

Alexander,

you have a good thesis and excellent ideas, but you need to work on being more concise and to the point.

Your understanding of Gilbert and Gubar's article is very thorough. You don't have to say everything about it though. Try to stay a bit more focused on your argument, and to avoid repeating words or ideas.

Hi

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Sep 9, 2018 11:12 AM Subscribed

I'm Alex and I'm taking this distance education course to learn more about feminism and women's writing.

My former roommate was targeted and killed in a pre-meditated vehicular homicide a few years ago and I never felt justice was done, <https://courtneyarthur.com/>

<https://www.mykawartha.com/news-story/6891828-emily-township-man-sentenced-to-five-years-in-prison-in-crash-that-killed-cyclist/>

She was a very bright feminist writer, and I feel she was targeted because of her feminism.

Attempting to complete this course is a form of therapy for me.

Module 1

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Sep 12, 2018 8:49 PM Last edited: Thursday, September 13, 2018 10:26 AM EDT Subscribed

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2 - Provide your own definition of ♦feminist.♦ Is there an undeniable connection between literature written by women and feminism? Why? Why not?

A feminist is someone that looks for equality between biases sources of power and control. Particularly in issues like Patriarchy, or gender roles, minority rights of the disabled, poverty, and secularism, etc.,

Someone would attempt to confuse that with humanism, but I factually know more often than not it is women that end up taking up the brunt amount of humanist behaviors and giving with little reward or even acknowledgment.

Sometimes even getting targetted for their ideals of peace and forgive and forget as if those concepts are somehow radicalized and intolerable in a Southern Ontarian society.

Feminism to me is seeing that it isn't an easy path forward to beat the old boys club, the jingoism, and chauvinists, but to try anyway because its the right thing to do ethically for the future of humanity and the world.

Feminism means that I might not get it right every time, but if I learn from my mistakes, I'll be able to educate myself and improve and do some good. That I won't have to end up in a Rudyard Kipling Novel with a swastika emblem in the inner page, where Evo-psych pseudo-truths become the law and that I'll still have free will to say no way in hell to that stuff and still live a good life.

I would like intersectional feminism one day to help get accountability for the total corrupt inside job system sentencing that happened to my friend Courtney Vannessa Arthur when she was murdered in a small town, Straight out of Mississippi Burning.

I find women writers are more observant of tragedies, sorrow, the underdogs fragile, unwanted, and that this sensitivity makes them strong.

Truth shouldn't be a conquest and honestly should be something people live.

I really get that experience from reading Jane Eyre who reminds me of <https://courtneyarthur.com/> - a woman just trying to live her life safely and help as many people as she could along the way.

Do you think men and women write differently? If so, what is it that is different about the two modes of writing: subject matter; style; narrative voice? Yes, I think men and women write differently but only really to the extent when they are writing in the character of men or women or writing subjective experiences. This is because men and women's subjective experiences are factually quite different emotionally psychologically physically so in writing as a woman who is physically a woman and has lived a woman's life more of these nuances and character trains and observances of the setting are in the readers face.

More so society and media have definitely locked in women and men into gender roles and lifestyles that contribute to subject matter; style; narrative voice; etc. A male is more likely to be interested in watching or reading or writing a heroic story of a warlord than a story of a woman slowly and delicately taking care of her family and friends and improving their lives through thick and thin and even chronic illness.

There is an attention deficit issue with males wanting quick gratification into what is programmed as exciting and immediate that women typically don't have. I find women care more about the holistic good of a large group and making things amicable between everyone more than they do a having a champion or a winner take all do or die scenario.

Though I have to say in the case of Jane Eyre the reading reminds me more of detailed psychological attack and deconstruction of the patriarchy scheme and world it's operated in. In a much more healthy way than a wartime book like The Painted Bird which had to illustrate these concepts with blunt war descriptions, Bronte is more able to keep things less grotesque than war but still definitively cold and distressing with her first-hand account of Jane Eyer's life.

Tiny Tim from Charles Dickson's a Christmas Carol does not worry me half as much as Jane Eyre.

Feedback  
Alexander,

I am sorry about your friend--she sounds like a wonderful person.

Your posts are very compelling. You really unravel a lot of interesting issues. Try to be more concise though, and edit your writing more. Re-read each post before posting it, paying particular attention to sentence fragments.

Alexander Knapik-Levert  
September 12 at 9:23 PM  
Hi Emily,

I agree that women do tend to put more emotion into their words than men and that lets the reader empathize with the meaning of the text to a much greater degree than say the latest specific mechanical term for computer or weapon or criminal grifting jargonized score antic.

When it comes to literature I feel the best way to interact with the text is to be able to empathize with what is being written and that simply is much harder if the book has plenty of technical jargon but not enough emotional language.

<<< Replied to post below >>>  
Authored by: Emily Petrini-Woolley  
Authored on: Sep 12, 2018 9:41 AM  
Subject: Module 1

Question one:

When comparing men and women's writing styles, I would have to say that through my own personal experiences with novels and different reading materials, that there is a clear difference between the way a woman writes, compared to a man. I find that women tend to write with a lot of emotion, are very cautious with how they describe things, and they really write so that we can understand how they are feeling. However, from what I have experienced, men don't write with much emotion. They get down to the point very fast and forget that a reader needs as much information as possible, to be able to fully understand and establish emotion within a story. For example, a woman may describe the death of a friend as being heart wrenching, life changing, and tear wrenching; while a man may describe the same event as being bad, poor timing, and/or unbelievable. In this example, I would connect way more with how the women feels, than how the man described his pain.

Question two:

To me, being a feminist means to be open minded toward everything in life. To accept everyone, no matter their race, sexuality, social class, gender. It also means that as a woman myself, that I stand up for what I believe in, I stand up for women's rights, and will not allow myself to be degraded, because I am a woman. Often, I hear that "women can't do tough/strong jobs, or "men jobs", and I get highly offended at this because we can do anything that a man can do. Why do us women choose not to degrade men because they are unable to carry a fetus in their body for nine long months? But it is ok for us women to be put down because we don't have "big muscles" or are considered "weak"? Both of these things are completely out of our control, and we all need to love each other for who we are. Men can't help that they were born males. Just like women don't get to choose to be born females. Gender equality is still a huge problem in today's society, and we really need both men and women to stand up to women's rights, so that we can live in a kinder and more loving world.

I do believe that there is a connection between feminism and literature written by women because when women write, they don't typically talk down to the male gender,

and are quite accepting, which I think is part of my definition of feminism.

Alexander Knapik-Levert  
September 12 at 9:16 PM  
Hi Vyomi Vyas

I agree with your definition of feminism and was interested how you juxtaposed such a solid and easy to empathize with a definition of feminism with one of men's writing.

I had forgotten how many extra technical words a writer like James Joyce would have added into one of his books, or how much extra bloated terms we come up with today to appease our social groups or for whatever myriad of reasons.

Your comment made me think of the website urban dictionary which I think its pretty useless and so loaded with jargonized words of the day and how much those words are taken as serious pending the peer group someone is in at the time of their usage.

It made me think of how much more accessible writing is when everyone can understand it without the ego flaunting of the biggest vocabulary.

Alexander Knapik-Levert  
September 20 at 2:35 PM

Hi Christine, thank you for your very thorough answers, they are really excellent to read as Jane Eyre is an important topic.

The closeness of the relationship with Bertha and Rochester is questionable for sure. It makes me think of almost a purely arranged marriage, though Rochester does say that he loved Bertha.

Bertha's suicide and her crawling on her hands and legs doesn't speak to me of genuine physical or genetic mental illness. I think of it as more cries for help from someone who has been supplanted and abducted to a foreign land. I don't think it's learned helplessness I think it's vitality and revolt while imprisoned. When she can not escape from her prison and is left behind in a trapped life she decides to break free from the mortal coil.

Jane Eyre definitely develops as you say over the course of the relationship with Rochester but not only that the entire novel. She is a woman for all seasons as much as that other guy is a man for all of them. Jane can not possibly be only submissive or subservient, she has many learned behaviors, but she also has many survival traits as well. Bertha and Jane both represent some form of confining nature into madness, the taming of nature using patriarchy.

The relegation of people to book characters has to be a theme here, as the novel is so detailed it is almost like the humans in it are living creations. Observing the similarities of people in the physical world to them makes them that much more alive.

<<< Replied to post below >>>  
Authored by: Christine La  
Authored on: Sep 18, 2018 8:44 PM  
Subject: Module 2- Jane Eyre

What do you make of the courtship and relationship of Rochester and Bertha Mason? Is her madness a result of genetic predisposition (♦nature♦) or of outside forces (culture shock, imprisonment, incompatible spouse, etc.♦in other words, ♦nurture♦)?

I think the relationship between Rochester and Bertha Mason is that they did not have a close relationship regardless of their marital status to each other. I think that because they did not have a relationship prior to their marriage, they were not able to form a relationship as a couple. In relation, it was mentioned that Rochester did not love his wife, Bertha. It is evident that he married her because of her beauty and her family's wealth. As a result, Bertha's madness was a result of outside forces (culture shock, imprisonment, incompatible spouse), but due to Bertha's imprisonment for 10 years, it is likely for one to develop "crazy-like" or "madness" behaviours. In addition, in the novel, it was mentioned that Bertha's family history included mental health illnesses such as violent insanity and intellectual disability. It was evident that Bertha did suffer from violent behaviours and would crawl with her hands and legs. So, I think that her imprisonment and her husband's actions of mistreating her (and wanting to marry Jane), resulted her to behave violently and show her true self. I believe that Bertha does suffer from mental illness such as behaving violently, which she inherited from her family genes.

Brontë's heroine Jane Eyre is often seen as a model of strong, independent womanhood by readers of the novel. At the same time, others maintain that Jane is a subservient, submissive woman who finds fulfillment in the marriage to a domineering man. In your opinion, what is the more accurate reading of Jane's character and why?

I think that Jane Eyre is a subservient, submissive woman who finds fulfillment in the marriage to Rochester. I think that Jane's relationship and love to Rochester is undeniable. Her character and personality develops from when she first met Rochester on the morning walk to when she returns to find Rochester after running away and hiding from him. Although Jane had refused to be married to Rochester because of his marital status with Bertha, she did not forget about Rochester when she ran away and hid from him. She was obedient to Rochester, for instance, when he asked her to aid Mason's wounds she did. It is evident that Jane's personality is supportive, and will help when she sees it. To exemplify, she discovers that Rochester is injured from saving the servants and Bertha from the fire, and she immediately offers to take care of him. In conclusion, I believe that Jane is a woman who loves and listens to Rochester.

Christine La

September 21 at 12:28 PM

Hi Alexander, I didn't think of interpreting Bertha's suicide and her crawling behaviours as a cry for help, as you have mentioned. However, now that you mentioned it, I can interpret it in that sense as well. I think that Bertha didn't even realize she was crawling or acting violently. Perhaps she was exhausted from her relationship with Rochester and acted out without realization.

Thank you for your response.

Unread post

Emily Petrini-Woolley

September 21 at 3:02 PM

Hi Christine,

I also agree with you when you highlighted that the relationship between Rochester and Bertha contributed to her madness. He was extremely controlling and didn't take her feelings into consideration. To me that would make me extremely frustrated. I also felt that he messed with her head, and being that her head was already not in the right place, I can definitely see why she would have fallen off the deep end. He didn't help her in any way.

Great post!

Unread post  
Pooyah Kathirgamanathan  
September 21 at 3:32 PM  
Hey Christine,

I agree with you that Rochester and Bertha didn't have a close relationship. Keeping Bertha in the attic only made her more violent and mad and did not help in any way. I think that's what also led up to Bertha's suicide. I feel that if Bertha had received proper care from her family or Mr. Rochester that she needed for her mental illness she would have not ended up dead or being locked up in the attic that led to her death. Their relationship was not healthy and there was no love or care in their relationship.

Great Post!

<<< Replied to post below >>>  
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Authored on: Sep 18, 2018 8:44 PM  
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Brontë's heroine Jane Eyre is often seen as a model of strong, independent womanhood by readers of the novel. At the same time, others maintain that Jane is a subservient, submissive woman who finds fulfillment in the marriage to a domineering man. In your opinion, what is the more accurate reading of Jane's character and why?

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immediately offers to take care of him. In conclusion, I believe that Jane is a woman who loves and listens to Rochester.

Alexander Knapik-Levert

September 20 at 1:57 PM

Emily, I agree with you that Rochester is controlling and abusive, and I think the relationships in Jane Eyre really show a detail of the various ways patriarchy psychologically controls people, womyn.

Especially how Rochester locks Bertha away in the attic as if to sweep her under the carpet, or treat her like a disposable possession. By being dismissive of Bertha's entire existence and imprisoning her Rochester also manipulates Jane against Bertha with his bigamy. To me, that's an obvious crazy-making tactic that will most likely gaslight a reaction, which is why I can't label Jane as strictly confused, maybe it is more that she is having confusion inflicted on her?

