in the Wood are filled with sexual imagery, but Lo queers these images from heteronormative representations. The first time Ash goes looking for Sidhean in the Wood, she trips over a root and cuts her cheek. Sidhean is concerned: "'You are bleeding,' he said, and rubbed a smear of her blood between his fingers. The sight of her blood on his pale skin

made her shudder, and yet she felt herself lean toward him instinctively" (Lo, *Ash* 85). Red blood against a white backdrop is often used to signify a loss of virginity; but significantly, Ash cuts herself in the search for knowledge about her mother, not because of any penetration (implied or not) from Sidhean. Her blood is juxtaposed with Sidhean's pale skin instead of her own skin or bedsheets, further queering the trope of the virgin's deflowering.

Wargo's reading of Ash as bisexual is problematic since she never desires Sidhean in a romantic/sexual sense. Instead, Sidhean represents an escape from the cruelties of her stepfamily and a reunion with her mother. Further, using the definition of queerness as anything that challenges heteronormativity, even if Ash were bisexual she would still be queer. Her choices to participate in several heteronormative encounters, including dancing with the Prince and entertaining Sidhean's marriage-like proposal, show her ability to navigate between external expectations for her sexuality and her internal desires. Ash ultimately rejects her male suitors, but the inclusion of options from different genders and species is inherently queer. This complicates the notion of compulsory heterosexuality so innate in most fairy tales and their retellings. As such, *Ash* extends past heteronormativity to include transbiological and same-sex desire in the space of queer time. Lo implies that reality and fantasy are intertwined domains, which disrupts normative boundaries and binaries, and presents queer desire as one of many possibilities.

Lo's fluctuation between representing queer characters in a specific sociohistorical realm while also adapting and alluding to fairy tale legend is, in fact, "that queer" (Wargo 46). *Ash* depicts a historic community with queer members at the same time as it dehistoricizes this community (See 1075). While most fairy tales take place once upon a time, *Ash* is set in a quasi-historical time period, in which the conflict between Greenwitches and Philosophers reflects a

larger concern about the disappearance of magic and encroaching modernity. Lo's intricate world-building is steeped in structural hierarchies at the intersections of politics, wealth, class, gender, and sexual identity. She also queer-codes her take on the fairy tale in a way that disrupts mythic heteronormativity. The Greenwitches are a cipher for Greenwich Village, a historically queer community, while the Philosophers represent scientific erasure of queerness. Sidhean's "'fairy' status refers to effeminate gay men (thus queering the fairy tale itself)" (1075). These contemporary allusions link the adaptation to a queer matrix. By shifting narration from an authoritative space (the once upon a time tale that has always been around in some incarnation or another) to a personal one, *Ash* and other transformative adaptations encourage readers to empathize with the protagonist and question authoritative narratives. Ash's time spent dreaming and in the fairy realm and her literal queer time with Kaisa opposes the linear temporality of capitalistic society, the marriage market, and domestic work. Her queer temporality of choosing brief moments of pleasure instead of a linear, reproductive future leads to queer potentiality in the hope for a more utopian future with Kaisa. Queer adaptations like Lo's transform the narrative itself to expose certain beliefs that permeate previous adaptations and in doing so open up the tale to a wonderful world of possibility. The next chapter also focuses on a transformative adaptation that responds to a discursive web of source materials instead of a singular text and in doing so creates queer potentiality.

Chapter 3, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Marvels and Tales*, 2020, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

CHAPTER 4

Annie John, the Postcolonial Palimpsest, and the Limits of Adaptation

It doesn't matter what you do or where you go, I'll always be your mother and this will always be your home. – Jamaica Kincaid, *Annie John* 147

Revisions of canonical English literature are extremely popular in what has become the postcolonial canon. William Shakespeare's 1611 *The Tempest* and Charlotte Bronte's 1847 *Jane Eyre* have been revised time and again in ways that give voice to the colonized subject. Two of the most popular adaptations of these works, Aime Cesaire's 1969 *A Tempest* and Jean Rhys's 1966 *Wide Sargasso Sea*, adapt their source texts in a way that exposes colonial ideology by shifting narration to the colonized subject and location to the Caribbean. Jamaica Kincaid's 1985 *Annie John* further responds to this practice of Caribbean revisionism by signifying not only *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre*, but also their most prominent postcolonial Caribbean adaptations (Yeoh 115). These adaptations rely on repetition with variation to engage their readership (Hutcheon 4): *A Tempest* retains the characters and names of *The Tempest* while reframing the narrative to be told through Caliban's eyes, and *Wide Sargasso Sea* similarly shifts perspective to that of the madwoman in the attic while still repeating the disastrous marriage and house fire of *Jane Eyre*.

However, the domain of repetition with variation is much more tenuous in *Annie John*, which intertextually references Cesaire, Rhys, and their source texts but through layers of nuance. Critics of intertextual referentiality and the search for source texts feel it encourages a suffocating "paternalistic genealogical determinism," which destabilizes both signifier and signified (Smith 802). The amorphous referentiality of *Annie John* could cause it to fall into that domain. However, looking at the myriad of ways in which literature signifies other texts can be an exploration of the "radically intertextual" (Hutcheon 246). Since the texts grouped together in this analysis are what I find to be transformative rewritings of their source texts, I hope to avoid

the slippage between signifier and signified and instead explore a radical intertextuality that demonstrates the power of dialectic adaptation studies. These texts draw attention to what needed to be said in their source texts. In *A Tempest*, Cesaire explores contemporaneous issues surrounding race and colonialism by pointing out these issues in a classic work of British literature. *Wide Sargasso Sea* demonstrates the sexism and fear of the Other implicated in the colonial gaze that *Jane Eyre* leaves unsaid. And in *Annie John*, Kincaid revises the masculinist ideology of *A Tempest* and racism of *Wide Sargasso Sea* but uses their own revisionist rhetorical strategies to do so. Therefore, while critics still might find the desire to configure *Annie John*'s intertextual realms unpalatable or even unnecessary, it provides a useful locus to determine the limits of adaptations studies. Rather than falling into a recursive genealogical trap, I hope in this argument to show how adaptations studies can provide us with ways to think about texts that themselves are not adaptations-as-such.

Kincaid has articulated the indelible influence of Cesaire and Rhys as well as the British canon (and *Jane Eyre* in particular).[31] *Annie John* follows in the revisionist tradition of postcolonial *Tempests*, the most prominent being Cesaire's *A Tempest* and George Lamming's 1960 *The Pleasures of Exile*.[32] Kincaid intertextually revises tropes in *The Tempest* and through a gender-based lens takes on "a revision of the revisionist tradition itself" (Yeoh 103). That is, she moves the focus from Caliban to Sycorax and responds to a feminist lack in *The Tempest* and later revisions. Lauren Maxwell and Ian Smith argue for Wordsworthian intertextuality in Kincaid's works,[33] and Paul Giles and others demonstrate how *Jane Eyre* influenced her

[31] In a 1998 interview, Kincaid said that she would "would sacrifice any amount of reading of any of [her own] books for people to read Jane Eyre" (qtd. Balutansky 799).
[32] *The Pleasures of Exile* is a postcolonial counter-discourse that alludes to *The Tempest* and other works to explore Caribbean identity fragmentation and (re)construction.
[33] Lauren Maxwell argues that in *Lucy*, Kincaid contrasts the "exclusively masculine mobility in Wordsworth poems" and "genders journey feminine by recounting the immigration of her female protagonist" (23). Ian Smith notes that Kincaid "materializes Wordsworth," particularly the "revelatory moment for the poet" (813-14).

writings.[34] Maritza Stanchich,[35] Linda Lang-Peralta,[36] Rebecca Ashworth,[37] Barbara Langston,[38] and others draw similarities between *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Annie John* to show their analogous literary approaches. The well-established analytic tradition arguing for Kincaid's intertextuality with these texts – as well as the sort of nationalistic postcolonial narrative that questions the constitution of Caribbean identity politics espoused by Cesaire, Rhys, and Kincaid – both support the reading of *Annie John* through the lens of adaptations studies.

Cesaire and Rhys write back to the canon by giving narrative agency to characters deemed Other. Cesaire disrupts the colonizer/colonized relationship indicated in *The Tempest* and reframes it more explicitly as a master/slave paradigm. *A Tempest* fleshes out the character of Caliban, who has been read as the subaltern subject in *The Tempest*. This reading finds Prospero an arrogant colonizer in relation to Caliban's subalternity. As Gayatri Spivak articulates, the subaltern is "society's Other," and their voice is often lost in translation to Western discourse (66). Cesaire harnesses "transformative powers" to invoke a model of change that does not simply mimic or mirror hegemonic discourse, but instead revises it to include disaffected voices (West-Pavlov 90). Similarly, *Jane Eyre* grants Bertha little textual space; she appears only as a shadowy, savage specter that wreaks destruction and is feared for her madness as well as her darkness. Her story is told only through Mr. Rochester, who blames her promiscuity and wildness – stereotypes often associated with Creole women by Victorian era

[34] Giles calls these these influences and allusions the "ghosts of postcolonialism" (202).
[35] Stanchich compares *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Annie John* to show how they share similar identity formation portrayals.
[36] Lang-Peralta calls Kincaid "a true daughter of Charlotte Bronte" and further articulates the influence of *Wide Sargasso Sea* on her writing (16).
[37] Ashworth notes that *Annie John* revises tropes from *Wide Sargasso Sea*, particularly gendered madness and the use of obeah to mediate trauma.
[38] Barbara Langston says that even though Rhys and Kincaid hail from "different generations and races and therefore experienced two very different points along the (post)colonial spectrum, the tremendous breaks between subjects (Rochester and Annie's mother) and objects (Antoinette and Annie) by the end of the novels reveal that both writers can only envision a Caribbean identity separate from England" (163).

