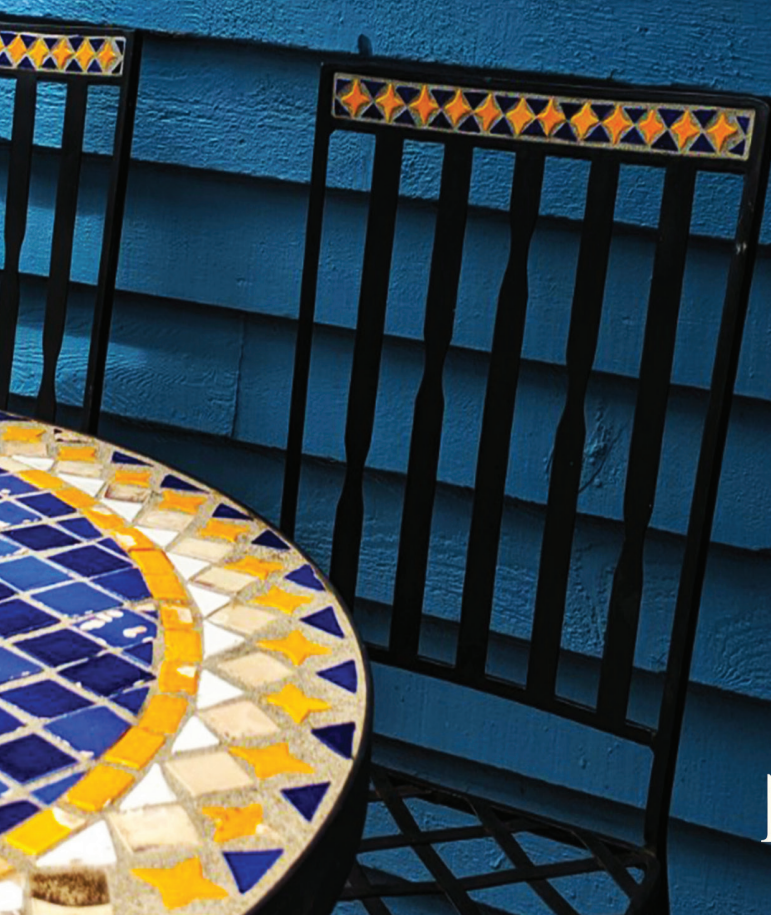


JOURNAL of LITERARY STUDIES

PENTANGLE



NKU ²⁰₂₀

PENTANGLE

Established 1992

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Pentangle's History

Pentangle is NKU's student-run journal featuring essays pertaining to all areas of literary studies, including film and other media.

Pentangle's name alludes to the famous image in the Middle English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where it is a symbol of truth and perfection. The journal seeks to highlight excellence in academic writing and scholarship.



Submission Guidelines

Pentangle solicits submissions of critical essays pertaining to all areas of literary studies, including essays on film and other media. Book reviews should be for books written in the last two years. All submissions must be in MLA format (8th ed.) and typed in Microsoft Word. Submissions should be at least 500 words and no more than 8000 words. Please email all submissions to pentangle@nku.edu. When submitting manuscripts, please include a brief biography and contact information.

Editorial Policy

The editors reserve the right to edit submissions for grammar and punctuation. Editing may also include revisions to thesis statements and transitional sentences as well as other changes that clarify the work. The editors will work diligently to ensure that the integrity and intent of the author's work is maintained.

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We would like to take this opportunity to recognize Dr. Gazzaniga for her time, work, dedication, and expertise during the publication process of this issue of *Pentangle*.

Throughout our journey of editing, revising, and publishing the journal, Dr. Gazzaniga guided us along. Her work and dedication to the magazine included her knowledge on the submission and publishing processes, gathering resources and tools, handling finances, listening to editors' ideas/decisions, ensuring that the journal was published and released on time, and most importantly, she brought passion and excitement to the development of the journal.

While we editors put this journal together, it was Dr. Gazzaniga that inspired, guided, informed, managed, and trusted us to make this publication of *Pentangle* possible.

We appreciate Dr. Gazzaniga for everything that she has put into *Pentangle's* publication process. Dr. Gazzaniga is one of the many reasons that we still believe in the importance of literature and its accessibility.

Thank you, Dr. Gazzaniga, for your effort, time, skills, knowledge, passion, and enthusiasm toward the development of this journal.

We hope you all enjoy this issue of *Pentangle* as much as we do. Read on!

Sincerely,

The Editors

Luciey Garland, Chloe Cook, Danielle Heiert, MeKaisha Jones-Hatcher, and Ariel Yisrael

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

We would like to present to you the seventh edition of *Pentangle* magazine. *Pentangle* is NKU's student-led literary journal whose intent is to elevate excellent writing. Our journal derives its name from a symbol in the chivalric romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The five pointed star was used to exemplify the intricacies and symmetries of human ideals and emotions. Through our selection of unique pieces, we hope to do the same.