Jane is very naturally lucid, she flees her various abusive environments many times, she witnesses life horrors while the book poses important experiences and questions on not only the control and abuse of women but patriarchal society as a whole.

I don't think Bertha is mad at all because almost the entirety of psychiatry is a historically based male construct of oppression. Rochester's diagnosis of Bertha having some inherited mental illness because of genetic "science" in the 18th century and his power to simply lock her away is good evidence of that history of authoritarian abuse.

Some people actively go looking for, "I did not participate in this horror show" trophies, perhaps Charlotte Bronte did the same a bit after completing a monumental contribution to humanity like Jane Eyre.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Emily Petrini-Woolley

Authored on: Sep 17, 2018 3:24 PM

Subject: Week 2

Brontë's heroine Jane Eyre is often seen as a model of strong, independent womanhood by readers of the novel. At the same time, others maintain that Jane is a subservient, submissive woman who finds fulfillment in the marriage to a domineering man. In your opinion, what is the more accurate reading of Jane's character and why?

In my opinion, I feel that Jane is a confused woman, who isn't really sure of what she wants in life. At times, she demonstrates that she is an independent woman. But then just like that, she changes her character and makes the reader feel that she needs a man to survive in this world, and that she lets people walk right over her. An example of this, is when Jane is in a relationship with Rochester. She allows herself to be controlled by Rochester, even though she claims that she loves the man. Why would you allow yourself to love someone who constantly controls your life? What is so satisfying about that? In contrast, she begins to realize that all she is, is an object to Rochester, and starts to despise him, and the gifts he brings to her. So although she begins to show her independency by realizing that the relationship she is in, isn't real, she still allows her submissive partner to control her life. Further, Jane was strong enough to stand up for herself when John Reed was treating her wrongfully, but yet, allowed Rochester to play mind games with her, before she ran away from the relationship. Jane is a very confusing

character.

What do you make of the courtship and relationship of Rochester and Bertha Mason? Is her madness a result of genetic predisposition (♦nature♦) or of outside forces (culture shock, imprisonment, incompatible spouse, etc.♦in other words, ♦nurture♦)? The courtship and relationship between Rochester and Bertha is not normal, is extremely unhealthy, and has clearly damaged both of them emotionally. I do believe that part of the reason that Bertha is unable to control herself, is because she is in fact, ♦mad♦. From what I have interpreted from the story, Bertha is not the only one in her family who is insane, and therefore, some of her behaviour and actions have very likely become out of her control, and she is unable to manage herself in the way that a typical, ♦normal♦ adult would. Some could argue that because she didn't get help for her issues, she has set herself up for failure in life. In addition, Rochester has a history of being controlling, and from my personal experiences, controlling someone who is not well in the head, is a recipe for disaster, and will just end badly for both parties involved. Further, the fact that Rochester felt the only way to stay safe, was by locking Bertha in the attic, supports my opinion that both Bertha and Rochester were in an unsafe, and abusive relationship/courtship.

Cassandra Carchesio  
September 20 at 10:06 PM  
Hi Emily,

I too agree that a combination of a predisposed history of mental illness, along with a lack of nurture from her husband is what ultimately led Bertha to become "mad". It was unfortunate that she was unable to receive the proper help she so desperately needed in this relationship. It was evident that Rochester's abusive and controlling tendencies that Jane had too noticed in their own relationship had led to a toxic, unsafe environment . Ultimately, Bertha's mental and physical is what took a toll.

Thanks for your post!

Unread post  
Haya Khalid  
September 21 at 4:47 PM

I agree with you I don't believe that their marriage was a healthy one or an even a good one and not getting the proper care would result in the state of the person worsening I used to think that it was because of nurture and the way that everything was handled and peoples expectations of women but you really made me think about other factors as well

Module 2 - Questions 1, and 4.

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Sep 20, 2018 12:21 PM Subscribed

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Brontë's heroine Jane Eyre is often seen as a model of strong, independent womanhood by readers of the novel. At the same time, others maintain that Jane is a subservient, submissive woman who finds fulfillment in the marriage to a domineering man. In your opinion, what is the more accurate reading of Jane's character and why?

Jane Eyre to me is an example of born innocence that gets castigated into a jail-like frame of life, the patriarchy, but is luckily vivacious enough to resist the death throes.

Throughout the novel, her decision making is inhibited by limited choices from that type of society. She takes to survival, and in that sense has a very intelligent



and detailed perspective on the entire psychological model of her environment. This isn't subservient, or submissive, it isn't strong in the, ♦I don't want to die♦ sense, because, it should be given to not want to be trapped, enslaved, and destroyed by the world from birth, mentally and physically. What she does is natural and feminine in a world against it. She illuminates that world. She is a feminist character.

The marriage is her on the tracks of life making the best of what she can through the perspective of someone hopeful. Rochester isn't her penultimate fulfillment, he's her imperative from what she knows, even with evidence of his past failures as a person and man. St. John, to me is a representation of the church as a redundancy where after surviving one tainted love romantically, when Jane moves on, religion is there to attempt to scoop up her ♦soul♦ into a different hegemony, ♦appealing to a higher power.♦ The patriarchy doom train machine has no breaks.

She isn't submissive to either of these characters and interacts with them as ♦sociable♦ as possible with her available information, though she encounters lots of grief.

There is a real commentary in this novel on how social systems shape people's choices and lives. It isn't as simple as doing something grandiose like, ♦taking personal responsibility.♦

People aren't perfect and women shouldn't be targeted to be immaculate or binary.

What do you think is the relationship between Charlotte Brontë♦ the author and Jane and Bertha the literary creations respectively? What is the function, using Gilbert and Gubar's terminology, of Jane the chaste and modest woman and of Bertha the wanton madwoman in Brontë's text?

Using Gilbert and Gubar's terminology there is anomie and the permanent authority of text in both Charlotte Brontë as a person, and Jane and Bertha the literary creations. In my opinion, the novel is a published and detailed feminism that is accessible hundreds of years later, and social critique during a time period that totally was against it.

Revolt is hinted at in the entire novel, and the placement of the characters, as well as, ♦what could have been if...♦ and the conflict of that, and I think Charlotte Brontë's life did too. Revision of a failed system of oppression is hard, especially when, ♦she is victimized by what Mitchell calls the ♦inferiorized and ♦alternative♦ (second sex) psychology of women under patriarchy.♦ (Gilbert and Gubar).

Jane and Bertha interact with Charlotte Brontë's own ideas of how patriarchal structures have not only affected her but all women. They are feminist creations.

The madwoman in the attic and the chaste marriageable woman show the angel/demon, false-dichotomy, through the juxtaposition of the psychosocial worlds they live in.

There is a system of thinking and writing being put on display that shows how male-dominated it is, right down to the ♦sociosexual♦ relations of the characters.

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Ruchika Gothoskar  
September 21 at 6:37 PM  
Hi Alexander,

Thank you for your thoughtful reflection. Something that really struck me was you saying, "people aren't perfect and women shouldn't be targeted to be immaculate or binary." It's such a powerful statement steeped in truth - women, more often than not, are held to such an immeasurable and unattainable regard, expected to be everything, for everyone. To expect that out of anyone, let alone exclusively women, is silly and ridiculous. It was just quite nice to see that statement written out for once, is what I think I'm trying to get at here!

Topic Module 3  
Posts Read: 24  
Threads Created: 1  
Replies Posted: 2  
9 / 10 90 %  
Details  
Feedback

Your posts are very perceptive, Alexander.

Try to incorporate quotations into your sentences though (rather than letting them stand on their own). See: [https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Integrating\\_Quotes.pdf](https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Integrating_Quotes.pdf)

I don't think there is any textual evidence to suggest the narrator of the YW dies at the end. The last we know of her is that she has lost touch with reality entirely and she is "creeping" around and around the room, and over John's unconscious body.

Alexander Knapik-Levert  
September 28 at 11:57 PM

Jennifer, I agree that the perception of John diminishes as the story goes on, almost as if he is inhibited by his role as a doctor and not completely able to emotionally relate with his wife. In this way, the story is tragic to me because as the narrator gets more sick, so does the relationship. Parts of their relationship are displayed more transparently as the story goes on, and the reader can really feel the dysfunction and control of the relationship and John. I feel like this is all exacerbated by John being very normalized to his patriarchal role and believing he's the one that's right and the authority, while conversely his wife who has coupled with as she gets sicker can no longer rationalize herself out of her feelings of inequality or being treated like a prisoner.

I think the relationship dynamic makes the Yellow Wallpaper more tragic but also more pointed in its social commentary about the injustice in traditional relationship dynamics.

Because the narrator is treated like an object she almost becomes one in her "stimulating distraction" as you say of the wallpaper.

Truly a mind-bogglingly tragic story, and your comment made me think about it in a lot of ways I wasn't able to, thank you!

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Jennifer Weeks

Authored on: Sep 24, 2018 1:27 PM

Subject: questions 1 & 3

I have mixed feelings about John and the medical treatment of his wife. At first, I thought John is a kind man who wants what is best for his wife, and genuinely loves and cares for her: The narrator says "He is very careful and loving" and "He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have the perfect rest..." His intentions seem good, as he tends to her needs and wishes for her recovery. However, as the story progresses, I feel John shows he is in fact controlling, patronizing and insensitive in his reactions to her wishes, concerns, and behaviour. The narrator says John "laughs at me about the wallpaper", dismissing her discomfort with it. She asks to go downstairs, and he doesn't agree. She wishes John would let her visit family, and he says she's not well enough. She can't write, which she loves to do, because "nothing" is best- and he knows best. And he is "practical in the extreme", with control. All of these instances make me see John as someone who lacks emotion, concern and patience in her recovery. And he is treating her more of a stubborn patient than his wife.

The symbolism of the yellow wallpaper is certainly strong! The woman trapped behind the bars in the pattern is, I think, symbolic of the narrator, trapped in the room, the house, and in her oppressed gender role (no education, supposed to marry/raise a family, abiding by your husband) in the Victorian 19th century. She is trapped in the pattern of day to day life. Her husband claims to plan to remove it from the wall, but he does not, to her disappointment, because he thinks it of course has nothing to do with her recovery. So, the lingering of it on the wall, despite her despise of it, symbolises to me that men know better than women. The paper drives her mad eventually as it is the only stimulating distraction for her, since she is forbidden to write, socialize, exercise, etc... Thus the crazy design and pattern is, well, her fate. Also, she says of the description how the curves commit suicide, which struck me as a sort of foreshadowing.

Alexander Knapik-Levert

September 28 at 11:49 PM

"I think because her husband loves her, he is strict with the treatment, and this makes the treatment weigh that much more on the narrator. Additionally, I believe that the narrator's husband has more control over her compared to the control a husband exerts on his wife in a typical husband-wife relationship. This is because her husband is also her physician, so he has just that much more power and control over her, and that much more power to make orders upon her. "

Hey Alexandra, I think you expressed some really good points that I missed in my own analysis.

It is challenging that the husband both loves his wife and is her physician. I agree with you that it must weigh more on the narrator, almost like a contributing factor to her outlook on her condition. It's scary to me to read about the influence that males can have through sheer accumulated power and normalization in patriarchy.

I feel that it creates a very large blindness for males in not being able to know what exactly they are doing wrong in their treatment of women, which is a reason I enjoy learning about feminism.

It's particularly tragic to me that the husband's wife gets progressively more ill and perhaps dies when he has so much control over her. There must be a

communication divide when she seems outright against him and more enjoying the Yellow Wallpaper.

It also could just be such a great piece of writing on the perils of marriage in patriarchal society that shows how male power corrupts and alienates some from the people they care about.

I enjoyed what your comment reminded me of, thank you.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Alexandra Nemeth

Authored on: Sep 28, 2018 1:33 AM

Subject: Module 3

In ♦The Yellow Wallpaper,♦ the narrator♦s husband is a renowned physician. Do you see his treatment of his ill wife as a means to control and patronize her, or do you believe he is doing what he sees as the best way to treat her nervous condition? Support your claims with specific references to the text.

I believe that his treatment of his ill wife is a means to control her, but I also believe that he thinks that the ♦treatment♦ and this control over her that he is prescribing to her is out of love for her. I believe that what her husband thinks is best for her may not actually be what♦s best for her, but her husband sees his treatment as the best treatment possible for the illness that his wife has. The narrator obviously does not feel that the treatment is working for her, as she believes that, ♦John is a physician, and perhaps-(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)-perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster.♦ I think because her husband loves her, he is strict with the treatment, and this makes the treatment weigh that much more on the narrator. Additionally, I believe that the narrator's husband has more control over her compared to the control a husband exerts on his wife in a typical husband-wife relationship. This is because her husband is also her physician, so he has just that much more power and control over her, and that much more power to make orders upon her. He can control her and influence her by being her husband, but he can also exert control on her by being her physician, by ordering various treatments, etc. The narrator described how she even felt nervous being around her husband, which to me, means that their relationship was not healthy: ♦And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous♦.