English society – for her madness. *Wide Sargasso Sea* writes back to this text by providing Bertha (called Antoinette in this adaptation) with a complex backstory and making her the protagonist of her own bildungsroman. Rhys transpositions the novel spatially and temporally: from England to Jamaica (and back to England), and forward a few decades so that she can incorporate the island's abolishment of slavery as a locus of shifting attitudes about race. By subverting the paradigms set up in their source texts, Cesaire and Rhys encourage critical inquiry into authoritative narratives.

Like Cesaire and Rhys, Kincaid moved away from the European-colonized Caribbean island of her birth. She was born on Antigua in 1949 and lived there until 1965, two years before it became self-governing after years of British rule. Kincaid's engagement with the English literature canon has been well-documented by Giles and others, who find that in *Annie John* she intertextually connects with English literature to "valorize the protagonist's insurrectionary manner" (211). While Kincaid's works all reflect an intertextuality that demonstrates the continued potency of the English canon, *Annie John* and its sister text *Lucy* most explicitly signify other postcolonial adaptations and their source texts. For Kincaid, postcolonial writing represents the split subject and the ways in which colonial violence is turned inward (213). This split is represented not only in Kincaid's inscription of the colonized subject through her characterization of *Annie John*, but also through the text itself, which responds to the traditional canon *and* to subsequent postcolonial critiques: "her narrative method self-consciously abjures a progressive or redemptive spirit and rotates instead on an axis where positions of domination can be inverted but not eradicated" (214). Postcolonial literature often eroticizes the sadistic power dynamic of colonialism itself and, in doing so, transposes the colonial dynamic into the very act of reading. Readers experience the doubling, prejudice, and betrayal inherent in (re)producing

the colonized subject, but also feel the pleasure of recognizing the transposition. Like Cesaire and Rhys, Kincaid represents the anger that necessitates the formation of the postcolonial subject (214). This reconstitution takes place through the lens of postcolonialism but also through that of intertextual adaptations studies.

Cesaire, Rhys, and Kincaid all depict the multifurcations of postcolonial identities in their revisionist texts. Identities are formed pluralistically, stemming from and working against community, imposing imperialistic powers, and different means of language development. In *A Tempest*, Cesaire frames pluralistic identity formation by adding the racial, colonial, and spatial aspects of having Caliban as hailing from Africa but living as a slave on a Caribbean island. Prospero represents the white colonial/imperial power, and his singularly constituted identity stands in stark contrast to Caliban's multitude of possibilities: kingdom-ruler/someone who loses control over an island that was once his by birthright; free man/slave; black-as-good/black-as-seen by Prospero. Similarly, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys examines pluralistic identities as they relate to Creolism and the double oppression of colonization and gender. And in *Annie John*, Kincaid portrays pluralistic female, queer, black intersectional Caribbean identities. These depictions recognize that identity is mobile and is constantly being translated between self and Other in terms of power relations that inform, interpellate, and compel them.

Perhaps the most obvious connection between these texts is the recursive figure of the island setting as it relates to identity construction. Like mobile settings (ships, vehicles, trains), and other liminal spaces like the woods, islands often represent anarchic space.[39] Anything can happen on an island, its portrayal seems to convey: it is a place of magic, growth, and escape. The allure of the island setting resides in its translatability. It paradoxically implies both the

[39] J.R. Carpenter and others establish the tradition of islands in literature as liminal spaces, "on the threshold between places" (2).

frenzied interactivity of travel, port stops, and trade, but also the notion of inescapability, staleness, and island fever. Similarly, islands are often aligned with savagery and wildness, but simultaneously with the impetus for control – as signified through colonization, enslavement, and military presence. The significance of island culture is often neglected in postcolonial studies (De Souza 238). Although postcolonial scholars seek to destabilize the idea of the West/Europe as the default position (whether looking East towards Orientalism or expanding West), they sometimes still forget to include the intricacies of the more liminal spaces of islands. The term postcolonialism itself implies that the genesis of once/colonized spaces as a point of study lies within the power hierarchies of colonization (239). This way of thinking disregards indigenous peoples as valid subjects because it defines them only in terms of their encounterability with hegemonic society. Pascale De Souza identifies *A Tempest* as a text which reclaims the tabula rasa ascribed to island spaces that so often shows up in European narratives. Instead, Cesaire "re-inscribes local subjectivity" onto this blank slate to allow for the proliferation of island-based identities (239). In fact, both *A Tempest* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* radically alter the island settings either indicated or explored in their source texts by moving them to the Caribbean and expanding their portrayal through the eyes of the island-born. *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre* both portray characters whose wildness and in particular their deviant sexuality is founded in being island-born. Following in this tradition, *Annie John* takes place entirely on the island of Antigua seen through Annie's eyes. This serves to reframe the specter of colonization indicated in source texts.

Annie John revises its source texts and responds to a tradition of Caribbean revisionism through the narration of a queer islander child. Since a very young age Annie John expresses her attraction to and romances with other girls, including the dunce Sonia, the prim and proper Gwen, and the wild Red Girl. The narrator's queerness is "obvious and ordinary": her desire for

queer relationships is part of what makes up her identity (Valens 123). Only her mother reads these relationships as problematic, since she wants her daughter to become a proper marriageable young woman in the heteronormative tradition. Kincaid responds to canonical English texts that construct the islander as racial other and to their adaptations, which expose the assumptions of colonial ideology, by revising the colonizer/colonized relationship through the lens of queer Caribbean romance. She redefines the colonizer/colonized relationship as one between "the powerful and the powerless" (Jackson 300). Tommie Lee Jackson reads this as a sadomasochistic impulse that is reflected through Annie John's relationships with other girls as well as her relationship with her mother.[40] Like the colonizer/colonized relationship, the sadomasochistic relationship is defined by codependency. The sadist is not a sadist without reflection off the masochist, and vice-versa. Kincaid mirrors this painful, codependent dynamic first through Annie John's encounters with Sonia, her intellectual inferior, who she torments. Annie says: "I loved very much – and so used to torment until she cried – a girl named Sonia. She was smaller than I even though she was almost two years older, and she was a dunce – the first real dunce I had ever met" (Kincaid 7). In this queer relationship, Annie John signifies the Prospero of *The Tempest* and *A Tempest*, who holds his language and supposed intellectual prowess over Caliban. Even though Caliban is older than Prospero and has ties to an ancient power through his mother, Prospero still torments him because he is seen as a dunce. Annie John directly parallels this dynamic in her torment of the older but smaller and less intelligent Sonia.

The Tempest encourages its audience to root for Prospero and Miranda to escape their island prison and return to England, an oasis of hope. While the island-born Caliban has some of the most eloquent and elegant monologues, often about the beauty of the island, he is still an

[40] See Jackson's "The Symbolic Implications of the Portmanteau in Jamaica Kincad's *Annie John*," where he relates Annie John's sadomasochistic impulse to that of the colonizer/colonized.

uncontrollable savage as seen through Prospero's eyes. Prospero justifies Caliban's enslavement because he attempted to rape Miranda. As island-born, Caliban opposes those hailing from European society, with a different set of social norms and a claim to superiority through a supposed ability to control its innate desires. Instead, Caliban apparently cannot resist the urge to rape Miranda. Not even the drunkards Stephano and Trinculo express sexual aggression towards Miranda, which implies that Caliban's base sexuality is founded through his connection to the wild, untamable island. The island is a blank slate for the colonizer to project their dreams and desires, but for the island-born through the colonizer's eyes it becomes an ecological metaphor for savagery.

In *A Tempest*, Cesaire transposes the conflation of the island with deviant sexuality to show how it only appears as such through the colonizer's eyes. Caliban's supposed attempted rape of Miranda is portrayed as Prospero's own doing, as he "put those dirty thoughts" into Caliban's head (Cesaire 13). Prospero actually wields deviant desires, not Caliban. Prospero wants Caliban to be savage because he is island-born, and this is the real problematic desire. This turns the narrative of the overly sexualized animalistic island-born back on the person who creates that narrative in the first place. It also signifies the insidious pervasiveness of colonial ideology, since Prospero can seemingly put thoughts into Caliban's head. The fault here lies within an external colonial force that invades Caliban's mind, not within the dynamics of the island itself. Further, Caliban's sexuality in *The Tempest* is not simply indicative of savagery; it also indicates anxieties about lineage and control. His desire to "people the isle with Calibans" represents these anxieties, which would have vastly different meanings on an island than in Europe (Shakespeare 1.2). If the isle was peopled with Calibans, they would have twofold the claim to the island: one through nature – Caliban's relationship with his mother and her rule over

the island before her death, and one through nurture – Miranda's bloodline from Prospero, who rules over the island by means of his magic and intellectual abilities. Caliban's children would have claim to the throne of the island from both Sycorax and Prospero, and so Prospero must prevent Caliban from ever reproducing to prevent colonial loss of the island.