The narrator of ♦The Yellow Wallpaper♦ spends her days and nights tracing the pattern of the wallpaper of the room in which she is essentially held captive. She provides the readers with a considerable amount of description of the wallpaper♦s physical features. These physical features may be interpreted to stand as symbols for the narrator♦s mental state and/or her situation. What do you think is the symbolic meaning of the yellow wallpaper?

I believe that the yellow wallpaper is a symbol of the narrator's thoughts and mind, and specifically, represents the narrator's mental disorder. I believe that she uses the wallpaper and the whole house, to describe her mental state. This is evident in the following passage: ♦♦but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad. So I will let it alone and talk about the house♦. For this reason, whenever she describes the house and the room, and the details of the wallpaper, I believe she is actually describing her mind. At the beginning of the story, when she is talking about the house (or really, herself and her mental state), she sees some goodness and positivity in it: ♦The most beautiful place!♦ and ♦There is a delicious garden! I never saw such a garden♦large and shady.♦ I think that this represents that she is not completely insane, and there are some things that she sees are right about herself♦and maybe just a small part of her mind is suffering (aka just the yellow wallpaper).

I think the wallpaper could have remained just an ugly wallpaper, and her depression could have just remained an episode of depression, but because of the

treatment she was prescribed, the wallpaper became more than just a wallpaper, it becomes a tormenting, all-encompassing aspect of the narrators life, like an untreated or worsening mental disorder.

Additionally, just like how John believes that his wife is not sick, and that he assures friends and family that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression, he also is the one who laughs at me so about this wallpaper! To me, this shows that the wallpaper is the women's mental disorder, and John does not believe her mental disorder actually exists, or he belittles her mental disorder.

Module 3 - Questions 2 and 3

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Sep 24, 2018 6:51 PM Last edited: Monday, September 24, 2018 7:01 PM EDT Subscribed

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Cixous, much like Gilbert and Gubar, is trying to understand the social and historical circumstances that lead to the absence of women's voices in Western literature over the last two and a half thousand years. Is it simply a matter of women's lack of access to education that would allow them to participate in the artistic and literary community? Or, is Cixous actually suggesting that women have a way of thinking, speaking, and interacting—a women's grammar—that is different from men's and that has made it more difficult for women to participate in such discourse?

"Cixous does not want to provide rigid definitions for the terminology she uses, because to do so would make her essays exercises in dogma and phallogocentricity—something she fights against." (Module 3 - Helene Cixous' "The Laugh of the Medusa" The Author Biography). "For Cixous, the logical structure of male language not only sets up and maintains hierarchical positions, but makes them seem natural: the phallogocentric model of language is thus the dominant mode of seeing and organizing the world. By writing the body, Cixous insists, women writers will free their bodies as well as their speech." (Module 3 - Helene Cixous' Analysis of "The Laugh of The Medusa").

I think Cixous is suggesting that there is a woman's grammar, that it is different from men's, and that it is important to participate with it because it is beneficial to all women and differentiates women's writing from male writing. I think Cixous is saying that writing in any kind of typified historically established literary mode is going to be influenced by a patriarchal social norm, so when she engages in woman's writing she is going to write as a woman and not as a man, and that means expressing herself as one too.

The Laugh of the Medusa, in my opinion, illustrates how Cixous has given information in such a way so as to avoid patriarchal hierarchies in writing, an explanation of how she did so, and why as well.

I don't think it is only a lack of access to education that is preventing women from being active in the artistic and literary community though I do think Helene Cixous is a lover of education and she isn't strictly against historical form, as she describes in her "bisexuality of literacy" ideas. She isn't arguing to castrate men or men's writing of maleness and isn't arguing that all literary form up to her is evil, instead she speaks about de-paternalizing writing and the world, and that there are ways to do this in expressive writing, and in my opinion, that writing is a way for all women to help find themselves.

I think she is arguing for more acceptance in different types of writing instead of

demonizing one.

The narrator of ♦The Yellow Wallpaper♦ spends her days and nights tracing the pattern of the wallpaper of the room in which she is essentially held captive. She provides the readers with a considerable amount of description of the wallpaper♦s physical features. These physical features may be interpreted to stand as symbols for the narrator♦s mental state and/or her situation. What do you think is the symbolic meaning of the yellow wallpaper?

In my opinion, the symbolism of the yellow wallpaper is situational in the context of each of the narrator's experiences documented in the text, as well as of an overall symbolism of the patriarchal male-dominated system of the world.

The wallpaper is stripped off in large chunks at the start of the story. This could have a dual meaning in that not only is the narrator physically ill but the wallpaper and her life is damaged by patriarchy to begin with.

The narrator is very educated (she may want to inflict that she is indoctrinated) in the introductory lines, she's clearly been formally educated, she knows about ancestral knowledge, but her thinking about her life is all in relation to this guy John, her husband, who is dismissive of her and even laughs at her questioning. She's been socially conditioned to relate to herself through him so she's taught herself to brush off his abusive behavior. She's also been normalized to her patriarchal society to an extreme degree, she's fine being called patronizing condescending infantilizing terms like little girl, listening to her husband's orders, being denied social contact, and generally being submissive because that is her society's idea of "normal", though it's destructive, and she internalizes this destructive aspect of society. That is the analogy of the wallpaper in my opinion, and while this all happens the wallpaper changes, "On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind." (The Yellow Wallpaper By Charlotte Perkins Gilman).

"The color is hideous enough and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing." (The Yellow Wallpaper By Charlotte Perkins Gilman). Perhaps this is a reflection on her dealings with her husband, their moving to a country mansion, the expectations he has towards her being a mother, her treatment in her growing sickness, and how society reinforces all of this as healthy or "good". Because the world is a patriarchy and because she is locked out of changing that society because she is a woman, having the knowledge of what is happening to her is torturous.

I'm not sure if the narrator dies in the end, but she says she pulls down most of the wallpaper and this symbolizes to me that once she has exposed the reader and her husband to the ideas that the patriarchy is so toxic, that that can't be changed, that though she may be dead she is free of the patriarchy, she has become part of the fabric of life itself by interacting with it and writing about it, and now she is able to creep over "him" every time. It is gruesome that she may have had to die to pull down the wallpaper and expose her husband to what she experienced, which is another commentary on the sickness of it. Though she may have been physically ill, she was not intentionally ill and the patriarchy is if she must seek freedom from it in death.

Alexander Knapik-Levert

October 2 at 10:48 PM

Hi Helen, I agree with you that there were some indicators that the relationship could have been "loving" but not loving in the love-filled and happy sense.

I think Rochester does give basic courtesy sometimes to Antoinette but it is never anything more than basic, and mostly to save himself from his perceived

inconvenience of her emotions, I wouldn't consider it empathetic. His comfort for her when she leaves her home is to tell her to, "forget about it" which isn't really comforting, and then he goes on to be dismissive of all her other emotions that she shares with him defeating the entire discussion and emotional relation. He also belittles her shortly after and starts calling her Bertha, almost reimagining her as something he wants to both try to change her and also dismiss her existence and humanity further.

I'm not sure if Rochester telling Antoinette he doesn't love her is what fully pushes her over the edge as a final catalyst so much as it may make her more desperate out of self-preservation. Much like witnessing all the other horrors of her life Antoinette may have learned that in order to survive or at least not be cast out and destitute she would have to do certain uncomfortable things to survive. I think this is also why she doesn't leave to go to Martinique when Christophine suggests it, she has definitely been conditioned to believe that to maintain her life she must stick to some patriarch for better or worse, with the worse being potential independence but ultimately being alone and even dying in a very cruel and violent way.

In this way, it's very very evident how patriarchy infects women into dependence and robs them of their agency. It's particularly graphic in a novel like *Wide Saragossa Sea* because the historical context is so brutal, though these social problems continue today.

Thank you for your interesting comment.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Helen Huynh

Authored on: Oct 2, 2018 9:54 AM

Subject: Module 4

1. I think that there were some indicators that pointed to the possibility of a loving relationship between the two characters. I think that the Englishman loved Antoinette in a small way and, if outside forces did not break them apart, or if he allowed himself to develop these feelings, there could have been real love between them. For example, when they were beginning their journey to Jamaica, he said that he would comfort her if she showed any signs of sadness over leaving her childhood home. This showed that he still cared enough for her that he would want to hold her if she were sad. I also believe that the gossip and Daniel Cosway's letter had some truth in them but were over exaggerated by their hatred for Antoinette's family. For example, her mother did go mad but what drove her to madness was omitted from gossip which made her seem crazier than she actually was. Her reason for attacking her husband could stem from the grief of losing her son and her blaming him for the death since he refused to leave the home when she asked him to. There were things that pushed her mother to madness, just as there were things that pushed Antoinette to madness and omitting these things in the gossip and letter made their points less valid.

2. I think that Antoinette fully goes mad after the Englishman tells her he doesn't love her. Though I believe that she was already mentally ill before their marriage since she discussed how she felt depressed at night, I do not think that her madness reached a full climax until she heard that her husband didn't love her. During the fight, when he tells her he doesn't love her, she began to curse at him with words she didn't consciously realize she was using and then even bites him. It was at this moment that I think she really lost control of her sanity. I think she snapped at this moment because it seemed like her husband was the only person left that she could fully have as a companion but with this admission from him, she realized she had truly lost everyone. Her mother rejected her and she knew that her servants were planning on leaving, so the Englishman was all she felt she really

had left. Losing him too was too much and this caused her to go mad. We can see this after their fight, on their journey to Jamaica, where Antoinette did not seem to have feelings anymore and seemed ♦doll-like♦, signalling that she gave into her madness and no longer cared about trying to fight it.

Christine La

October 4 at 6:39 PM

Hi Helen, I agree with you that the letter that Daniel Cosway wrote was over-exaggerated and an addition to the gossips. He wanted to show that Antoinette and her family had issues, which was basically seen throughout the book with the servants' gossips. So, I do agree with you that the gossips was also a factor that caused Antoinette's madness behavior.

I too believe that Antoinette's cause of madness occurred when she found out that her husband doesn't love her. She had a love connection with him, but she was rejected from it. Also like her servants, gossiping about her and her former nanny planning on leaving her, she had no one to rely on and did not feel loved.

Thank you for your insight.

Unread post

Emily Petrini-Woolley

October 5 at 9:43 AM

Hi Helen,

I really didn♦t believe that there was any love between Antoinette and the Englishman, but you did a good job on convincing me. Perhaps, there was a time, where he actually had true feelings towards her, and showed compassion, but unfortunately it didn♦t last long.

I also feel that the turning point and the reason that she went mad, was because of all the traumatic events that had just happened to her family. Her brother died, and her mom was very unwell. She had no one to express her emotions too, and was left with her and her unwell thoughts.

Great post!

Unread post

Simrah Ali

October 5 at 11:59 PM

Hi Helen - do you think that that Rochester telling Antoinette that he doesn't love her is the long factor that caused her to go mad?

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Helen Huynh

Authored on: Oct 2, 2018 9:54 AM

Subject: Module 4

1. I think that there were some indicators that pointed to the possibility of a loving relationship between the two characters. I think that the Englishman loved Antoinette in a small way and, if outside forces did not break them apart, or if he allowed himself to develop these feelings, there could have been real love between them. For example, when they were beginning their journey to Jamaica, he said that he would comfort her if she showed any signs of sadness over leaving her childhood home. This showed that he still cared enough for her that he would want to hold her if she were sad. I also believe that the gossip and Daniel Cosway♦s letter had some truth in them but were over exaggerated by their hatred for Antoinette♦s family. For example, her mother did go mad but what drove her to madness was omitted from gossip which made her seem crazier than she actually was.



Her reason for attacking her husband could stem from the grief of losing her son and her blaming him for the death since he refused to leave the home when she asked him to. There were things that pushed her mother to madness, just as there were things that pushed Antoinette to madness and omitting these things in the gossip and letter made their points less valid.

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Unread post

Alyssa Oddi

October 6 at 11:32 AM

Hey Helen, I think that you make an excellent point discussing "outside forces" when it comes to Antoinette and the Unnamed Englishman's love. I never considered their relationship a loving one, but regarding the Englishman's ability to comfort his wife is an endearing and caring point that I hadn't really thought of! You're right, his way of showing Antoinette that he cares about her feelings is extremely kind of him. Even if it isn't love, initially, at this part, readers can see that he does have it in his heart to look after Antoinette's wellbeing. I also didn't consider Daniel Conway's letter to have any precedence to the story, as I read it as a bitter and angry note, written for the sole purpose of over exaggerating the truth and tarnishing Antoinette's reputation.

Alyssa

Alexander Knapik-Levert

October 2 at 10:38 PM

Hey, I enjoyed your comment and it's very succinct in covering many of the aspects of how Antoinette is basically set up to be doomed from the start.

You're absolutely right that Daniel and the people in the book don't believe Antoinette is deserving of love. In this way, a large group of people, the tyranny of the masses, chooses to victimize her from the time she is young. This could be seen in one way as retribution for the family having owned slaves in the past but it is nothing but revenge in my opinion. It is taking one abusive patriarchy and replacing it with another.

I also agree that there wasn't anything loving about the relationship between Rochester and Antoinette, to begin with and it was also set up to be unhealthy. He's groomed to be a patriarch and people user and she's groomed to be innocent and accepting of it without agency to escape. That plus the time era of the setting is a recipe for disaster in my opinion.

I think your line that fate is against them in every way possible is very true, but what makes it more agitating and grief causing for me is that it is the system and society against them as well.

I don't think there was something not quite right with Antoinette, only that there was social condition and expectations for her to be a certain way which she can't possibly be because she has empathy skills and isn't a psychopath. Antoinette sees the humanity in people and that's why she relates to Obiah and Creole and her servants and family. Because she has empathy she is victimized by society over and over again, and you're right in my opinion for, "not blaming her for going mad because she had essentially lost everything...".

I agree that had Antoinette's situation been slightly different she wouldn't have been targetted by the masses and she wouldn't have been victimized or taught to internalize her victimization and would have had a much different life. Truly it is a scary piece of knowledge to learn.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Emily Petrini-Woolley

Authored on: Oct 1, 2018 7:29 PM

Subject: Week 4

Do you see indicators in the text that point to the possibility of a loving relationship between the unnamed Englishman and Antoinette? How much validity do you give to the gossip and especially Daniel Cosway's letter? Support your answers with examples from the text.

I do not see any indicators in the text that suggest that there is a loving relationship between Antoinette and the unnamed Englishman. Right from the start, it was pretty evident that the decision to marry Antoinette was spiteful, and he did not truly love her. In fact, it was mentioned that he does not feel like himself when he is around her, and if he feels this way, then why in the world would he marry someone who he isn't comfortable around? Antoinette can also sense the awkward tension between the two of them, and knows that what they have, isn't real at all. Unfortunately, there is nothing loving about their relationship, and is actually very unhealthy. In regard to the gossip, I believe that people thought the arrangement between Antoinette and the Englishman was strange, but I do not believe that the letter from Daniel Cosway was truthful. I feel that everyone wanted to ruin Antoinette's marriage because people may have felt that she was undeserving of love, so this man Daniel, decided to stir the pot and tried to blackmail them both. It was really hard to determine whether Daniel was truly a slave and had anything to do with the Englishman in the past, but either way, Antoinette and her husband are doomed for sadness. Fate is against them in every possible way.

At what point do you think Antoinette goes mad? What are the causes of her madness? Support your answer with examples from the text

I feel that there was something that was just not quite right with Antoinette, right from the start. From her character description, she seemed like someone who wasn't comfortable with the gossip that she was surrounded with (I wouldn't be either) and felt judged all of the time. However, I feel that the tipping point for Antoinette and the reason she became mad, was because her family home was set on fire, and in return, her brother had passed away, due to extreme exposure to spoke, and her mother became mentally unwell and couldn't take care of her. Antoinette then was sent away to another family, who happened to be a family of color, and she had to attend a convent school. I interpret that Antoinette felt sad, defeated, and alone, and I don't blame her for going mad because she had essentially lost

everything she had ever cared about. I believe that although Antoinette's family were very much disliked, it was the fact that they were not black, that put their whole situation over the top. Had they have been black, I find it doubtful that their house would have been set on fire, and therefore, Antoinette would still be with her brother and mother.

#### Module 4

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Oct 2, 2018 9:20 PM Last edited: Tuesday, October 2, 2018 10:26 PM EDT Subscribed

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Do you see indicators in the text that point to the possibility of a loving relationship between the unnamed Englishman and Antoinette? How much validity do you give to the gossip and especially Daniel Cosway's letter? Support your answers with examples from the text.

I think Rochester mostly exacerbates a bad situation, to begin with, this is mostly because he operates through a patriarchal system. He's even taught to seek dominance over other men as a patriarch which I think is exemplified in his letter to his father, listing an accomplishment, "he seemed to be attached to me and trust me completely." (69) He's a manipulator. When Antoinette is doing things like making her hair smell good or complimenting him on "looking like a king or emperor" he is dismissive having already crowned himself.. (67).

To the extent of loving, I don't think he is more mitigating than loving. "I said, 'Antoinette, your nights are not spoiled, or your days, put the sad things away, don't think about them and nothing will be spoiled, I promise you.'" (121). In this way, Rochester is comforting but in what context is he comforting? Antoinette doesn't reply to him with some kind of binary emotional switch that she can just turn on and off but instead attempts to emotionally relate to him more about her brother's death, which he just turns off. He then guilt's her about forgetting her mother when she brings up Mr. Mason having moved her mother in with other people away from them who abuse her.

Rochester then goes on to call her Bertha because he likes that name better. In this way, Rochester doesn't accept responsibility as a patriarch at all and there isn't any real love in their relationship.

As for the gossip and Daniel Cosway's letter, I think it shows the extent that people will go to gain an advantage over other people. Daniel Cosway's letter is destructive and not necessarily truthful in an attempt to gain money. The setting of the story is post-slavery and people are out for revenge. Using the formal Queen's English language, invoking knowledge of the Bible, all of these things could be attempts to gain confidence and manipulate for money. Deligitimizing a family that previously owned slaves or causing them chaos would be seen as a noble fight for people previously victimized by it and doing everything possible to cause conflict would also.

In the novel gossip is somewhat used as a voice for the native people to be juxtaposed against the storytellers so you know the social climate of the people, and it is one of revenge against the former slave owners in my opinion.

At what point do you think Antoinette goes mad? What are the causes of her madness? Support your answer with examples from the text.

"No one had ever spoken to me about obeah - but I knew what I would find if I dared to look." (28)

"...If the worst comes to the worst I can fight to the end though the best ones

fall and that is another song." (34)

"I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it." (41)

Antoinette's house burns down, her brother dies, their parrot dies, she is predatorily stalked and bullying after, and her mother goes insane while living separately, their family is ruined. Then the convent, all through the book she is called white cockroach. Daniel Cosway's attempt at blackmail, and her husband arranging sexual liaisons that she must witness. There are too many contributing factors to list.

I think her entire life is on a railway track to PTSD but I wouldn't call it insanity. It isn't learned helplessness either because she is confined to a patriarchal structure that is basically inescapable. "Tell your husband you feeling sick you want to visit your cousin in Martinique... When you get away, stay away." (100) but she has no money and no protection, and after witnessing so much strife from humanity already she feels confined into having to go to England, her choices are limited not by her but society. Not only that but having grown up in the Carribean she has a belief in Obeah, "You can make people lover or hate. Or... or die," Antoinette said. (102).

She's been conditioned into a role that isn't healthy.

Most "sane" people snap after even the slightest amount of stress but inflict greater amounts of stress and punishment on others, that's one of the major aspects of the patriarchal system in my opinion. For Antoinette, she lives in perpetual stress and is forced to normalize and internalize that stress, stresses like a few religious cultures, murders of her family, the emotional reverberations of a post-colonial society, being courted in a patriarchal society where she is an object to be possessed or an animal to be tamed, etc. Her aunt Cora's religious sect says that everyone not in it is in hell, perhaps Antoinette's life is an example of an innocent life living the tortures of hell.

The story reminds me of horror stories like the wicker-man, which disgusting, "folk affiliated" cult and mob mentality garbage humans still attempt to inflict on others out of "folk irony." I had a friend get murdered specifically from this and the court system turned a blind eye to it.

So to say Antoinette has gone mad wouldn't be just in my opinion. I think she's learned to internalize stress out of survival, and I think outside of complete escape from her situation, which she was never given the agency to do, revenge or death would have been her only options, with her having to suffer death. Perhaps she has a few reactions of trying to blend into the culture but I view that as making the best of a bad situation or her trying to overcome stacked cards against her, like her making a love potion, but this isn't insanity, it's a natural reaction to being faced with so much adversity, it's survival instinct and empathy.

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Yawa Sordzi

October 5 at 8:15 PM

Hi Alexander,

Thank you for your post. I agree with your description of Rochester as a

manipulator. And, I think it links up well with your explanations on the role of Daniel Cosway and the value of gossip. To me, the expression "like attracts like" is adequate to describe Daniel Cosway and Rochester. They are both self-serving egotists who behave in ways that only benefit themselves - Rochester married Antoinette for her money, and Daniel "warned" Rochester about Antoinette to extract money. In both cases, these men had no qualms about destroying the lives of those around them in order to achieve their goals.

As an aside, did you not find the tone of Daniel's letter "oily" and overly ingratiating? Maybe it's just me but it really got under my skin for some reason.

Thanks again,

Yawa

Alexander Knapik-Levert

October 19 at 6:18 PM

Well, I might have been wrong in my above post in that it's not so much of a competitive victim psychology but an internalized one from institutional abuse from the system. So when bad reactions happen it's understandable that some groups become socially toxic because they are trying to establish themselves both as individuals and as social group humans but at a huge starting disadvantage compared to the system.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Emily Petrini-Woolley

Authored on: Oct 19, 2018 5:18 PM

Subject: Module 5

Hi Alexander,

I really enjoyed reading your response regarding black feminist essentialism. I too agree that although it was very common for blacks to be treated with an immense amount of disrespect, not every single black person has had this experience. I am an black woman myself, and remind myself and others, that although my ancestors were slaves, I am not, and was never one. I don't feel it's appropriate to go around and acting like every white person is bad because of what happened in the past. Bad things do happen, but we can't be stereotypical and assume everyone has had a bad experience in life.

Thanks!

Alexander Knapik-Levert

October 19 at 2:28 PM

Christine, I kind of think the story is written by Dee/Wangero as Alice Walker after it happens because it's so introspective and retrospective. The words feel like regret and empathy to me and of learning hard life lessons.

It's interesting you say that they've gone through assimilation because it really is like a kind of factory processing that robs people of their identities a lot of the time and it's challenging to maintain an identity in a traditional home, especially as someone from a racial minority so reinvention definitely happens.

Perhaps Dee feels guilt for not being able to totally get her family out of poverty and instead ends up hiding a bit of it through her new identity which she thinks is a way of protecting herself and of protecting her individual family's identity with a larger group identity.

I agree with you that Kincaid's Girl is a story in prose of a mother teaching a

daughter how to survive and thrive in a patriarchal society as well as going against the patriarchal norm. Though I disagree with you that her mother is saying her daughter is a failure or is scolding her daughter if her daughter becomes a slut.

I think the life lessons in Kincaid's *Girl* are varied and go beyond labeling or teaching survival skills and do more with poetic license in not only teaching her daughter how to be a "good girl" but to have a good life and give a good life to others. There is definitely a moral element to her verses that go beyond foreboding mother.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Christine La

Authored on: Oct 14, 2018 5:53 PM

Subject: Module 5

Provide a sympathetic reading of Dee/Wangero's character in Walker's "Everyday Use".

I think that Dee/Wangero's character in Walker's "Everyday Use", is a representation of the historical period in which African-Americans were facing racial discrimination. The narrative is told through Dee's mother, mama, and as a reader, I think that Dee's character is how mama feels she should be viewed as, or how the family should be in their period of time. It seems that Dee's character is trying to fit into the mainstream lifestyle (American) and forget about her cultural identity and history. For instance, her change of name, her physical appearance, and her rejection of her family's culture. Moreover, I think that many immigrants do face this identity crisis and are forced to fit into the 'American' lifestyle and culture as people racialize them. Also, Aboriginal people in Canada have been through assimilation, in which they've been stripped from their identity culture and family to be educated into the "white" society. I think that Dee faced some sort of identity crisis and felt lost within her culture, so she wanted to change her appearance and name to discover her personal identity.

What is the mother's litany of chores and reprehensions to her daughter trying to accomplish in Kincaid's *Girl*?

The mother's litany of chores and reprehensions to her daughter is to set a path for her daughter's life. The mother is teaching her daughter how to be a good person (a good girl). The mother refers to her daughter as becoming a 'slut', which is determining and seems to be titling her daughter as being unknowledgable in life skills or as being a failure in her eyes. I do believe that the mother's instinct in educating her daughter is to prevent her from being labelled and judged from others when she becomes a woman. Although her mother's teachings seem like insults to her daughter, she is informing and ensuring that her daughter is prepared for her adult life and how to survive it.

Alexander Knapik-Levert

October 19 at 2:11 PM

Ruchika, ya I think it can be hard to empathize with your family when you've had a traditional upbringing and then been exposed to the modern world, and I think that is what gives Dee/Wangero some humanity but whether she absolutely grew I think is debatable. Part of the story that I enjoyed a lot was that Mama maybe hadn't been exposed to the modern world and maybe had been socially conditioned a certain way but she still had so much unconditional love for her child that she accepted and

forgave her and was tolerant of her throughout her entire life, and that speaks volumes on the entire story and juxtaposing Mama and Dee/Wangero. "I think she's wrong for allowing herself to be manipulated into a movement wherein she demonstrates how much she cares for the wellness of Black folks, all while forgetting about the Black family she has that got her to where she is." I don't think she's wrong so much as vulnerable, because having grown up in her own family of poverty while having to adapt to a different world and wanting to take care of her family at the same time and also coping with racism still being prevalent in the world, it's understandable to see that she would be looking for identities and might have been confused.