Cesaire further subverts the dominant narrative surrounding islander sexuality by including an African god in the notorious masque scene where Prospero blesses Ferdinand and Miranda's impending union. Whereas *The Tempest* only incorporates the spirits Iris, Ceres, and Juno, *A Tempest* adds the surprise of Eshu, who Prospero did not invite to the masque. He conjures the other spirits through his "art," which aligns them with Europe (Cesaire 47). In *The Tempest*, Prospero remembers Caliban's plot to usurp his throne upon the arrival of reapers to the masque, but in *A Tempest* Prospero's precarious position of power is indicated through the appearance of this pagan god. Eshu is a spirit in the Yoruba religion founded in Nigeria. Cesaire's intended audience may not have been aware of the specific allusion, but the name invokes pan-African deities in general, which adds to Cesaire's project of translating the Shakespearean canon text for a different purpose and audience. He still includes the normative European spirits but building in an African spirit creates a more pluralistic narrative. Miranda views Eshu as a "devil" rather than a god, which shows his relationship to Caliban (47). In *The Tempest*, Prospero calls Caliban a devil several times, and his mother Sycorax supposedly slept with the devil to produce Caliban. Therefore, Eshu is not only is related to Caliban through his organic location on the island, but also through ties to his mother. Eshu sings a song that names his role as trickster while simultaneously capitalizing on sexual narratives about black men and islanders. Prospero's belief in dangerous black sexuality is extrapolated to bawdy comedy. Eshu sings that he can "whip you with his dick," which destabilizes the oppressive ideology of

dangerous sexuality by incorporating stereotypes of well-endowed black men (48). Here, the "dick" is portrayed as a weapon that can be used to "whip" others (48). Earlier, Prospero claims that beating is the only language that Caliban can understand, and Eshu's overtly masculine threat twists the narrative so that the black body is the one in power. Eshu's mischievous threat to whip Prospero demonstrates the shift from the European hegemonic model to more dialogic possibilities. Cesaire implies that islanders and the enslaved will fight back against colonial powers using the realm of sexuality which has so often been used against them.

Annie John also queers, through a Caribbean context, its precursor texts in a more metatextual way. As a bildungsroman about a queer Caribbean girl, it alters the normative bildungsroman that tells the story of a straight white man coming of age (Valens 124). Since queer desire threatens colonial heteronormativity, its representation in *Annie John* signifies anti-colonialism (124). According to Teja Valens, heterosexuality as a regulated norm can be traced to a Victorian moral code with roots in British imperialism (124). Instead of simply resisting colonial heteronormativity, though, *Annie John*'s representation of queer desire refocuses the lens to explore what feels right and also Caribbean about relationships between women (124). The Antiguan setting of enslavement and colonization enforces "extreme domination-of colonized by colonizer, of slave by master, of black by white, but also of women by men, of children by adults" (124-5). Further, Annie John's partners all embody what Valens calls a "Caribbean erotics of the grotesque" (131). Sonia is covered in long, dark hair that, along with her intellectual inferiority, make her seem almost animalistic (or Calibanistic). Gwen's features, which are immensely attractive to Annie John, are markedly Caribbean. And the Red Girl is unclean, boyish, and smelly, which not only makes the stereotype "'cast back in Western faces,' but... embraced by Caribbean ones, becoming a trope for anticolonialism as well as for

autonomy" (134). This subverts the perception of Eurocentric beauty espoused by Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The girls reenact colonial domination through the lens of play, or repetition with a difference (124), which itself takes place through the very act of adaptation. Kincaid not only invokes and revises colonial relationships in her depiction of queer relationships between Caribbean girls; she also invokes and revises the act of Caribbean revision through adaptation itself.

Kincaid writes a queer, anticolonial Caribbean sexuality that refuses the heteronormative colonial ideal and revises the colonizer/colonized relationship. She also signifies specific textual instances through this lens to situate her adaptation as such. After hearing that the Red Girl has moved away, Annie John has a dream in which she re-envisions a scene from *The Tempest* (Valens 140). She says:

> The night of the day I heard about it, I dreamed of her. I dreamed that the boat on which she had been traveling suddenly splintered in the middle of the sea, causing all the passengers to drown except for her, whom I rescued in a small boat. I took her to an island, where we lived together forever, I suppose, and fed on wild pigs and sea grapes. At night, we would sit on the sand and watch ships filled with people on a cruise steam by. We sent confusing signals to the ships, causing them to crash on some nearby rocks. How we laughed as their cries of joy turned to cries of sorrow (Kincaid 70-71).

Kincaid revises the introductory ship-crashing scene of both *The Tempest* and *A Tempest* by placing it in terms of a queer Caribbean relationship. Like *The Tempest*, *A Tempes*t opens with the chaos of shipmates entering the titular tempest. In midst of the storm, the boatswain says that even more powerful than the king is "his Majesty the Gale" (Cesaire 4). In *The Tempest*, Prospero is portrayed as possessing power through his magic and books; control over Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban; and ultimately, political standing. *A Tempest* revises this to show that though Prospero creates the tempest that causes the ship to go into turmoil, power over nature is a tricky

and impossible thing. Kincaid revises both of these texts by placing Annie John and the Red Girl in various positions of power: first Annie John is aligned with Prospero since she plays the rescuer, and then both Annie John and the Red Girl parallel Prospero's ability to cause shipwrecks with storms. However, *Annie John* argues for a potency that aligns the girls' powers with nature. Together, they control even his Majesty the Gale to terrorize ships. The people on these ships represent an invasive neocolonialism that Annie John and the Red Girl are able to destroy – at least in the context of a dream. Kincaid revises the introductory scenes of *The Tempest* and *A Tempest* but places it in the middle of the book through the rhetorical device of dreaming and portrays it through the lens of queer desire. Annie John subconsciously works out colonial issues found in *The Tempest*, a "marker of colonial power systems," and revises the masculinist view of *A Tempest* in a way that argues for the power of queer desire between Caribbean girls (Valens 140).

Annie John also revises notions of islander sexuality in *Tempests* through appropriation of its tropes. Chantal Zabus finds that the codes of *Tempest* adaptations are omnipotent magic, abstract book knowledge, and heterosexual romance (128). *Annie John* rewrites *The Tempest* "by critical proxy" and by queering its tropes (Zabus 128): Annie John's illness is cured through the magic of obeah, she possesses specific colonial book knowledge, and she engages in queer romance. Further, while Caliban is reworked through the characters of Sonia, the Red Girl, and even Annie John herself, he is also mirrored through Mr. Nigel, the fisherman. Like Caliban, who Trinculo mistakes for a fish, Mr. Nigel is aligned with fish, which "reverse Trinculo's conjectures but also the colonial premise about the stinking native" (129). Unlike *Tempest* colonists, however, Annie John finds "stink," especially of the Red Girl, appealing. She finds a useful non-normative marriage model in Mr. Nigel and Mr. Earl, whose arrangement is "as close

to a Caribbean resistive model as can be found" (Valens 145). Mr. Nigel visits Annie John while she experiences a mysterious debilitating illness. After she compares him to her father, he laughs so loudly that she feels like his laugh sucks the air out of the room, causing her to have a violent, hallucinatory reaction. The Caliban-like Mr. Nigel thus wields some sort of magic while being a representative of non-heteronormative romance, therefore queering *Tempest* codes.

The Tempest and *A Tempest* explore the island setting thoroughly (even though they portray it as something that Prospero and Miranda want to escape from), but *Jane Eyre* only references the island as it pertains to Rochester's wealth and insane wife. In *Jane Eyre* the island is a place of prologue, an uncivilized space of liminality that produces the savage Bertha. Mr. Rochester describes Bertha as initially a "tall, dark and majestic" woman who wishes to marry him because he is "of a good race" (Rhys 323). This immediately sets up a dynamic wherein Mr. Rochester, a signifier of England, is racially and morally good, whereas islander Bertha becomes diametrically opposed as a signifier of the island, racially and morally bad. After his initial description, Mr. Rochester constructs Bertha's deviant sexuality through the lens of racial otherness, which is connected to her island birth; she is "coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile," with a "pigmy intellect" given to her genetically from a lunatic mother (324). Her madness is exacerbated by tropical weather associated with her island upbringing and racial otherness, which is contrasted with Mr. Rochester's own respectable intellect as a subject interpellated through white English society. Mr. Rochester conflates Bertha with prostitutes and animals, affirming the European colonialist narrative about dangerous sexuality. Her madness is founded not only through the maternal tie to her mother but also from her "intemperate and unchaste" past in Jamaica (323). He justifies locking her away in the attic because of her deviant desires which have led to madness. His view of Bertha implies that being an islander is an indelible

mark that stays with its subject even after removal from the island; while this affects how he sees Bertha, it also seems to make intertextual commentary on other island-born subjects, including Caliban in *The Tempest*. Under the colonizer's gaze, the island becomes a place of "isolation and insularity" that remains with islanders perpetually, thus continually recreating them as colonized subject (De Souza 245). In response, Mr. Rochester confines Bertha not only physically but also ideologically in his attempt to constrain what he views as dangerous sexuality.

In *Jane Eyre*, ostensibly proper sexuality is demonstrated through non-islander Jane. She desires Mr. Rochester but finds this desire intolerable and impossible: "to agitate him thus deeply, by a resistance he so abhorred, was cruel; to yield was out of the question" (Bronte 322). Mr. Rochester's libidinous desire is nearly uncontrollable and regulated only by the object of said desire – Jane. Yet his desire is acceptable, while the desire attributed to Bertha is seen as the source of her madness. She is freed from this constraint only through death, after she metaphorically castrates Mr. Rochester by maiming him and shuts down the male gaze by blinding him. However, even this tenuous sexual agency is transposed in the end. Mr. Rochester gives birth to a child with Jane, indicating the attempted castration is ineffectual. He can see the child, which demonstrates a return of the patriarchal, colonial worldview. Their child is born after a long courtship and marriage, which falls within the confines of normative regulated European sexuality.

This paradigm is critically scrutinized in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Before allowing herself to be seduced by the promise of European genteel status, Antoinette has an ongoing loving affair with Sandi Cosway. Although she finds fulfillment and joy in this relationship, as a wealthy white islander, "she won't marry with a coloured man even though he don't look like a coloured man" (Rhys 73). Sandi's physical appearance does not deter Antoinette, but her perception of his

socially constructed identity as interpreted through her lens of colonialist racist ideology does. Even though Mr. Rochester and other European colonists think of Antoinette as a sexually deviant islander, she hypocritically internalizes this view to project it onto someone she sees as less than her: a black islander. Antoinette's and Sandi's relationship serves as a foil to Antoinette's relationship with Mr. Rochester, who constructs her as the racial other even as she perceives herself to be white. Mr. Rochester does not feel love but instead "thirst" for his wife, which again associates her with base desires that can be fulfilled by animals or the environment (55). He conflates her sexuality with the ecological landscape of the Caribbean island she was born on; both are beautiful but also disorderly and therefore dangerous. He desires both but simultaneously fears them, and this fear is a catalyst for his arousal but also the reason he cannot love Antoinette. Although Mr. Rochester believes himself to have an egalitarian worldview, his racism is expressed through his rejection of things he associates with the island. Even Antoinette's attempts to please him by correlating herself with European notions of desirable female purity fail because he views her as an islander. She wears a white dress, thus aligning herself with feminine chastity, but the way it slips over one shoulder "associates her with (black) female wantonness and prostitution" (Mardarossian 1076). Antoinette's sexuality is inextricable from her place of birth, and Jamaica will always inform perceptions of her sexuality. Her internalized colonialist ideology reflects this when she says, "I wish to stay here in the dark… where I belong" (Rhys 105). Antoinette feels she belongs "in the dark": the dark of her imposed racial identity, of her madness, of her island, and of her attic. Rhys writes back to *Jane Eyre* by problematizing deviant sexuality and its relation to the island in the original text.

Kincaid revises these depictions of islander sexuality alongside her revision of *Tempests*. Annie John envisions a future where she visits Belgium. She pictures the escape while realizing

that in this vision, she would fill the position of Bertha/Antoinette; still, even with this knowledge the dream takes place through a queer Caribbean lens. Annie John imagines living in Belgium, where her favorite character Jane Eyre once lived, after Gwen tells her she should marry Gwen's brother. Her vision for a Jane Eyre-based future is based off a push against heteronormativity. Mr. Rochester's colonial view of islander sexuality is reflected through how Annie John's mother views her potential slut of a daughter. As was instilled in her through colonial ideology, Annie John's mother associates wildness and freeness with sexual immorality. She does not want Annie John to spend time with the Red Girl or to talk to boys. To her, both of these indicate the kind of sexual looseness Mr. Rochester sees in Bertha/Antoinette.

Kincaid further signifies islander sexuality in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* through Annie John's mysterious illness. She is saved from her illness by Ma Rain's obeah, which her mother also uses to fend off her father's affair partners, correlating obeah with deviant sexuality. Annie John says:

> My mother would go to a woman every Friday who could tell if things were being done to us and if these women were having successes with my father. I'm pretty sure he was faithful, but that's only because he was old. But there were always these consultations, and really it was a sort of psychiatrist, someone keeping the unconscious all oiled up (Kincaid 409).

The idea of obeah as a means of sexual control also takes place in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* After Edward (Mr. Rochester) reads the letter sent to him by Daniel Cosway and subsequently rejects Antoinette, she runs to ask the obeah woman Christophine for a love potion to make him adore her once again. This scene directly situates Christophine as oppositional force to Edward's representation of patriarchal authoritarian law. Christophine advises Antoinette is to leave Edward, to "have spunks and do battle for yourself" (Rhys 69). However, Antoinette begs for help and Christophine eventually tells her how to use obeah to have Edward fall for her.

Antoinette seduces Edward using Christophine's potion, rum, and candles, but Edward becomes sick and imagines she has poisoned him. The poisoning and its aftermath is the turning point of the text. Edward accuses Christophine of trying to poison him, which leads to a confrontation about her obeah powers. Readers knowledgeable about *Jane Eyre* recognize a final subversive act of obeah: Christophine subtly curses Edward to lose his eyes, which happens after Antoinette/Bertha sets fire to his estate.

Annie John mirrors this relationship between islander sexuality and obeah through Ma Chess, who to Annie John represents escape from the sadomasochistic relationship with her mother (Jackson 309). Therefore, she also represents an escape from the colonizer/colonized relationship and a new form of sexual self-understanding. Annie John becomes ill after a falling-out with her mother, during which her mother calls her a slut, but is saved from this sexual demonization through Ma Chess's obeah. While sick, Annie John is sequestered in her room, which is reminiscent of the punishment red room in *Jane Eyre* (which is also reflected through the Red Girl's moniker). It also signifies the attic of Bertha/Antoinette's confinement. Mr. Rochester confines her largely because he sees her as a sexual deviant, and this is paralleled by Annie John's mother inducing her illness by calling her a slut, which leads to her confinement. Annie John's confinement reflects Bertha/Antoinette's, but she can escape with the help of Ma Chess's obeah. This subverts the paradigm set up in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, where Antoinette's attempt at seduction using obeah makes Edward thinks she's insane enough to lock her up in his attic. Kincaid revises this scene in a way that ultimately allows for Annie John's queer island sexuality instead of hiding it away. While in a hallucinatory fit during her illness, Annie John washes her old family pictures. She focuses especially on a picture of her in her old confirmation dress, white like the dress Antoinette wears when trying to seduce Edward. Annie John washes

the picture so hard it completely erases the dress, both a signifier of colonial enforced sexual purity and *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s seduction scene. She denies the dress its symbolic power while revising its implications in previous textual incarnations.

Annie John plays with the trope about leaving the island written in *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre* and signified in their postcolonial adaptations. These texts depict four different possibilities regarding a conclusion for island life: 1) the colonizer leaves the island but must give something up to do so, 2) the islander leaves the island and suffers, 3) everyone remains stuck on the island, or 4) the islander leaves the island with the hope for a better life. *The Tempest* falls within the first category. To return to England, Prospero must swear off his powers and his books. This is displayed through the lens of audience interactivity, as the audience must clap to set him free from the island. Caliban's destiny is unclear: does Prospero leave him free on the island, or is he brought to England a slave? His final words onstage are a self-admonition to no longer believe in false idols. While Caliban here references his adulation for the false gods Stephano and Trinculo, his words also apply to his relationship with Prospero. He exposes the colonizer/colonized relationship, initially seen as an intellectual ideological rescue, as worship of a false idol. Even though he wields magical powers on the island, Prospero will become a dull fool when he gives up his powers and books in exchange for departure from the island. While the conclusion of island life in *The Tempest* ends with the colonizer sacrificing something to leave the island, *Jane Eyre* falls within the second category: the islander leaves the island and suffers. Bertha is given little to no backstory, and readers only see her as understood by Mr. Rochester. Although she potentially wished to leave Jamaica in search for a better life in England, which would place the book in category four, Bronte leaves her hopes and desires completely unexplored. Only Bertha's suffering after coming to England remains textually significant. She cannot achieve a

successful marriage to Mr. Rochester and therefore legitimize the colonizer/colonized relationship as something that can lead to equal partnership; instead, she leaves the island to live a nightmarish experience of confinement, isolation, and ultimately death. Her inability to have a happy ending demonstrates a biased view of islanders. Jane Eyre had arguably a more problematic past, with no parental ties to establish her gentility, but because she is a white English woman and not a colonized islander she is automatically found to be a better suited wife for Mr. Rochester.

In *A Tempest*, however, islander and colonizer alike remain on the island at the close of the play, which falls into the third category and denies the escapist ideal portrayed in *The Tempest*. Instead of writing a future for Caliban where he leaves the island, Cesaire subverts the narrative to leave both colonizer and colonized on the island and therefore rewrite colonizer as colonized. By the conclusion of *A Tempest*, Caliban and his army of opossums have diminished Prospero into the dull fool invoked in *The Tempest*. After decrying the island's takeover by wild animals, Prosper mutters to himself the reversal of his and Caliban's relationship: "only you and me. You and me. You-me... me-you!" (Cesaire 220-1). "You-me" becomes "me-you," which both shows their codependence and that Prospero is now the Other. Caliban does not care to reverse the oppressive lens, though, choosing instead to embrace island life and remain apathetic towards its intruder. He ignores Prospero's hailing and instead calls out to the sea "FREEDOM HI-DAY!" (222). While Prospero can now never be free, Caliban locates his freedom in his island home. The two remain forever on the island in a way that suggests the inescapability of the colonizer/colonized relationship. Caliban wields supernatural powers by the close of the adaptation, but his success is somewhat mitigated by his and Prospero's codependent relationship. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, however, falls between categories two and four. Antoinette

leaves Jamaica in hopes for a loving honeymoon with her husband in Dominica. By the time she leaves Dominica for England, however, Rochester declares her insane. She suffers until ending with the same fiery conclusion of *Jane Eyre*. This implies that Rochester believes that Europeans will always associate savagery with the island-born. *The Tempest* and *Annie John* both conclude with the promise of escaping the island setting; but *Annie John* concludes with the narrator leaving her island home to go to nursing school in England, thus rewriting the notion of needing to disavow one's books to escape as put forth in *The Tempest*.

While I argue that *Annie John* most explicitly references the source texts addressed here, the novel also cites other works of the British colonial canon and other texts that signify them. The transformative intertextuality that takes place in *Annie John* points out absences and issues in its source texts, such as colonialism and the need for queer, feminist islander representation; however, and possibly more significantly, it demonstrates the importance of revisionism itself. For years, readers were satisfied with the powerful argument Cesaire makes against racism and colonialism and the way Rhys reclaims the island and exposes Mr. Rochester's sexist colonial standards. The masculinist view of *A Tempest* and racism still prevalent in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and the heteronormativity of both texts, remained unchallenged because these adaptations were *good enough*. However, in *Annie John* Kincaid revises these adaptations and their source texts to show that revision is never complete.