I don't think the mother berates the daughter for being a slut at all Ruchika, I think the mother is trying to actualize the daughter in a safe way when the world is so predatory towards women. I also don't think the mother's bread comments are meant to be condescending or patronizing, I think they're meant to be safe and reinforcing of a greater femininity and about not suffocating people with greed. I don't think the story is about mothers conditioning their children into patriarchal rule either but about learning to have an alternative to it, as well as coexist with it in a healthy way without having to suffer from it. I don't think the mother's comments are overbearing with the exception of cleaning clothes or salting fish correctly, I think they're responsible and I think they're meant to teach the daughter a healthy way of life.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Ruchika Gothoskar

Authored on: Oct 14, 2018 1:15 AM

Subject: Mothers and Daughters in Walker and Kincaid's Writing

2. Provide a sympathetic reading of Dee/Wangero's character in Walker's "Everyday Use."

To be honest, I'm inclined to want to dislike Dee's character, but I definitely can understand where she is coming from. Dee seemingly grows up as the most liked daughter of the household, eager to leave Maggie and Mama's antiquated views in the dust in favour for her own enlightenment. The anger, confusion, and frustration felt by Mama upon her return is warranted - Dee returns to a place she has not contributed to in years, only to start claiming things left, right, and centre as her own. However, I can sympathize with Dee's growth in the past. When your family is one that has not had the opportunity to learn in the ways you have, or grow in the same ways you have, it can be difficult to feel as though you still relate to them. With the fight for desegregation of schools and the civil rights movement of the 1970s, African-nationalism was born. This is seemingly the time period when Dee, who was college educated, where the trend originated, had a new-found outlook on her African roots - so much so that she changed her outward appearance and name. When Mama inquired on why she changed it to Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo, Dee simply replied with "She's dead. I couldn't bare it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me." The introduction to the new and "improved" Dee exemplifies the process Dee has gone through of morally separating herself from the past generations and reclaiming her "Blackness", and her identity. I don't think Dee is wrong in wanting to find herself in her ethnic and racial past - I think she's wrong for allowing herself to be manipulated into a movement wherein she demonstrates how much she cares for the wellness of Black folks, all while forgetting about the Black family she has that got her to where she is.

3. What is the mother's litany of chores and reprehensions to her daughter trying to accomplish in Kincaid's "Girl"?

A quick aside: this piece made my stomach churn - so many beautiful, important

lessons packed into 650 words! Moving on -- I felt that this poem, though harsh, was a beautiful exemplification of the difficulty of a mother daughter relationship, and the strain it may go through because of outside factors. Kincaid's Girl touches on the impossible difficulty of femininity, living under the patriarchy, sexuality, colonialism, and more. It seems like the mother is piling on chores and rules that she believes are correct from young women, chores that are often relegated to the female of the house in the future, so it reads like the mother thinks she's doing her daughter a favour. Though the daughter's voice can only be heard twice in the story it may be important that when she speaks her mother disregards what the daughter has said. It is as though the mother is imposing her will on her daughter. Through this, Kincaid may be suggesting that the following of tradition is fine (women cooking, cleaning, going to church, getting married), but an individual still needs to be allowed to have their independence. This onslaught of chores and rules may seem like a good idea to the mother, with some having their merit -- like how to cook fish to lower its salt content and how to properly clean clothes -- but ultimately, the mom comes off as overbearing and unnecessarily harsh towards her daughter who is still learning the ways of life. She refers to her daughter as a ♦slut♦ as she is giving these instructions, even though there is no sign of the daughter promiscuity, let alone her even realizing her sexuality. She berates her for singing benna in Sunday school, though the daughter hasn't even done so -- the mother is just being presumptuous because that's the type of girl she sees her daughter to be. Although the mother's approach could be seen as abusive, or as bullying, she is seemingly preparing her daughter not only for wifely duties but to be appealing for the outer world. When her daughter naively asks if the baker would let her feel the bread, her mother replies ♦after all, you are really going to be the kind of women who the baker won't let near the bread?♦ implying that the mother feels like she's taught her these things for no reason, if the daughter still thinks she's the ♦type of woman♦ who won't be allowed to squeeze bread. All in all - a fascinating piece about how mothers groom their daughters into the same submissive patriarchal rule, just because it's what they know.

#### Module 5

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Oct 18, 2018 11:20 AM Subscribed

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"1.) In the essay on our course syllabus, hooks finds fault with a kind of black feminist essentialism. What is your understanding of this term and hooks' rejection of it?

"My story was reduced to a competing narrative, one that was seen as trying to divert attention from the 'true' telling of black female experience. In this gathering, black female identity was made synonymous again and again with 'victimization'".

"A particular brand of black feminist 'essentialism' had been constructed in that place. It would not allow for difference. Any individual present who was seen as having inappropriate thoughts or lingering traces of politically incorrect ideas was the target for unmediated hostility,"

(Revolutionary Black Women: Making Ourselves Subject\* - Bell Hooks).

I find Hook's idea of black feminist essentialism to be a description of toxic competitive victim ideology, where the idea of being a victim becomes a power status symbol and is used more for elitism than for empathy, compassion, healing, nurturing, actually doing altruistic things for society, etc.

In this way being a victim becomes, even more, victimizing for some and for others it can become totally false because there is so much ego involved in giving "the best victim testimony" it overshadows the experiences of others who have been victimized themselves.



"At the dose of this gathering, many black women gave testimony about how this had been a wonderful experience of sisterhood and black woman-bonding. There was no space for those individuals whose spirits had been assaulted and attacked to name their experience. Ironically, they were leaving this gathering with a sense of estrangement, carrying with them remembered pain," (Revolutionary Black Women: Making Ourselves Subject\* - Bell Hooks).

If people are leaving these meetings having been revictimized or victimized separately by the group itself, it shows a toxic social dynamic that is void of unconditional love and caring for all victims and more into a competition of the best identity.

The idea that there is only one correct notion of victimhood or black feminist identity that is essential, doesn't help victims be heard and creates a supremacy aspect to victimhood.

Bell goes on to say,

"Essentialist perspectives on black womanhood often perpetuate the false assumption that black females, simply by living in white supremacist! capitalist! patriarchy, are radicalized. They do not encourage black women to develop their critical thinking. Individual black women on the Left often find their desire to read or write 'theory', to be engaged in critical dialogues with diverse groups, mocked and ridiculed. Often, I am criticized for studying feminist theory, especially writing by white women. And I am seen as especially 'naive' when I suggest that even though a white woman theorist may be 'racist', she may also have valuable information that I can learn from,"(Revolutionary Black Women: Making Ourselves Subject\* - Bell Hooks).

Which in my opinion shows that having a more open and accepting perspective only helps victims and everyone in their understanding of each other and the world.

2.) Provide a sympathetic reading of Dee/Wangero's character in Walker's  
Everyday Use.

Dee is a young woman coming into her own out of a life of poverty with the support of her family in a society built on the discrimination and slavery of black people. She is strong but she's had to fight to earn her strength and intellect in a society where those privileges are given to sycophantic competitive people who are much more coddled than her. She knows this so perhaps that's what makes her more driven in establishing herself but it also makes her extremely human.

Dee is embarrassed of her family but not to the point she doesn't care. She is young and knows that her family is from poverty and is against the white patriarchal society that surrounds it. Dee doesn't bring her "friends" to the house perhaps because she wants to save her family from being shamed by what her friends would consider "normal." Her family isn't even aware if she has "friends" this is probably because she doesn't really have true friends but more like people that want something from her or pigeon-hole her in an identity and Dee may be keeping her friends away from her family to protect her family from systemic ridicule and herself from investing in friendships that aren't true. This is a smart attitude in my opinion. Dee tries to make the best of her situation regardless and is determined to see her family no matter what.

Dee comes back to the house as Wangero' having reinvented herself. She brings Asalamalakim with her and they take photos of Mama and Maggie. Maybe this is written as a bit of a condescending behavior but Wangero really does want the best for her family in that she is trying to preserve memories of them in the way she

knows how, while also preserving herself in what she views is a socially insulated identity, "being Wangero".

As Wangero, Dee is more able to identify with a historical culture and her family through her new identity, "Wangero, though, went on through the chitlins and com bread, the greens and everything else. She talked a blue streak over the sweet potatoes. Everything delighted her. Even the fact that we still used the benches her daddy made for the table when we couldn't effort to buy chairs," (Everyday Use - Alice Walker). She also remarks that Maggie's brain is like an elephants' in that she has an extremely long memory.

Both identities are trying to make the best out of a bad situation and I think that is what makes them the most human, especially the entire story of Alice Walker, who uses all the identities to make a representative picture of the social intelligence systems in patriarchal society that inhibit people.

3.) What is the mother's litany of chores and reprehensions to her daughter trying to accomplish in Kincaid's "Girl"?

Alright, I think the litany of what I'd call verse is Kincaid trying to help her daughter craft an identity in society that is actualized. Kincaid doesn't slut shame to the extent where she is forbidding behavior instead she embraces the slut identity while simultaneously trying to protect her daughter from the pitfalls of being labeled a slut. She's very aware of what are supposed to be "normalized" social behaviors and teaches her daughter those behaviors defensively and protectively while also teaching her daughter that she can fight back and bully a man back or love a man as well. She teaches an appreciation of heritage with different and various recipes, and traditions.

There is sexual innuendo in a lot of the work, "this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don't squat down to play marbles; you are not a boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers; you might catch something; don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all;" (Jamaica Kincaid - Girl) and I think it is meant to cover up social taboos as well as the rest of her writing on close reading.

"this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea; this is how you set a table for dinner; this is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest;" (Jamaica Kincaid - Girl).

Perhaps using poetic license here the statement isn't only about sweeping the house but also about "cleaning house" as people call it, socially. In that, it could be interpreted as, this is how you socially beat people using context and strong social skills; this is how you cope with people who challenge you, this is how you deal with people that hate you, this is how to appreciate people, this is how you nuance you interactions with important people.

This is how the mother is not only teaching the daughter how to survive but how to thrive.

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Emily Petrini-Woolley  
October 19 at 5:18 PM  
Hi Alexander,

I really enjoyed reading your response regarding black feminist essentialism. I too agree that although it was very common for blacks to be treated with an immense amount of disrespect, not every single black person has had this experience. I am an black woman myself, and remind myself and others, that although my ancestors were slaves, I am not, and was never one. I don't Feel it's appropriate to go around and acting like every white person is bad because of what happened In the past. Bad things do happen, but we can't be stereotypical and assume everyone has had a bad experience in life.

Thanks!

Alexander Knapik-Levert  
October 19 at 6:18 PM

Well, I might have been wrong in my above post in that it's not so much of a competitive victim psychology but an internalized one from institutional abuse from the system. So when bad reactions happen it's understandable that some groups become socially toxic because they are trying to establish themselves both as individuals and as social group humans but at a huge starting disadvantage compared to the system.

<<< Replied to post below >>>  
Authored by: Emily Petrini-Woolley  
Authored on: Oct 19, 2018 5:18 PM  
Subject: Module 5

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I really enjoyed reading your response regarding black feminist essentialism. I too agree that although it was very common for blacks to be treated with an immense amount of disrespect, not every single black person has had this experience. I am an black woman myself, and remind myself and others, that although my ancestors were slaves, I am not, and was never one. I don't Feel it's appropriate to go around and acting like every white person is bad because of what happened In the past. Bad things do happen, but we can't be stereotypical and assume everyone has had a bad experience in life.

Thanks!

Taia Postolati  
October 19 at 10:35 PM  
Hi Alexander,

You make some great observations in your answers. I think all three essays portray people who are formulating their identities and trying to think of themselves in a new way, beyond a slave master relationship. It seems to me that black essentialism and black nationalism identities are similar in that they are both rigidly defined, one dimensional and very exclusive identity paradigms. There is no middle ground, you either are or aren't a "victim" or a "proud African descendant". Kindacid on the other hand shows her daughter a more nuanced reality; acknowledging the

existence of gender and racial stereotypes while making provisions for dealing with life's many surprises.

Alexander Knapik-Levert

October 26 at 1:18 PM

" I believe that we unfortunately cannot get away from the binary oppositional thinking. Everything has to be compared to something else. That's the way it has always been, and I don't see any changes anytime soon. Some oppositions that I hear almost everyday is white/black, skinny/fat, and strong/weak. It seems that it not socially acceptable to be black or fat, or ♦weak♦. But why is this? Why do we always have to compare things? Sadly, I really don't know the answer to this but I do think that our society is very stereotypical and judgemental and therefore, is never satisfied. Grouping things into different categories seems to provide people with a way to judge each other. Having a world where everyone and thing is valued as equal, is merely just a dream. "

Honestly, it cant all be just a dream because eugenics is a real movement still in Canada to this day.

I dont think it has to be something totally science based where all people start as uniform and then get changed through customization. There is a way to accept everyone and let everyone enjoy society, but it definitely is a battle against a corrupt establishment that does not value grey thinking.

Because of this I'd say its not that I disagree with you that an equal society is a dream society, it's that I empathize with you and also all the people that don't get to enjoy society as much as those "born to" that I'd rather sit out or at least go down with the ship fighting.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Emily Petrini-Woolley

Authored on: Oct 22, 2018 2:45 PM

Subject: Week 6

Can you give examples of literary or popular culture texts (books, films, songs, poems, and so on) in which the female character or figure exists primarily to fulfill a need in the male character or protagonist rather than as an independent, fully realized character in her own right? Why do you think these kinds of texts are still being produced?

When thinking about a movie that has the female character playing a role where they are submissive to the man, the protagonist, I think of them movie ♦Room♦. In this movie, the male character captures the girl at a young age, and keeps her in his shed. He captured her for purely sexual pleasure, and rapes her on many different occasions. She lives in the shed for many years, and has a child with her sexual predator. The woman hides the child away whenever the man is around. The man did not care about the well being of the woman or the child that he created. He left them alone all day, left them with hardly anything to eat or drink and on one occasion, the power was cut off, and the mother and son were left freezing. The only thing he cared about, was the physical side of things that he got when he came home at night, when the child was sleeping. All he needed to do was speak about the child, and the mother would distract the man by allowing him to have sexual relations with her. He would often get very angry, and her submission was the only way to relax him, and would distract him from seeing the child. I believe these types of movies are still produced, to demonstrate how awful women are still being portrayed, in hopes that real change can happen. This woman did not choose to be captured or have a child with this man, but of course, men get what they want. Men are still considered to be superior, and in order for women to have a purpose in life, they must obey their masters/husbands.

Cixous discusses the limitations of organizing our world through binary oppositions: male/female, culture/nature, reason/madness etc. In each set of oppositions the first term is privileged over the other, thus creating uneven power relations. Do you believe that we cannot get away from this kind of binary oppositional thinking? Can we organize our comprehension of the world without relying on this type of approach? Suggest ways of doing so.

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Honestly, I do not feel that we can get away from this type of comprehension of this world. Our society is too cruel, is gender and culturally derogatory. That's the way it's always been, so many would say, why bother changing it? I am currently taking a history course, and even in the 1800s, people organized the world through binary oppositions. It's very sad, but something that I just have to accept.

Unread post

Pooyah Kathirgamanathan

October 26 at 9:51 PM Last edited: Friday, October 26, 2018 9:52 PM EDT

Hey Emily,

I also think that men are still considered dominant over women. Women are still being portrayed as being dependent on a man and to fulfill his needs. I think the movie *Room* is a great example of male dominance where we see the women being treated poorly to the point where she has to obey what her capturer says in order to save her child from him. The media industry is also very male dominated which is also another reason why women are portrayed in the media as objects to men.

Great Post!

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Emily Petrini-Woolley

Authored on: Oct 22, 2018 2:45 PM

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occasion, the power was cut off, and the mother and son were left freezing. The only thing he cared about, was the physical side of things that he got when he came home at night, when the child was sleeping. All he needed to do was speak about the child, and the mother would distract the man by allowing him to have sexual relations with her. He would often get very angry, and her submission was the only way to relax him, and would distract him from seeing the child. I believe these types of movies are still produced, to demonstrate how awful women are still being portrayed, in hopes that real change can happen. This woman did not choose to be captured or have a child with this man, but of course, men get what they want. Men are still considered to be superior, and in order for women to have a purpose in life, they must obey their masters/husbands.

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I believe that we unfortunately cannot get away from the binary oppositional thinking. Everything has to be compared to something else. That's the way it has always been, and I don't see any changes anytime soon. Some oppositions that I hear almost everyday is white/black, skinny/fat, and strong/weak. It seems that it not socially acceptable to be black or fat, or weak. But why is this? Why do we always have to compare things? Sadly, I really don't know the answer to this but I do think that our society is very stereotypical and judgemental and therefore, is never satisfied. Grouping things into different categories seems to provide people with a way to judge each other. Having a world where everyone and thing is valued as equal, is merely just a dream.

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Unread post

Alyssa Oddi

October 26 at 11:20 PM

Hey Emily, this is insane! When I was typing up my response to the module, I read the first question, and the first thing that popped into my head was the novel, Room! I remember reading it at a younger age, maybe 14 or 15, and feeling incredibly disturbed. Not only by the sick and disgusting way in which Ma was held captive, but in the way that she was treated. Old Nick looked at her as though she was nothing, as if she wasn't anyone's daughter, sister, friend. He stole her life away, and did not even consider how her entire being would deteriorate. He thought she was put on this earth to satisfy his twisted desires. You have a point, these sorts of plots are still being produced to this day, because so many people still see men as the dominant gender, and feel like women are supposed to subject to them. Great response!

Alyssa

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Alexander Knapik-Levert

October 26 at 1:15 PM

I always thought Pepper pots took care of Iron Man in a way that was really healthy

compared to his self-destructive behavior. I wouldn't have minded seeing her side of the story with him as a secondary character. Or her even becoming her own Super Hero herself.

" It seems that in most cases, woman characters are portrayed as not having their individual mindset, and are always following the leads of men, and supporting them in their decisions. "

I agree that this is a large aspect of the patriarchy that can't be ignored and should be undone by revision.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Christine La

Authored on: Oct 20, 2018 10:28 PM

Subject: Module 6

Can you give examples of literary or popular culture texts (books, films, songs, poems, and so on) in which the female character or figure exists primarily to fulfill a need in the male character or protagonist rather than as an independent, fully realized character in her own right? Why do you think these kinds of texts are still being produced?

An example of a film such as Iron Man, as the film revolves around (main character) Tony Starks' life, and his under-covered superhero identity as Iron Man. In the film, it is evidence that Pepper (assistant, and love interest of Iron Man) is in Tony Starks'/Iron Man's life. She is loyal, supportive, and shows her worries whenever his life becomes in danger. She plays a character who is an assistant, and love interest of Stark's/Iron Man, who shows her support in most of his decisions, and is loving towards him, as she fears for his life once he is in danger, or is fighting a villain character. I think in this case of the film/comic, the creation of having Pepper as Stark's/Iron Man's love interest, and his personal assistance, is to display that he is "living" his life to the fullest, as he is a known superhero, CEO of his own company, genius, and has a girlfriend who loves, and cares about him.

Another example is the cartoon show George Shrinks, as there is a family consisting of an aunt, mother, father, younger brother, and George (the main character), and his friend/neighbour (Becky). Each episode of the show consists of a different story line that involves the lead of George, solving a problem. I believe in almost or in all of the episodes, his friend/neighbour, Becky, joins him and his family on an adventure, in solving the problem that occurs within the episode. Becky seems as a loyal friend to the family, most importantly to George, as she assists him in his struggles, and cares about him when he is in danger, or is injured. As a result, like Pepper's character in the Iron Man film, Becky is a female supporting character to the male protagonist. Both female characters are by the protagonists' side, and in their lives when they are in danger, or need assistance, but the story line does not revolve around the female characters. In society, women are portrayed as being the "caregiver" of the family, or the relationship, so women characters in films, and books are portraying the role.

Discuss the term ♦the Other♦ as you understand it from de Beauvoir's text and how it functions in Jean Rhys♦ Wide Sargasso Sea.

In Simone de Beauvoir's "Of women in five authors" text, she discusses the history of females in society, and the way females are viewed by males and within society. She writes that women are considered as being "the other", whereas men are viewed as a dominant, or superior in society. She explores the texts that were written by the five authors, to further explain the portrayal, and role of women. For instance, she analyzes the author's text, such as D.H. Lawrence's, and she mentions that the author respects the woman in the text, as the woman character gives

herself for the sake of the man, the hero. It is evidence that the woman character in Lawrence's text is also living/supporting the male protagonist, as she is willing to sacrifice herself for him. It seems that in most cases, woman characters are portrayed as not having their individual mindset, and are always following the leads of men, and supporting them in their decisions.

I think in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, "the Other" functions in the character of Antoinette, as after her madness behaviour begins to display, many characters including the servants, and her husband, neglect her and imprison her due to her behavior. Antoinette's character seems to be viewed as "different" or "the other" than other characters because she has a family history of madness behaviours, and people believe that it is in her genetics. Likewise, I believe that it is assumed that Antoinette is viewed as being "others" in her relationship with her husband, and her life within her home (with her servants, and others around her).

Unread post  
Emily Petrini-Woolley  
October 26 at 6:13 PM  
Hi Christine,

It's such a shame that still in this day in age, men are considered to be more superior than women. Just the other day, I was outside using a chainsaw, to cut down some branches off a tree. My male neighbour came over to me and asked what I was doing using a chainsaw, and immediately started to take over and said, ♦you can♦ do this, I♦ll do it♦. I was very frustrated and appalled that he felt comfortable enough to come over and tell me I shouldn♦ be doing that type of work. Women are just as strong as men. Some recognition would be nice!

Module 6

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Oct 26, 2018 1:08 PM Subscribed

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1.) Can you give examples of literary or popular culture texts (books, films, songs, poems, and so on) in which the female character or figure exists primarily to fulfill a need in the male character or protagonist rather than as an independent, fully realized character in her own right? Why do you think these kinds of texts are still being produced?

The support character trope is definitely still around EVERYWHERE. I don't think it's going to change because many women from my generation are very proud of their supplemental status or decide to glorify it as their nature while denying wanting to actually get involved with harder more technical work. I think Feminism even suffers from this bias sometimes by blaming everything in society but women. Sometimes it really is women not wanting to do a STEM degree that prevents them from getting a STEM degree, sometimes women do want the guy with a larger penis that is the Young Bull from *Wide Sargasso Sea* even if he is a Donald Trump manipulative scum bag that abuses society, sometimes people would rather give into base human nature than try to overcome and challenge society to its core, and that sucks but that's reality.

An example I can give is any video done by Anita Sarkeesian in the last decade on youtube. Basically, the entire world is driven by the patriarchal idea of women as supporting characters. Anita uses something called the Bechdel Test <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLF6sAAMb4s> "The Bechdel Test is a simple way to gauge the active presence of female characters in Hollywood films and just how well rounded and complete those roles are. It was created by Allison Bechdel in her comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For* in 1985. It is astonishing the number of popular movies that can't pass this simple test. It demonstrates how little women's complex



and interesting lives are underrepresented or non-existent in the film industry. We have jobs, creative projects, friendships and struggles among many other things that are actually interesting in our lives... so Hollywood, start writing about it!"

Basically, every Bourne Identity film has some supporting character that's a woman nursing him but not really being the star hero herself.

The stereotype probably still exists for many reasons.

- Feminists that want to topple the patriarchy are a minority.

- Beating down the establishment is more than hard.

- Some women support the establishment (see women for trump/douglas/harper/kavanaugh's wife, etc for further example).

Perhaps waiting 50 years for technology to force a more secular society is the only option though I'm hoping Elizabeth Warren gets elected or Bernie Sanders and some radical changes get forced on people for their own good.

2.) Cixous discusses the limitations of organizing our world through binary oppositions: male/female, culture/nature, reason/madness etc. In each set of oppositions, the first term is privileged over the other, thus creating uneven power relations. Do you believe that we cannot get away from this kind of binary oppositional thinking? Can we organize our comprehension of the world without relying on this type of approach? Suggest ways of doing so.

Nuance and thinking in grey is definitely the best approach but so many people reject it outright. I don't have a particularly large penis, the women I've been with want a guy with a whopper, my choice is to put up with an emotionally unfulfilling emotional love life where I get "cucked" or to not have sex, or to date someone I know doesn't have the type of anterior fornix orgasms they want because I'm smaller than average.

Is my only solution there to be celibate? Am I unevolved because I didn't take massive amounts of growth hormone as a kid? Should I kill myself because I am wasted genetic material?

I don't really know the answer and picking the lesser of the evils really is terrible, or having to rely solely on sex toys. I think a part of feminism being anti-establishment and new is that it is an uphill battle with a lot of sacrifices involved and that's what I take comfort in. The idea that in the future my experiences won't happen to others and that the system will get better.

I think transcending the binary thinking is one option but it's a road that is extremely difficult. Had I been on growth hormone as a kid and teenager I'd have been a big jock and a feminist but I probably wouldn't have empathized with people who weren't like me to the degree I'd self-sacrifice for them or be a human shield. I may have walked around with the idea of "can't save everyone," which I think is robotic and strange at best. Instead I have the view that "you can save everyone or you can die trying." Which is what helps me sleep at night when I do screw up which I have many times.

I don't think humanity can continue to get away with binary thinking, but that doesn't mean that a huge amount of people will try.

3.) Discuss the term ♦the Other♦ as you understand it from de Beauvoir's text and

how it functions in Jean Rhys♦ Wide Sargasso Sea.