Can an adaptation so transform its source text(s) that it no longer becomes identifiable as such? In connecting the types of adaptive processes that take place between *Annie John*, *A Tempest*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and their source texts, I hope to demonstrate that exploring the process, rather than defining the result, is what truly matters when it comes to adaptations studies. More important than specific citational practices in these transformative adaptations is

the impetus that drives an author towards the adaptive process. In her text, Kincaid reclaims a queer black islander identity whose parts were neglected in other adaptations – even ones that are, themselves, transformative. This demonstrates how adaptation genealogy is self-producing and a good in its own. As humanity progresses and new identities are constituted and claimed, texts that have already been revised may require a further look. The theory of adaptation set forth in this dissertation allows for an approach to these texts that explores not only what adaptations see missing in their source texts, but also how the process of revision allows for new voices and revivals of other texts. Students all over the world become acquainted with *Wide Sargasso Sea* before ever reading *Jane Eyre*. And even though not all readers will be familiar with the intertextual revisionism that takes place in *Annie John*, the concepts and tropes of transformative adaptations encourage new ways of looking at old texts that might become recognizable through further reading. The contemporary nature of adaptations and the new issues they address revitalizes interest in original texts while still creating something anew. This adaptation theory can be used as a way of understanding revisions that do transformative work – even if these texts are less obviously adaptations than others. We re-tell ourselves stories in different ways to accomplish something new and exciting with each iteration: "In the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception" (Hutcheon 177). Through transformative works, though, the norm of adaptation may be exceptional. The following conclusion further argues for the significance of transformative adaptations at the cross-section of the genre.

Chapter 4, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Postcolonial Interventions: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 2019, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

CONCLUSION

Rhetorical Strategies of the Postmodern Parallel Novel

When I was born, the name for what I was did not exist. – Madeline Miller, *Circe* 1

. In this dissertation, I take a case study approach to theorizing transformative (inter)texts, since deep-dive analysis provides fruitful interpretative possibilities. However, the latest trends in adaptations studies advocate for a more longitudinal method to see new paths adaptations studies can take – new theories, contextualization, contentions, and so on. But what strategies, specifically, make an adaptation transformative? Using a genre-based approach to adaptations studies, this conclusion identifies different rhetorical strategies employed in contemporary parallel novels and give brief overviews of the postmodern texts that use these strategies. The notion of literary ephemerality, or the inability to name or otherwise grasp potential narrative concepts, demonstrates the project of the postmodern parallel novel: to question, destabilize, and show how there might be a variety of perspectives for any otherwise authoritative narrative. The strategies that allow for a transformative adaptation at the cross-section of the genre are collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality. After explaining how these strategies engender transformation, I conclude with a systems approach to transformative adaptations.

The parallel novel is a type of adaptation that draws from a source text or source texts to build upon past works. It retells the events of a known narrative from a minor character's point of view. Of the texts I address in my dissertation, all but Malinda Lo's *Ash* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* are parallel novels (with the slight caveat that "The House of Asterion" and *A Tempest* are a short story and a play, respectively). *Ash* subverts Cinderella tropes but retains the Cinderella character as its protagonist; however, Gregory Maguire's *Confessions of*

an Ugly Stepsister is considered a parallel novel since it tells the story of a side or minor character in the Cinderella story. While *A Tempest* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* give voice to minor characters in their source texts, *Annie John*'s reliance on these and their source texts as inspiration does not meet the standards of the parallel novel. Rather than simply arguing how texts write back to the canon, the importance of the new genre of parallel novels is that "one discovers an assertion of the unique subjectivity of every individual and a consequent insistence on a plurality of perspectives rather than any single truth" (Rosen 143). Instead of engaging in case studies, this conclusion assesses a subset of transformative adaptations at the cross-section of the genre. The strategies I identify (collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality) exist on a gradient and are by no means closed categories. However, while these categories are often fluid, this detailed grammar extends the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Gerard Genette, Linda Hutcheon, and others to theorize the work being done in parallel novels.

The trend of reconfiguring a canonical text or known story to allow for minor or marginalized characters' points of view was made immensely popular in the early 1970s after Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967), Aime Cesaire's *A Tempest* (1969), and John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971). These texts were often viewed by scholars as a way to push back against patriarchal, colonial, and racist silencing. The minor character elaboration trend continued with Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon* (1982), which tells the stories of the women of Arthurian legend; Christa Wolf's *Cassandra* (1983) and *Medea: A Modern Retelling* (1996), retelling the legendary tales of Cassandra and Medea; Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* (1990), a minor character in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997), the story of Magwitch from Charles' Dickens' *Great Expectations*; Marina Warner's *Indigo* (1992),

which gives voice to Sycorax from *The Tempest*; Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent* (1997), which refashions the Biblical story of Dinah; Robin Lippincott's *Mr. Dalloway* (1999), which tells the story of the husband in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*; Sena Jeter Naslund's *Ahab's Wife* (1999), the story of Ahab's wife from *Moby Dick*; John Updike's *Gertrude and Claudius* (2000), characters from *Hamlet*; Geraldine Brook's *March* (2004), a novel about Mr. March from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*; Nancy Rawles' *My Jim* (2005), giving backstory to Jim's wife in *Huckleberry Finn*; Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), breathing life and scandal into Odysseus's ostensibly faithful wife; Jon Clinch's *Finn* (2007), the story of Huckleberry Finn's father; Ursula K Le Guin's *Lavinia* (2008), a postmodern take on *The Aeneid*; Christopher Moore's *Fool* (2009), retelling Shakespeare's *King Lear* from the point of view of the court jester; Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles* (2012) and *Circe* (2018), recreating, respectively, the stories of the *Illiad* and the witch of the *Odyssey;* Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), also retelling the *Iliad* mostly from Briseis's point of view; and Natalie Haynes' *A Thousand Ships* (2019), giving a feminist spin to the Trojan War. This is by no means a definitive list but rather an account of some of the more popular minor-character adaptations.

Some authors have even predicated their entire textual corpus on the notion of giving agency to minor characters. For example, most of Gregory Maguire's works are parallel novels in which he retells the stories of *Oz*, "Cinderella," "A Christmas Carol," "Snow White," *Alice in Wonderland*, and "The Nutcracker." The Canongate Myth Series and the Hogarth Shakespeare project are just two of many such undertakings that seek to recreate canonical myth and Shakespearean texts for a modern audience. Atwood's *The Penelopiad* was part of the Canongate Myth Series (2005). Amongst the most popular of these retellings is *Weight*, by Jeanette Winterson, which retells the stories of Atlas and Hercules; *Girl Meets Boy*, by Ali Smith, a

modern-day recreation of Iphis; and *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, by Philip Pullman, which transforms the story of Jesus Christ. Further, based on copyright availability and textual popularity, some canonical authors and texts have a vast array of adaptations. Jane Austen and Shakespeare both have hundreds of adaptations of their works, many of which flesh out minor characters' roles and otherwise give them voice. With the current literary market of self-publishing, fan fiction, and other forms of accessible writing practices, it is easier than ever to create a text that gives individuality and voice to traditionally marginalized or silenced characters.

Transformative postmodern adaptations rely on collaborative originality, or the ways that texts refer to a variety of signifiers. These include interdiscursive realms of shared knowledge: "literature, visual arts, history, biography, theory, philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology, and the list could go on" (Hutcheon 12). Collaborative originality is about the relationships between texts and the discourses and sociohistorical realms in which they operate; and collaborative originality can be explicit or implicit. *Wicked* refers explicitly to the *Wizard of Oz* book series as well as the famous 1939 film, particularly the Wicked Witch of the West's green-skinned portrayal. It also implicitly refers to literary fairytales as a genre, historical Nazism and terrorism, and psychoanalytic notions of the phallic woman. Even the main character's name is an implicit interdiscursive reference: Elpheba is a phonetic spelling of L. Frank Baum's initials. This interdiscursive referentiality reminds readers of the various structures that allow for the writing – and reading – of Maguire's adaptation.

Another example of collaborative originality takes place in *Ahab's Wife*, which references Lord Byron, the *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, Faust, Wordsworth, Coleridge, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Montaigne's *Essays*, The Virgin of the Rocks painting, *The Fairie Queene*,

"Rebecca, the Jewess," Lancelot, Shakespeare, Da Vinci, Jonah and the Whale, Deborah Sampson, Abby Jane Morrell's *Narrative of a Voyage,* Euclid, many Greek myths, and so on. Una meets such historical figures as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Frederick Douglass. These references interdiscursively show Una's historiography; since she meets real people, it implies that her story is also real. Turned inverse, this implication means that readers are reminded how historical narratives, too, are emplotted. Therefore Una's encounters with historical figures ironically verify her tale while simultaneously undermining it as well as that told in *Moby Dick* and in history books.

Further representations of interdiscursive collaborative originality includes references in *The Wind Done Gone* to historical figures Edmonia Lewis, Dredd Scott, Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Tubman, Sally Hemmings, Francis Cardozo. The novel also literarily references Calypso/Odysseus, Hansel and Gretel, Moses, Mary and Martha, and three of Shakespeare's plays: R*omeo and Juliet, Cleopatra*, and *Othello*. In *The Penelopiad*, Penelope transverses between the time her story unfolds to present-day, anachronistically asking about this Marilyn and Adolf she keeps hearing about (Atwood 186). Similarly, the twelve hanging maids take Odysseus to trial in a modern-day courtroom. In *Gertrude and Claudius*, Updike references not only Hamlet but also other texts such as Dante's *Inferno* and the historical events of Denmark's evolution from a feudal state to the encroachment of Christianity through the Renaissance. And in *Grendel*, the titular monster calls his attackers "Bastards! ...Sons of bitches! Fuckers!" before saying, "I wasn't even sure what they meant, though I had an idea: Defiance, rejection of the gods that, for my part, I'd known all along to be lifeless sticks. We, the accused, didn't even have words for swearing in!" (Gardner 52). Grendel's anachronistic use of language is an intertextual reference to Caliban's monologue about being taught language by Prospero.