I believe the Other is the person that is juxtaposed with the One, or support characters to main characters, submissive to dominant etc. I think Beauvoir discusses the Other as something that must have its own identity to become more than "The one" or the patriarchy. Here's a Wikipedia quote, " She finds that woman is "the privileged Other", that Other is defined in the "way the One chooses to posit himself", [30] and writes that, "But the only earthly destiny reserved to the woman equal, child-woman, soul sister, woman-sex, and female animal is always man." [31] Beauvoir writes that, "The absence or insignificance of the female element in a body of work is symptomatic... it loses importance in a period like ours in which each individual's particular problems are of secondary import."

I think that because the One is always the masculine dominant figure that women must somehow play by the rules of the frame of the patriarchy and I think this is wrong because there are other options than patriarchal rule.

Wide Sargasso Sea shows this the most because it shows a woman's perspective as she is railroaded through a patriarchal society and colony revolution.

The entire loss of her home, of her family, and her life, is secondary to this patriarchal notion of violence being needed for revolution. It really shows to me how much more the animal side of humanity is valued than the logical or empathetic one.

Personally having been a victim of the system more than several times now I believe the best approach will be if both sexes transcend it together instead of fighting against i.e. feminism vs patriarchy. One of the ways I most enjoy seeing gain populism is Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders anti-establishment politics.

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Laura Nahmias

October 26 at 9:48 PM

Hi Alexander,

I agree with you in terms of how you conveyed the fact that some people still do wish to conform to the status of being subservient to males and and pride themselves on their supplemental status. I do think though this is because they fall subject to society's ideals; it is hard to overcome a societal norm when this is the norm they have been instilled with at such a young age, being bombarded with novels, films, popular culture that repeatedly convey this same message. People need to justify their actions in order to feel at ease in their life decisions; which is why many women use the coping mechanism of projecting a sense of pride and fulfillment carrying out this role; or they truly do feel this way. I do think it is very easy to disregard some females as doing this to themselves because it goes far beyond this, the environment one grows up in plays a huge role in the person one becomes.

Laura

Alexander Knapik-Levert

November 2 at 9:21 PM

Ya Christine, it's easy to see Melanie has very girlish ideals in the gender stereotypical way of life and men and romance. I think it's disturbing though that

instead of confronting these directly though she chooses the complacency route and ends up being fully conditioned into that psychology and social mask at the end of the novel. Juxtaposed with Jane Eyre, where Jane actually runs away or makes discerning choices or Wide Saragossa Sea where Antoinette is basically railroaded into her life path by class war, The Magic Toyshop has that much more sinister evil in it where the corrupt system is normalized and enticing. This reminds me exactly of real life, for example, to get the first woman president society would have to continue to sell itself out to big banks and corporations, while Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders get demonized on the same level as "communist despots" Kim Jong Il etc. It really shows a false dichotomy of choice where everything is framed as the lesser of two evils and nothing is ever fathomed as actually good vs evil or selfless good.

This book disturbs me for many reasons specifically the eugenics angle which you seem to be supportive of in your discerning of extraordinary men or Finn.

I'm not sure what an extraordinary man looks like anymore but I know they wouldn't support being categorized as that while so many people are stuck as others.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Christine La

Authored on: Oct 30, 2018 1:14 PM

Subject: Module 7

1. Is Aunt Margaret's silence an indication of her oppression or an act of resistance?

I think that Aunt Margaret's silence is an indication of her oppression. Readers are able to distinguish the type of personality and character that Uncle Philip is when it comes to his wife (Margaret), and her two brothers, and Melanie. I believe that the abuse occurs often in the family, that Margaret has become accustomed with his behaviour. Her husband's abusive, and controlling behaviour towards everyone in the family is a real representation of him treating them as his toys or 'puppets', having everyone under his control/power. It seems that the abuse she lives with is the main cause of her silenced, as her husband mistreats, and abuses everyone in the family as well. She is in the hands of him, as she is married to him, which I think indicates to her, that she cannot disobey her husband. To specify, it was mentioned by her brother, Finn, that Philip had gifted Margaret a collar-like necklace as their wedding present. The collar is a physical representation of her husband's oppressive force towards her, and as Margaret wears the collar, it is revealed that in her eyes, she is dealing with anxiety, sadness, and is not proud of the position and life that is she is living in, but she remains silence.

2. Give specific examples of Melanie's romantic imagination, and discuss how her romantic view of the world is eroded in the course of the novel.

It is evident that Melanie is growing into a young woman, as she tries on her mother's wedding gown during the absent of her parents. Prior to Melanie wearing her mother's wedding gown, she finds herself using the sheer curtains as a wedding dress, and imagines herself through the eyes of a man, her imaginary husband. She is discovering the world of romance, and is role-playing as a bride. Also, she has envisions of her dream man, she believes that she will never be with a real man, as she only received a wet kiss from Finn. Melanie hopes to find a man that is extraordinary, as she does not see in Finn.

Alexander Knapik-Levert

November 2 at 9:00 PM

Emily, I agree and I also thought it was way worse than Melanie being in a dreamland or the perfect man not existing and more about the total addiction to objectification that comes with participating in patriarchal society.

It's like these characters renounced their empathetic qualities in favor of a hallmark card style romantic dream that was built off material possessions or living in fear and obedience.

I don't think there was really a realization that sometimes fighting back and losing is better than being complacent and winning at the cost of everyone else losing.

There didn't seem to be a moral that when you win by conquest or complacency while other people suffer it isn't just and it isn't healthy. Then again many people are able to block out that kind of empathetic reaction and are much happier to own a nice car to commute 20 minutes to work while some people starve, or to own the newest nicest clothes while some other person lives on the streets.

There was probably a subtextual tone to the story trying to convey that living in the toyshop was wrong but I honestly found it to be not as conducive to showing how wrong it is to live in that kind of society compared to Jane Eyre or Wide Saragossa Sea.

Parts of this book really disgusted me.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Emily Petrini-Woolley

Authored on: Oct 29, 2018 1:26 PM

Subject: Module 7

Is Aunt Margaret's silence an indication of her oppression or an act of resistance?

I believe that Aunt Margaret's silence is in fact an indication of her oppression. To begin, she doesn't really have a choice about when her and Uncle Phillip make love. On Sunday's, she must wear the tight and uncomfortable necklace, and have sexual encounters with Phillip. For some reason, he finds pleasure in making her suffer with the necklace. He actually ♦[gazes] at her with expressionless satisfaction♦ (Carter 12). Interpret this quote to mean that Phillip is well aware that he is being submissive, but he truly doesn't care. As long as he is happy and satisfied, that's all that matters. At the time this book was published (1967), it was the norm and expectation for males to control and own their women, so I believe that throughout the novel, Aunt Margaret accepted this behaviour from Phillip, because that's the way she thought every woman was treated. Further, since Margaret no longer speaks and instead communicates through writing, she portrays that Phillip and men in general, are oppressive because she has no say in her life. She must obey Phillip at all costs. If she was to resist this oppressive behaviour, then she would not have remained silent through the novel, and would have expressed her true feelings.

Give specific examples of Melanie's romantic imagination, and discuss how her romantic view of the world is eroded in the course of the novel

In this novel, Melanie seemed to be in dream land. She really fascinated over specific romantic things. An example of this is when she kisses the man, Finn. Instead of being happy with the kiss she just had, it seemed like she was expecting more from Finn. Since she had received ♦wet kisses♦ (Carter 107) from Finn, she feared that she would never get a real kiss, as she had imagined in her head. What If all she ever got was wet kisses? I bet she wouldn't feel accomplished in her life, until she received a true kiss, as she has imagined many times before. Of course, a real kiss could never come from Finn. Further Melanie seemed very critical of a Finn and demonstrated that she could never be happy with him, because of the way that he presents himself. For me, I feel that Melanie is looking for a

Prince Charming, which certainly does not fit into Finn's description. She is frustrated that she hasn't found the right man, and comes across to be very picky and snobby. Little does she know; the perfect man does not exist!

#### Module 7

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Nov 2, 2018 8:54 PM Subscribed

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1.) Is Aunt Margaret's silence an indication of her oppression or an act of resistance?

I think Aunt Margaret's silence is both an act of resistance and telegraphing of her oppression. She doesn't give in to participating fully in the patriarchal family system of manipulation and puppetry of Philip because she doesn't vocally participate in it. Something is tangibly different about her actions to Melanie who is new to the whole thing but at the same time, Margaret isn't able to fully rebel against the entire situation for whatever reason. Margaret leaves just enough to give evidence of her oppression and victimhood but not enough to destroy it all, or self-sacrifice for the greater good. I think this is even more tangible with the fact that she's had an incestuous relationship with her brother. Perhaps she's been totally corrupted as an object, objectified to the point of becoming an object herself, and her silence is both a symbol of how internalized her oppression is as well as how much she's tried to fight back but has become powerless to do so both by her own doing and the society's she lives in. Aunt Margaret speaks at the end of the novel but the house is set on fire destroying it. I'm not sure if this is meant to show that she's now free from the patriarchal structure or that in the end by being passive until the very last moment she was destroyed by it as well.

2.) Give specific examples of Melanie's romantic imagination, and discuss how her romantic view of the world is eroded in the course of the novel.

I thought Melanie's idea of romance was imaginative in a very purist idealistic girlish way. She wears her mother's wedding dress, wanders in the garden at night, dreams of being married, her biggest worry is forgetting her key to get in her house. By the end of the story, she's worried about having hot water, about the responsibilities and issues of having a family, she sees Philip's toyshop with the dismembered puppets and has experienced life in the unromantic way, she's seen her Aunt Margaret's social mask where she only writes instead of vocalizing because she's been turned into an object so absolutely, she's learned to fake social hegemonic social interactions with Finn to protect herself and him from retribution physical and mentally. The tone of the narration even changes over the course of the book with the initial narration having a subtext that is really kind of innocently lewd, with the middle using more graphical sexualized subtext and parts of the ending getting so graphic that they're more grotesque.

I didn't use specific quotes because this novel is so dynamic, its limiting to robotically say this happened here and is absolute when it changes in the next chapter. I found Melanie remained romantic and conditioned into a gender role for the entire novel. She still thought of the dresses as pretty and was willing to dole out an ugly one to her Aunt who was objectified. I think in the end she became a puppeteer herself and joined the patriarchal hegemony, choosing not to totally let go of her romantic notions but instead becoming more jaded and furthering her idealization of objectification. The last page Finn worries about his jacket and Melanie about her bear, and there is more language using long descriptors of objects and adjectives to describe the objects that are lost in the fire.

To me, it only means that these characters got trapped in the patriarchy and weren't able to value the humanity of each other over the inherent materialism that was being used to manipulate them in the first place. This is exactly like real

life and capitalism.

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Yawa Sordzi

November 2 at 11:18 PM

Hi Alexander,

Your post was very thought provoking. Your analysis of the duality that is Aunt Margaret is something I hadn't thought of. My mind works in either/or, black/white fashion. So I never thought that perhaps Aunt Margaret's could be seen as a combination of both sides of the oppression/resistance continuum.

I'm a big believer in symbolism. For me, fire has been seen as a catharsis in many of the items we've read so far. I want to believe that the fire that destroyed her house was also what liberated Margaret. It almost feels like there should be a follow up book on what happens to these characters in the absence of their "puppet master".

Thank you for your post,

Yawa

Alexander Knapik-Levert

November 9 at 10:09 PM

Hey Alexandra, I enjoyed your post and the rest of the group's posts too. Especially the posts illuminating the male gaze aspect of the book, or how Finn used a peephole, or Uncle Phillip's use of mirrors to try to be an omniscient presence of control by spying on everyone at once.

I think examples like those are so important in trying to understand and conceptualize that the entirety of patriarchal society is built in such a way, whether it's from the conditioning of the male gaze as normal, objectification, consumer culture, patriarchal binary gender roles, or even the now somewhat exposed security state, where our entire lives are recorded or filtered in some way.

I think that the human examples of how these types of behaviors infect people even on smaller levels like through the creation and use of puppets in plays, or patriarchal socialization and family dynamics, or even conditioning young people into these kinds of social roles, all contribute to the type of internalization of patriarchal society, and the psychological schema of normalizing it. Which I really found to be in my face with the use of descriptive laden language in the magic Toyshop which had so many adjectives and visual imagery constantly.

It bothers me that this social normalization is so established in society as the norm and that to free people of it in multiple books down the characters have had to live through the burning down of their homes and destruction with fire.

It's scary and sad to me that destruction and rebirth seems to be the only way for people to realistically get out of the patriarchy. Though I do think democratic peaceful changes are possible, there's just so much opposition to it even at this point in history that some kind of cultural "new lands" or "grand awakening" as Trudeau says has to take place.

Thx for your comment.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Alexandra Fainblum

Authored on: Nov 8, 2018 1:00 PM

Subject: Updated: Module 8

1.