These examples of collaborative originality metafictionally expose the process of adaptation itself. Transformative adaptations refer intertextually to their source texts and also to other modes of discourse to empower readers to question known narratives. The postmodern condition is an uncertain one, founded in unverifiable discourse, the dissolution of the metanarrative, or simple disbelief. By showing the seemingly endless amalgamation of factors that lend themselves to the construction of any text, interdiscursive references in parallel novels imply that all narratives are constructed and so are open to questioning.

Postmodern parallel novels intertextually queer their source texts through representations of non-normative genders and sexualities and through methodological queering. Examples of representations of non-normative genders and sexualities in transformative parallel novels include *Grendel*, which portrays monstrous, aggressive interspecies desire; *The Wind Done Gone*, which writes Belle and Ashley as queer; *A Tempest*, which parodies colonial beliefs about black men's sexuality; *Ahab's Wife*, which extends the implied queerness of *Moby Dick* to explicit queer encounters; *Wicked*, in its portrayal of bestial sexual encounters; and more. This intertextual queering moves away from the binary view of gender and sexuality that is often enforced through the ideology of heteronormativity. Further, it encourages readers to rethink portrayals of gender and sexuality in source texts and extends the legacy of these texts while also allowing for a proliferation of desires.

Methodological intertextual queering takes place in parallel novels through metafictional parody, demythologizing, and framing devices. In many ways, adaptations are inherently metafictional because they remind readers that they are reading a fictional work, particularly one that responds to another fictional work. The term metafiction, originally defined by William H. Gass, has been given its most extensive critical treatment by Patricia Waugh in *Metafiction: The*

Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction. Waugh finds that metafiction implies that reality and history themselves are constructed – that the very structures we are interpellated into may be a figment of imagination (7). Linda Hutcheon extends Waugh's work to define metafictional parody as "repetition with critical difference" (32), leading the way to her later definition of adaptations as repetition with difference. The "critical" is what I investigate here and provides the stakes for my analysis: what makes the difference between source text and adaptation critical enough to count as metafictional parody.

Metafictional writing is postmodern because it encourages its readership to think about the process of narrative-making. The term "*postmodernism,* when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional *and* historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past" (Hutcheon 3). Since adaptations act as palimpsests that draw attention to their source text(s) as well as the revised work, they work metafictionally to remind readers that they are, in fact, works of fiction. According to Werner Wolf, explicit metafiction directly comments on the construction of text as part of storytelling, while implicit metafiction uses other disruptive techniques to prompt readers to remember that they are reading a work of fiction.[41] Many parallel novels use both techniques in a way that implies that not only is the adaptation a work of fiction but so is the authoritative source text.

Although they are similar, I categorize metafictional parody and demythologizing somewhat differently. Metafictional works often parody their source text(s) as well as the process of reading and writing itself. However, "to parody is not to destroy the past; in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it. And this is the postmodern paradox"

[41] In "Metareference across Media: The Concept, its Transmedial Potentials and Problems, Main Forms and Functions," he further designates direct/indirect metafiction, critical/non-critical metafiction, and generally media-centered/truth- or fiction-centered metafiction.

(Hutcheon 6). By parodying the historical past of the time their source texts were created and the literary past of paying tribute to an authoritative text, metafiction extends the legacy of its predecessors while simultaneously inviting readers to question it. While comparable, metafictional demythologizing exposes the process of myth-making itself while working to unravel it. Parallel novels that demythologize their source texts point out our inability to comprehend myth while ironically creating it anew.

Metafictional parody is often achieved in parallel novels through the conceit of the narrator directly questioning their source text and/or its author. In *The Penelopiad* and *Lavinia*, the narrator breaks the fourth wall to address both readers and source texts. Penelope says that Homer's epic "doesn't hold water" (Atwood xv), and that "the official version" is "an edifying legend. A stick used to beat other women with. Why couldn't they be as considerate, as trustworthy, as all-suffering as I had been?" (2). Penelope contradicts the "official version" by exposing its sexist uses and flaws, while simultaneously self-parodying her portrayal in the text as perpetually patient and pure. Similarly, Lavinia claims that in Virgil's depiction of events, "he slighted my life, in his poem. He scanted me" (Le Guin 3-4). This trivial representation causes her to say that "if I must go on existing century after century, then once at least I must break out and speak. He didn't let me say a word. I have to take the word from him" (4). While decrying that her portrayal by Virgil is less than complete, Lavinia also addresses readers directly – in a way that also intertextually responds to the feminist take of *The Penelopiad*. She says: "I AM NOT THE FEMININE VOICE YOU MAY HAVE EXPECTED" (68). This direct address to readers parodies expectations that this retelling is somehow going to reclaim Lavinia's story in a feminist way. Due to this rhetorical reliance on parody, *Lavinia* is "an exercise in non-linear story-telling, a postmodern meta-fiction that delves into the larger questions defining existence

and creativity" (Lindow 221). Atwood's and Le Guin's metafictional strategy here involves the narrator speaking directly to an audience – presumably readers – to tell them that the story they have heard is either incorrect or is not the full story. This reminds readers that the narrative they are reading is a fictional re-telling of another fiction, therefore metafictionally encouraging questions of narrative authority.

Further, these transformative adaptations demythologize their source texts by showing that the writers of these texts were perpetuating a historical fiction themselves. No matter its historical roots, mythology necessitates a historical foundation, since myth is "chosen" by history rather than a natural evolution (Barthes 108). In other words, myth's major purpose is to assimilate beliefs, and its permanence (or not) is due to its historical meaning. Barthes contends that although it appears objective or what Mikhail Bakhtin would describe as authoritative speech, myth's meanings are always political, but the quality of myth is that it always seeks to disguise its own historicity (108). In contradistinction to Barthes, I find that myth queers its own historicity. By reworking the familiar in a different way, it makes us conceptualize the known through a new lens. All adaptations, particularly transformative ones, defamiliarize readers from the known quantity of the original work; "repetition with difference" means that readers may approach an adaptation with certain expectations and be surprised when it takes a different path than they anticipated (Hutcheon 32).

However, defamiliarization of myth holds a particular gravitas, since myth is already itself alienated from its meaning. This twist is taken further through Barthes' idea that in postmodernity, text is not authoritative but rather "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (146). This rests on his notion of the death of the author, which says that neither the author nor a literary work is autonomous. While authors of

parallel novels do write the texts themselves, their works are predicated on a variety of influences, including language, (re)interpretations, contemporaneous ideologies, similar texts, minutiae that occurred as they were in the act of writing, and so on. Jean Baudrillard says that we have become so far removed from the concept that we have forgotten how to read myth.[42] This simulacrum sets up a binary Other that can never be truly copied. Because the parallel novel turns in upon itself, we are always aware of its metafictional implications and the space between texts.

The Penelopiad and *Lavinia* both demythologize their source texts by questioning the accounts portrayed by Homer and Virgil, respectively. One approach to demythologizing is to recreate the text by taking out or questioning its mythic or heroic components. Penelope metatextually shows how myths and legends are created by providing alternate versions to Odysseus's supposedly epic journey. His fight with the Cyclops is reduced to a brawl with a one-eyed barkeeper because Odysseus refused to pay the bill. A dangerous escape from cannibals is shown to possibly be just a normal fight. His encounter with the witch Circe, who in the *Odyssey* turns his men into pigs, is reported as just men being pigs at a brothel. The minstrels embellish these into mythic endeavors for Penelope's sake because, as she says, "even an obvious fabrication is some comfort when you have few others left" (Atwood 83). *The Penelopiad's* "overt thematizing of the logos of mythology is one of the novella's demythologizing devices" (Staels 104); by pointing towards how mythology is created, the text ironically un-creates it. Another type of demythologizing takes place in *The Wind Done Gone*, which shows again and again that the racial superiority assumed by the slaveowners in *Gone with the Wind* is foolish and

[42] See *Simulacra and Simulation* for further reading.

simply incorrect. For example, Randall rewrites the scene where Gerald/Planter wins Pork/Garlic in a card game by having the latter secretly orchestrate the entire encounter.

Ahab's Wife employs the rhetorical strategy of demythologizing by defocusing the tragic hero figure of Captain Ahab in its depiction of Una. Una does ultimately become Ahab's wife, but he is only a momentary blip on the radar of her fascinating and adventurous existence. Una begins her narrative by proclaiming that "Captain Ahab was neither my first husband nor my last" (Naslund 370). With just this opening statement, the novel destabilizes the godly, immortal portrayal of Ahab in *Moby Dick*. While Una is implied to be a meek, unassuming woman in the source text, in the parallel novel she runs away from home as a teenager to join a whaling crew disguised as a boy; has a three-way love affair; is forced to take part in cannibalism after being stranded at sea; marries a man even madder than Ahab; and has many extravagant adventures and intellectual encounters. More than showing that there are two sides to every story, this reconstruction of Una as even more adventurous than Ahab himself serves to demythologize his normative representation as a singular raging madman. Una even metafictionally refers to the process of mythology as constructed: when discussing her Christian father, she says that "I had been exiled for my unbelief – but that was for the ready-made mythology I inherited" (1022). By exposing mythology as something pre-constructed and inheritable, Naslund shows how people become interpellated into certain beliefs and that these beliefs can and should be questioned. This intertextually queers authoritative representations in source texts.