There are many examples throughout the Magic Toyshop that help demonstrate how the characters are constantly being watched or watching others. The first instance involves Melanie and ♦watching♦ when she ♦knelt down and put her eye to the keyhole♦♦, in order to spy on Margaret and Francie. The significance of sight imagery is further demonstrated when she describes what she sees through the keyhole, ♦Aunt Margaret (sat) perched on an upright chair smiling like an angel...her hair was loose and hung on her shoulders, a burning bush...face was skim milk, a bluish white, against her flaming hair♦. The embracement that she sees between these two characters (Margaret and Francie), is symbolic to her desire to experience this type of loving relationship as well. Furthermore, Uncle Phillip♦s control over Aunt Margaret can be interpreted as his way of watching over her. One example of his need to dominate and control is when he forces his wife to wear the necklace. Although in this situation she is aware of being watched, it's his way of never losing sight of her.

2.

After reading and analyzing the text, I believe that the ♦new lands♦ that Melanie discovers are her overall self-discovery as she matures and grows into a young woman. This is apparent both in her physical development and internally as well. This growth is largely evident when comparing her relationships from the beginning of the text, to the end. As readers embark further into the story, Melanie♦s ability to handle relationships becomes much more significant. She is able to better understand situations and make more impactful decisions (by keeping her feelings in mind). Lastly, the module elaborates on Melanie♦s new land discovery through a man♦s perspective, as they may view her as the "new land" at the beginning of the text.

Unread post

Simrah Ali

November 9 at 11:54 PM

Hey Alexandra,

Great post; I completely agree with what you said about Melanie finding new lands as an analogy for discovering herself and her maturing body.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

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Authored on: Nov 8, 2018 1:00 PM

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Alexander Knapik-Levert

November 9 at 9:44 PM

Thanks for your comment Christine,

Perhaps when Melanie is saying "Oh my America my new found land" it's meant to be ironic and jaded, as if the freedom she has found has been built on strife and turmoil much like America had to fight for independence from colonization.

It reads more like a grim reality to me than some kind of happy enthusiastic cheer of freedom.

The control of patriarchal society or Philip's collaring and objectification is still there in that the people involved in that society even when trying to achieve freedom are still tied to the machinations of achieving that freedom to begin with.

For women this might have been defying the gender/sex norm of not being destructive or violent and having to actively combat the toxic system just to achieve their freedom from it.

In that way all people are controlled because they have to take on the role of being a combatant or a soldier at some point.

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Christine La

Authored on: Nov 5, 2018 9:42 PM

Subject: Module 8

1. Characters in The Magic Toyshop are always either watching or being watched. With reference to a few specific examples, discuss the significance of sight imagery in the novel.

Characters in The Magic Toyshop are either watching or being watched. In terms of characters being watched, I think that Aunt Margaret can be considered as one. Her silence is an indication of her oppression, which I interpret it as Aunt Margaret, not being able to live as an individual but as a wife, or "toy puppet" to Uncle Phillip. Uncle Phillip's control, and abuse that he presents to Aunt Margaret, and her two brothers is a result of being watched by the puppet master, Uncle Phillip. She is unable to have freedom of speech, or be respected as an individual, Uncle Phillip is watching, and controlling her life, as he gifted her a necklace that



suffocates her. The necklace is interpreted as Uncle Phillip's plan in controlling her, and always having an eye on her, as if she is his puppet or pet animal. On the other hand, characters who are watching other characters are Melanie and Uncle Phillip. Melanie is observant as she sees how abusive Uncle Phillip is towards Aunt Margaret, and her brothers, specifically Finn. She notes, "Uncle Phillip never talked to his wife except to bark brusque commands. He gave her a necklace that choked her. He beat her younger brother." (Carter, 1967, p.124). In the context, Melanie knows that Uncle Phillip is abusive as she is describing what she is witnessing in the household. Moreover, sight imagery is significant in the novel because readers are able to picture how the characters are feeling, and what they are experiencing with Uncle Phillip's disturbing abuse, and behaviour. For instance, Melanie remarks Finn being physically abused by Uncle Phillip, "he brusquely kicked Finn's stomach but Finn did not move" (Carter, 1967, p. 131-132). Readers are able to image the text as Carter is using sight imagery in The Magic Toyshop.

2. The novel opens by equating Melanie's discovery of her body with geographical discovery ("O my America, my new found land"). It ends with Melanie and Finn facing each other "in a wild surmise," a reference to a poem by John Keats in which he suggests that reading Homer is akin to discovering a new land. What are the "new lands" that are discovered by Melanie and the reader?

The "new lands" that are discovered by Melanie and the reader is that we are able to comprehend and picture what Melanie has discovered about herself, in terms of growth and development. Melanie expresses "O my America, my new found land", as an indication that she is surprised to discover her body features as she is growing in a young woman. As she is growing, her body is changing as well, both internally and externally, so Melanie is stating that her new found land, is what she is discovering about herself (with her body features, and her growth spur).

Unread post

Pooyah Kathirgamanathan

November 9 at 11:23 PM Last edited: Friday, November 9, 2018 11:34 PM EST

Hey Christina,

I also felt the same way about what the ♦new lands" were referring to. I think the ♦new lands♦ means a future for Melanie where she can be herself again and dream of how she wants to live her life without being controlled by her Uncle Philip. This will allow Melanie to change her view on how she sees marriage and may also change her plans that she has with Finn. I like how you mentioned the necklace that Uncle Philip gave to Aunt Margaret which signifies Uncle Philip controlling her. I also think the necklace is important because Uncle Philip watches Aunt Margaret having difficulty eating with the necklace he gave her, which he enjoys watching.

Great Post!

<<< Replied to post below >>>

Authored by: Christine La

Authored on: Nov 5, 2018 9:42 PM

Subject: Module 8

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Unread post  
Simrah Ali  
November 9 at 11:53 PM  
Hi Christine,

Thank you so much for your well-written post as I really enjoyed it. I highly enjoyed your writing style and the points you made about sight imagery. I hadn't really considered the point about you made about Finn in your first answer.

<<< Replied to post below >>>  
Authored by: Christine La  
Authored on: Nov 5, 2018 9:42 PM  
Subject: Module 8

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#### Module 8

Alexander Knapik-Levert posted Nov 9, 2018 9:39 PM Subscribed

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Characters in The Magic Toyshop are always either watching or being watched. With reference to a few specific examples, discuss the significance of sight imagery in the novel.

I thought the graphic imagery in the novel was used to show how immersive patriarchal, objectification, and consumer culture is. How judgmental the entire culture is in making people fit in and how everything is rigged to be viewed. Much like the puppet show Melanie is forced to watch, or Phillip's use of a collar on his wife to restrict her and control her. This doesn't necessarily have to mean someone is directly watching or being watched because everything in that type of culture has to be normalized to become congruent with it so everything is always watched or judged in this type of everything has its place type of fallacy to create control.

I'm not sure if the book was written with so much sight imagery to totally convey that this type of patriarchal social conditioning is a terrible form of brainwashing and thought control, or if it has become an accepted side effect of being involved in patriarchal society, that we the reader end up watching these events happen as puppets ourselves instead of actively fighting back against it.

The use of adjective-laden sentences is so heavy throughout the book that you can almost pick any random part of it and have some sort of example, beyond the

specific character♦s watching each other quotes.

Here♦s one I quickly flipped to while trying to get my homework done after recovering from some sort of lead poisoning that happened 2 weeks ago and gave me a weird traumatic brain injury.

Page 56, ♦The bathroom was painted a dark green halfway up the walls, and above that, cream. It was a narrow, high room with unsuitable, stately proportions to the tall window, which was glazed with frosted glass, and half covered by a torn, plastic curtain with Disney fish on it. There was no mirror in the bathroom, not even a shaving one. Over the bath, which stood on four, clawed, brass feet and contained a puddle of grit-flecked water in which floated a small submarine from a packet of cereal, was a large geyser, the exposed metal of which had turned green with the years.♦

There♦s a brand name corporate trademark in the description. Green the colour of jealousy, and racialized slang of being both native to a country or foreign is used a few times. The descriptive visual language notes the sizes of the window and it could be some kind of subtext that is meant to show how internalizing measurements and size comparisons are due to patriarchal linguistics, and how the conditioning of those kinds of linguistics is meant to socialize people into a ♦bigger is better♦ frame of mind. It♦s kind of a throw to an inherent bias towards phallic objects in modern culture linguistics. The same could be said with the entirety of the mass amount of descriptive language used in the book and paragraph like more language is better language. There is no mirror, and maybe that is because self-reflection is discouraged and instead spying on other people and judging them is. If everyone is different but no one is supposed to be different then everyone can be controlled while trying to ♦correct♦ each other♦s differences through oppression instead of acceptance.

There♦s just so many different interpretations from a close reading of that kind of language that come to mind I guess it♦s better to almost keep it generalized or specific to the examples of characters watching each other.

I think the song mirror in the bathroom was written after this quote.

The novel opens by equating Melanie's discovery of her body with geographical discovery ("O my America, my new found land"). It ends with Melanie and Finn facing each other "in a wild surmise," a reference to a poem by John Keats in which he suggests that reading Homer is akin to discovering a new land. What are the "new lands" that are discovered by Melanie and the reader?

I suppose the new lands discovered by Melanie and the reader are Melanie♦s sexuality, the idea that love is something that can transcend a patriarchal structure and conditioning in society, because it should be unconditional, and that patriarchal society is rigged to condition people into objects and puppets, that worship other objects while creating them as well, sometimes out of people themselves.

Melanie has to discover all of this the hard way by experiencing the abuse and tyranny of her Uncle Phillip and the complete objectification he has of his wife, simultaneously she has to feel her emotions for Finn, and her growing sexuality in puberty for him as well, as he gets conditioned to be like Phillip and all of this is normalized not only by the family dynamic but by it being an accepted norm in society overall.

At the end of the novel the grim reality has to dawn on the characters that though the fire has burnt down the house they are still people in greater society at large. Perhaps the new land that has been discovered is that as people they may

have defeated the patriarchal family and that it is possible to do that to greater society as well, though there has to be some aspect of destruction and rebirth to accomplish this.

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Alyssa Oddi

November 9 at 11:17 PM

Hey Alexander, I really like your excerpt on sight imagery in the novel and the fallacies. It was extremely perceptive and different from what I have been reading! The puppet show is such an important aspect to mention, as it really showcases the fact that Melanie must always feel as though she is constantly being watched, as though she is a mere doll in the palm of someone else's hands, manipulating her every move.

I also said that Melanie's "new lands" were a result of her newfound exploration of sexuality. She walked into her aunt and uncle's house, thinking that she would get to a close-up look at their affectionate relationship, but instead, faces the horrors that Margaret must endure at the hands of Phillip. Suddenly, all of her views towards romance and love are shattered, and she is left wondering if she ever really had it all figured out, or was wrong the entire time.

Alyssa

Grades Received: 9

Module 8 9.5 / 10 95 %

Worth 2.08 % of final grade. Achieved 1.98 %

Last Modified: Nov 14, 2018 6:31 PM

Module 7 9.5 / 10 95 %

Worth 2.08 % of final grade. Achieved 1.98 %

Last Modified: Nov 5, 2018 3:39 PM

Module 6 8.5 / 10 85 %

Worth 2.08 % of final grade. Achieved 1.77 %

Feedback Last Modified: Oct 27, 2018 1:51 PM

Alexander,

You're doing very well for participation, but really you're required to write shorter, more concise and focused posts.

Please ground your posts in specific cultural texts. Refrain from controversial language and from political references that are outside the text.

Module 5 9 / 10 90 %

Worth 2.08 % of final grade. Achieved 1.88 %

Feedback Last Modified: Oct 22, 2018 10:57 AM

Alexander,

your responses are all very perceptive. Work on being more concise, and on integrating (shorter) quotations into your sentences.

Module 4 10 / 10 100 %

Worth 2.08 % of final grade. Achieved 2.08 %

Last Modified: Oct 21, 2018 9:09 PM

Response paper80 / 100 A-

Worth 20 % of final grade. Achieved 16 %

Feedback Last Modified: Oct 7, 2018 4:25 PM

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Module 3 9 / 10 90 %

Worth 2.08 % of final grade. Achieved 1.88 %

Feedback Last Modified: Oct 1, 2018 8:09 AM

Your posts are very perceptive, Alexander.

Try to incorporate quotations into your sentences though (rather than letting them stand on their own). See: [https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Integrating\\_Quotes.pdf](https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Integrating_Quotes.pdf)

I don't think there is any textual evidence to suggest the narrator of the YW dies at the end. The last we know of her is that she has lost touch with reality entirely and she is "creeping" around and around the room, and over John's unconscious body.

Module 2 9.5 / 10 95 %

Worth 2.08 % of final grade. Achieved 1.98 %

Last Modified: Sep 23, 2018 7:15 PM

Module 1 9 / 10 90 %

Worth 2.08 % of final grade. Achieved 1.88 %

Feedback Last Modified: Sep 16, 2018 10:09 PM

Alexander,

I am sorry about your friend--she sounds like a wonderful person.

Your posts are very compelling. You really unravel a lot of interesting issues. Try to be more concise though, and edit your writing more. Re-read each post before posting it, paying particular attention to sentence fragments.