Parallel novels also intertextually queer their source texts through framing devices, which draws attention to the process of narrative-making. While similar to frame stories, framing devices intertextually queer a larger constellation of recursive, mirroring, and mimetic strategies than simply providing a story within a story. Any adaptation works to reframe their source text,

but postmodern adaptations do so in a way that destabilizes the mirror image as well as the notion of the frame itself. In Cristina Bacchilega's discussion of framing in postmodern fairy tale adaptations, she argues that these strategies include externalization, metaphor, narration, and actual reflection (28). Refraction and the frame itself allows for the postmodern narrative's reflection (28). Assuming "that a frame always selects, shapes, (dis)places, limits, and (de)centers the image in the mirror, postmodern retellings focus precisely on this frame to unmake the mimetic fiction" (35-6). In other words, these retellings give us a funhouse mirror version of their source texts and, in doing so, draw attention to the normative mirror image and its own frame. The diary form of *The Wind Done Gone*, sandwiched by confirmation documents and closing remarks by someone other than Cynara, frame the story in a way that distorts the image of the events of *Gone with the Wind* and in doing so unmake its mimetic fiction.

The Penelopiad is told mostly in first-person narration, subverted by the chorus of the twelve hanged maids. The novel denies the progression of a linear narrative, instead regularly turning in on itself as Penelope speaks to readers from the 21st century but tells a story of ancient times. Even as she narrates her story, it is looped back on and questioned by the chorus of the twelve dead maids. This framing device un-makes Penelope's story even as she creates it – much like she and her maids unravel the burial shroud she weaves nightly. In *Ahab's Wife*, Una frames her story with a birthing scene, thereby also giving birth to her story. She progresses in a seemingly linear way besides this introductory framing, thus causing the final twist (she ends up in a romantic partnership with Ishmael, not Ahab, as the title of the novel would imply) to have even more impact. Naslund also relies on a recursive trope of literal framing throughout the novel. Una's mother is inexplicably obsessed with placing mirrors throughout the woods outside their home, and Una dictates several scenes where she looks into a framed mirror with her

mother; Susan, an enslaved woman who she helps escape; and her cousin Frannie. Her regular return to viewing herself and her woman companions through the conceit of the mirror exposes the patriarchal framing of society at the time the novel takes place, as well as hinting at that of *Moby Dick*. Finally, Una concludes her book with the recursive framing of starting to write her story alongside Ishmael. They each encourage the other to write their story and in doing so provide perspective plurality through the conceit of framing – as previously mentioned, these categories tend to shade into one another. Una's narrative ends with her deciding to start her story with what to her are the most difficult parts of her life: losing her baby and her mother, which are the opening scenes of the novel.

Framing can also occur structurally. *Lavinia* is framed through sections instead of chapters. Each section starts in all capital letters, which provides a "framework for moral decision-making" in the novel (Lindow 222). The all-capital introductions are when Lavinia most explicitly addresses readers and their expectations, like that she may not be the "feminine voice" they have expected (Le Guin 68). This framing allows Lavinia to regularly re-constitute and re-frame herself as she learns more about the world and her place in it. In *March*, Brooks uses an intertextual framing device. The novel begins with March writing a letter to his wife; the opening scene of *Little Women* is the girls seated around Marmee as she reads March's letter. *March* further emphasizes this frame through the novel's closing scene, which has March at home surrounded by his daughters. The opening frame of March's letter thus comes full circle until he is back home with his family in the closing frame. Like *March*, the prequel *Gertrude and Claudius* uses postmodern framing through the inclusion of three "Acts" instead of chapters. The characters' names change every act to indicate the evolving story from Saxo Grammaticus's twelfth-century *Historiae Danicae* to François de Belleforest's 1576 *Histoires tragiques* to

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The changing names frame the narrative to imply epistemological uncertainty. One of the characters even sees her life through the conceit of framing. Gerutha views her life as a tunnel with many windows but no doors, ending and beginning in "death, the end of nature and the opening… to a far more glorious world" (Updike 56). The mise en abyme framing of Gerutha within the text but before she is Gertrude signals to readers the later events of *Hamlet*: that her death opens up the narrative to the denouement of a great Shakespearean tragedy. Hamlet's only appearance in the novel further emphasizes the irony of this framing. Besides reference to some "muttered puns" (Updike 208), intertextually relating the narrative to its Shakespearean conclusion, his sole line is "I shall in all my best obey you" (209). Readers know that Hamlet ultimately does not obey the two, leading to great tragedy. This makes the novel's concluding line, "all would be well" (209), an especially paradoxical frame.

Many of the parallel novels addressed here use the internally persuasive dialogue of first-person narration in a way that challenges authoritative texts. However, a few, such as *Wicked*, use third-person framing, which omnisciently and ironically proposes that this narrative is the correct one. Third-person framing is "a form of ventriloquism that highly complicates the issue of narrative accountability" (Bacchilega 34). While most parallel novels work to undermine the possibility of authority in any given narrative through the rhetorical strategy of first-person subversion, texts that rely on third-person framing instead cause readers to ironically question both texts. Because readers know how the Wicked Witch of the West's story ends, the story reads like a Greek tragedy through the lenses of destiny and predestination. However, Maguire complicates this portrayal by blurring boundaries within the text itself. Elpheba is shown as a hybrid of man and woman – in the opening scene, the scarecrow asserts that "she IS a married man" (Maguire 2) – and human and animal. The prologue, titled "On the Yellow Brick Road,"

frames the rest of the narrative by intertextually referencing *The Wizard of Oz* and its depiction of literal framing. Elpheba, "a green fleck of the land itself" (16), soars over the yellow brick road on her broomstick, giving readers an aerial view establishing perspective of the story's events. This position of being elevated above the story but part of the landscape itself and able to witness it sets up the remainder of the novel's narration. The framing device of Elpheba viewing what she calls "nobodies" from afar serves as an ironic reminder to readers since they know that one of these nobodies is ultimately going to kill her (17). The conceit also reminds readers of the ways in which stories are shared and often go unquestioned. Elpheba overhears the scarecrow, tin man, lion, and Dorothy sharing cruel rumors about her, and the tin man says that he is "only repeating what folks say" (17). Using this framing, Maguire questions what readers have heard about the Wicked Witch of the West and exposes the process of literary mimesis. This process is reconstituted in the closing frame of the novel, which says that "a lot of nonsense has been circulated about how Dorothy left Oz" (534). By framing authoritative narrative through the conceit of rumor, the novel encourages readers to question the "nonsense" they may have heard (534). Finally, *Wicked* states that there is "no after" and "no afterword" in the life of a Witch (535), which is ironically undermined both by the narrative itself – though Elpheba still dies in this text, we receive a more intimate view of her life than in *The Wizard of Oz* – and also immediately ironically undermined by the text's last lines, in which an anonymous voice asks if the Witch ever came back and another anonymous voice replies "Not yet" (535). That the novel closes on the notion that the Witch might just come back implies that her story is not yet finished and that even the third-person omniscient narrator (and therefore, also readers) make claims and have assumptions (there is "no after" for the Witch) that may be wrong. Through this framing, the novel encourages a metafictional look at the process of writing and writerly reading itself.

The final rhetorical strategy that allows for a transformative postmodern parallel novel is perspective plurality. Heteroglossia, or many voices within a single work, lends itself to perspective plurality, the idea that no matter the event or situation people will have different interpretations of it. In a famous fable, several blind men encounter an elephant for the first time. The men all touch different parts of the elephant – side, trunk, tusk, leg, ear, and tail – and then argue that their individual interpretation of the elephant is correct. Only after some heated debate and the interjection of a seeing person do they realize that they have to put their perspectives together in order to better understand the beast they encountered. In the culmination of a plurality of perspectives a more complete picture emerges. In parallel novels, perspective plurality takes place when many characters have voice, not only the minor character who is given elaboration. The narration and formal structure of the novel questions representation in source texts through metafictional parody and demythologizing, which then encourages readers to be open to perspective plurality.

For example, *Wide Sargasso Sea* says that "there is always the other side, always" (Rhys 128). Initially readers interpret this to mean that they are getting the madwoman in the attic's story, but eventually understand that Antoinette is also biased and often perceives events in a problematic fashion. The novel also has parts narrated by Mr. Rochester and Grace Poole and so provides a plurality of perspectives beyond a singular voice challenging the depiction in *Jane Eyre*. This initial heteroglossic approach is used in many parallel novels. In *Grendel*, the titular monster says that "they have their own versions, but this is the truth" (Gardner 52), indicating that while Grendel believes his version is the right one there are a multitude of other versions. Grendel's problematic and unreliable narration encourages readers to question whether his version is indeed the truth. *The Penelopiad* includes the line "there was another story./Or several,

as befits the goddess Rumour" (Atwood 147), indicating again the possibility of many versions of the same events. In *Lavinia*, Lavinia constitutes and reinvents herself through talking with Virgil and through interacting with other people who cross her path (Lindow 222). And in *Foe*, Susan says, "I choose not to tell I because to no one, not even to you, do I owe proof that I am a substantial being with a substantial history in the world... for I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire" (Coetzee 131); further, "the true story will not be heard until by art we have found a way of giving voice to Friday" (118). These declarations show the malleability of narrative as well as the impossibility of getting to the "true story" unless all voices, particularly those historically silenced, are heard. Taken together, all of these examples indicate the need for heteroglossia in order to have perspective plurality; and many of these parallel novels continue to have perspective plurality through the inclusion of many points of view in their texts.

Perspective plurality also occurs in parallel novels through the inclusion of voices that provide a different view than the narrator. *The Penelopiad* tells not only Penelope's untold story but also that of the twelve hanged maids, who describe rather a different take on her modesty and goodness than she portrays. By including the chorus of the twelve maids who subvert both the story told in Homer's epic and Penelope's own story, Atwood ironically implies that the true story is never achieved, but that we get closer to it by hearing a plurality of perspectives. Similarly, *Ahab's Wife* includes a chapter narrated by Una's first husband, Kit, and one by her second husband, Captain Ahab, and also has epistolary inclusions that both mimic Moby Dick and also enhance perspective plurality. Una receives and sends letters to characters including an escaped enslaved woman; a smallpox-ravaged abolitionist; a whaler; a bounty-hunting dwarf; a woman politician and intellectual; and of course, Captain Ahab. In *March*, March's assertion that

"I never promised I would write the truth" is later troubled by Marmee (Brooks 4), who says, "There were troubling things here. Much as I did not want to hear, I knew I must listen, and sift them for what specks of fact they might yield" (219). Marmee and March himself both question the notion of narrative truth, and the heteroglossia of March's view of the Civil War evolves to perspective plurality when Marmee narrates four chapters herself. Similarly, *The Wind Done Gone* includes letters from Mammy and others as well as confirmation documents. Postmodern parallel novels suggest "that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (Hutcheon 209). Simultaneously, they open up the present to the past, which implies that writing – and reading – are ongoing processes. These texts ironically indicate a difference that opens up the adaptation's source text to questioning while also showing that the newly written narrative can and should be questioned too.

Postmodern parallel novels are only a portion of what I call transformative adaptations – adaptations that enact a transformative process on their source text to destabilize narrative authority while also extending the legacy of any given source text. However, by giving minor characters voice, parallel novels are inherently metafictional. While someone could have a full interpretation of *Ash* without knowing the "Cinderella" fairy tale, or *Annie John* without recognizing its intertextual references, readers of a parallel novel are always aware of the influence of source texts. Thomas Leitch sees many texts as existing "on the continuum from adaptation to allusion" and therefore difficult to classify with normative taxonomies of adaptations studies (503). Instead, adaptations studies allows the "matchless opportunity to treat every text, whether or not it is canonical, true, or even physically extant, as the work-in-progress of institutional practices of rewriting" (503). Therefore adaptations studies emphasize Roland

Barthes' notion of the writerly as opposed to the readerly text. The writerly text encourages readers to take part in the process of producing the text's meaning through the use of self-conscious writing and use of language. Authors of parallel novels use the rhetorical strategies of metafictional parody and demythologizing, heteroglossia and perspective plurality, collaborative originality, and framing devices. These strategies encourage the reader to question how literary worlds are constructed and connected, thereby also encouraging postmodern critique. My analysis is by no means comprehensive of all postmodern parallel novels but is meant to provide insight into how the genre functions as a whole. Viewing patterns at the cross-section of the genre gives a more comprehensive view of just how these strategies work – and therefore, the work they accomplish.

In this dissertation, I theorize a way to look at transformative (inter)texts by tracing the adaptive impulse through the lenses of sex, race, and gender. *The Wind Done Gone*, "The House of Asterion," *Grendel*, *Ash*, *A Tempest*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Annie John* all disrupt their authoritative canonical source texts and extend their lineage in a way that drastically alters the way we read a source text; and other transformative adaptations similarly extend the legacy of their source texts while also encouraging us to question notions of narrative authority. These texts also rely on already-pluralized source text(s). Because of the inherent intertextuality of adaptations, they are not just responses to their source texts, but instead change how readers view and interpret source texts and the web of similar texts. That readers have read the actual pre-text does not really matter. Instead, the transformative adaptation responds in some way to our shared understanding of a text's cultural legacy. Instead of looking at fidelity or variations, the theoretical significance of investigating adaptations relies instead on the tensions and anxieties that lends itself to a transformative rewrite.

Transformative adaptations can be categorized on a gradient shifting from feedback to vindication to destruction. Category 1) Feedback: adaptations that transform through *feedback* bring up the tropes, plotlines, and characters of their source texts in a way that transforms but does not mean to destroy the original reading of these texts. The texts discussed in this dissertation that fall into this category include "The House of Asterion," *Grendel*, and *Wicked*. These texts implicitly allude to source texts but in a way that largely serves to expand the story world of the original by providing feedback on the internal world of its characters. Creating empathy for the monster does not detract from their monstrosity but rather creates a matrix of interconnected feedback loops. Category 2) Vindication: transformative adaptations that fall into the category of *vindication* justify themselves against normative interpretations of a known text. Texts in this category include *Ash*, *Annie John*, *The Penelopiad*, and *Lavinia*. Cinderella is traditionally depicted as a straight, passive pushover, but Lo vindicates her strength and queerness in *Ash*. In *Annie John*, Kincaid indicates that prior revisions of *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre* simply did not do enough, and in doing so vindicates a queer islander identity. Similarly, Atwood and Le Guin perform textual vindications for the portrayals of their protagonists as portrayed in *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid*. Category 3) Destruction: although texts that enact destruction on their source texts still extend their legacies, they also aggressively declare war on them. These texts include *The Wind Done Gone*, *A Tempest, Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Ahab's Wife*. *The Wind Done Gone* reads as revenge narrative wherein Randall destructs Mitchell's portrayal of a civilized South as racist blasphemy. This attack is pleasurable in its sadistic and systematic approach. *A Tempest* similarly exposes the colonial issues of *The Tempest*; and *Wide Sargasso Sea* wages war against the sexism implicit in Mr. Rochester's choice to lock his wife

up in the attic. *Ahab's Wife* destroys the mythology of the great Captain Ahab by normalizing him and having Una end up with Ishmael.

It is important to note once again that these categorizations exist on an arc. Every transformative adaptation provides feedback to and about its source text(s). Exploring a monster's interiority does in some way redeem it by showing how close humans are to the monstrous. And an adaptation that transforms through a destructive attack simultaneously vindicates marginalized characters while it also serves to regenerate interest in the source text. Destruction, these texts imply, coexists with deconstruction: a phoenix rising from the ashes of a canonical text destroyed in the fiery rage of adaptation. This arc might also be defined as ranging from evolution to revolution. Every text can be read as a matrix of another text or other texts, and so every text provides the possibility for self-decoding. There are limitless potentialities encoded in the matrix of any text. What is revolutionary about adaptations is that they point out the power of the acts of reading and writing themselves as forms of self-decoding to create a synergism of possible counter-texts between the mind of the reader and that of the writer. Thus transformative adaptations are actually a form of literary criticism, and literary criticism itself is a form of rewriting. Adaptations are waging war on the canon, and in this war all readers (and writers) are soldiers.

If the pleasure of adaptation lies in repetition with variation, then the pleasure of transformative (inter)texts is a countercultural one: a recognition that points out issues in a source text and revises them in such a variated way that readers feel empowered to question. Between the texts examined here is the impulse to signify layered discursive meanings into the rewrite rather than simply responding to the source text itself. This may be accomplished through a desire to signify other African-American literary works, as in *The Wind Done Gone;*

postmodern pastiche of old and new through an exploration of the legendary and mythic as takes place in "The House of Asterion" and *Grendel*; a queer lens, as seen in *Ash*; or a nuanced inclusion of a multitude of cascading texts and references about canonical English literature and the figure of the island, like in *Annie John*. The process of temporal confusion and extensive signification metatextually reasserts the adaptation as a contemporary construction while simultaneously intertextually signifying its source(s). It also once again denies a strictly paternalistic, genealogical view of adaptations and situates the text as truly transformative rather than just a simple adaptation. There is something inherently pleasing about recognizing a text and having it come back.

Current forms of technological approaches to literature means that adaptations are being newly created in diverse ways. An example of this is interactive fiction, which entails a readership that uses text commands to change their narrative and cause specific character interactions. IF may be text-only, or it may have accompanying graphics and simulated gameplay. This format means that the reader is rewriter both literally and in a Barthesean sense; the reader adapts the narrative themselves and in doing so are at once writers, readers, and writerly readers/rewriters. Other forms of interactive storytelling use contributions from a wide audience. This further reduces the stamp of authority implied in so-called original texts because there are any number of authors for the narrative. While these may not be traditional adaptations, they imply a "rather more intriguing direction of travel, of the increased cinematic and textual migration of texts" (Sanders 224). Further, translation itself is also a transformative act. A text that adapts another text for a different kind of audience through the act of translation is also transformative. For instance, a Brazilian children's book called *Deaf Cinderella* is the first published narrative to use both Portuguese as well as Brazilian SignWriting. By translating the

known story for a diverse audience in a new way, the authors of this text engender an empowered readership.

So who, exactly, is transformed through the process of adaptation? The author is transformed through the exercise of rewriting a known tale. This destabilizes the impact of authority (author/ity) figures created by canonical choices but also by the self. The text is transformed through the process of revisionism. And finally, the reader is transformed, which often leads to empowerment. New paths for transformative adaptations that fall in the categories of feedback, vindication, and destruction must both respond to and extend known texts and their more conventional adaptations. There have been many adaptations that depend on changes in the culture industry rather than more significant "real social changes… and ideological bent[s]" (Zipes 216). However, every so often a text that transforms its source text(s) and therefore also transforms the author through the process of writing and the reader through the process of writerly reading can lead to true change. As I argue throughout this dissertation, the three main tools that I see allowing for this type of transformation are collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality. From here it is critical that we discover what other impetuses might encourage transformation and therefore also empowerment. For an untransformed world, an unevolved one, remains stagnant. But an ever-changing world, a transformed one, is imaginative, subversive, and fantastic; and that leads to new, wonderful, and revolutionary possibilities.

The Conclusion, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Woke Cinderella: 21st-Century Adaptations,* 2020, Suzy Woltmann. The dissertation author was the sole investigator and author.

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