The fact that this is our seventh publication is quite serendipitous as seven is another eminent symbol of unity and perfection. The theme of this particular publication is best illustrated by the Latin phrase *sui generis*, meaning of its own kind or in a class by itself. Within this collection of essays, there are pieces that approach traditional stories and historical events in a way that is absolutely unique. The viewpoint and style that these pieces use conquer themes of race, sexuality, and the elements of language which are nothing short of *sui generis*.

While all the pieces in this edition are inarguably *sui generis*, it is because of their uniqueness that they are in absolute symmetry.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *Pentangle*.

Sincerely,

The Editors

Luciey Garland, Chloe Cook, Danielle Heiert, MeKaisha Jones-Hatcher,
and Ariel Yisrael

Harriet Beecher Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Phuong Nguyen Le

Woman activists and feminist movements have been emerged in different forms, in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe is among the prominent examples of American society in the mid-19th century. Through her fictional writing on slavery, Stowe had caused mass controversy that lives on today and proved her impact as an advocate woman writer. This essay will provide a brief introduction on Stowe and an analysis of the background stories of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), née Harriet Elizabeth Beecher, was born and passed away in Connecticut. Her family was made up of eleven people, and her father, Lyman Beecher, is “a prominent but domineering Calvinist minister” (Lauter 2547). Later in her life, she married to a theology professor, Calvin Stowe. One can clearly that Stowe's viewpoints were strongly influenced by her religious and academic viewpoints, which contributed to her writing style of expressing ideas with a strong sense of logic. Her most famous, influential, and controversial writing, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, shows her opposing viewpoint towards slavery, which rebuts the ideas of the Congregationalism, or Puritanism in particular. As a woman, especially a religious one, Harriet Beecher Stowe was supposed to refrain her opinions on political and social issues “from the public.” Since she was a child, she was so outspoken that her father wished she had been a boy (Lauter 2549).

Uncle Tom's Cabin, or *Life Among the Lowly*, is based on true stories from different fates of the runaway slaves that Stowe molded into one main character, Uncle Tom, who lived in Kentucky. In fact, the Stowe family used to live in Cincinnati for about 20 years, a place free of slavery, and on the other side of this city is Kentucky, a state of slavery starting from 1832 (“Harriet Beecher Stowe House”). Upon witnessing this state, she questioned slavery while the whole of America at that time was largely under the influence of the Congregation whose ideas were against biblical sins. She reached out to and interviewed the African-Americans who escaped from slavery. Mrs. Stowe understood and empathized the grief of losing one's own children since she experienced the death of her kids during the cholera epidemics (“Harriet Beecher Stowe: Abolitionist”). Finally, the Fugitive Slave Act passed in 1850 required citizens “to assist law enforcement in capturing runaway slaves.” The Stowes went against this act

because they believed in Puritan ideals. Overall, all characters and plots in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were based on her personal research and experiences. The book was a bestseller during this Romantic period (Luebering), just after the Bible, and “it sold 300,000 copies in the U.S. in the first year of publication alone” (Railton).

This book follows the story of the main character, Uncle Tom, who is called “uncle” as a respectful way to address the elderly by the Southerners. He is a righteous Christian who opposed violence but he himself bears the cruelty from his slaveholders (Kuiper). Uncle Tom chooses to be loyal to all of his masters, even when he is sold from the Shelby family, a more humane family of slaveholders in Kentucky, due to economic reasons, along with Harris, which is in the initial plot of the story. His life then turns upside down when it is associated with harsh masters, starting with the hard-hearted Marie St. Clare, and finally the evil master in Louisiana, Simon Legree. This master ends Uncle Tom's life by beating him to death when he tries to conceal the identities of the runaway slaves.

Nevertheless, Uncle Tom is not the illiterate and uneducated slave that the readers expect based on his stubborn choice to keep these names in secret. Tom is, in fact, a faithful slave, plus he was taught to write and read by the young George Shelby in chapter 4: *An Evening in Uncle Tom's Cabin* (utc.iath.virginia.edu, 41). This amuses and amazes both Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe, who are in the cabin watching George correct Uncle Tom's writing. This plot reflects the fact that Stowe used to teach her family's slaves when she was younger. This can be one of the reasons the anti-Uncle Tom movement used to rebut this book as they claimed it is not “real enough” (Eschner). As slaves were considered pieces of property rather than human beings, slaveholders allowing them to learn increase their chances of running away. The slaves, then, could understand the contracts that they had to sign when they were transferred to a new master and read the signs and/or methods that could let them flee. This is mentioned in chapter 14, “Evangeline”, when both young George and Uncle Tom feel devastated upon the fact that Uncle Tom is sold to Haley, the slave trader. However, there is a need to develop the plot that the nice masters, the Shelby family, did teach their slaves to read and write. First, it highlights the faithful characteristic of Uncle Tom—he never runs away even when he is no longer illiterate. Second, this literally shows what Stowe used to do with her family's slaves, which she believed was a humane act. The Puritans established free education for children during the early stage of their immigration. Since the Stowe viewed black people as human, it is safe to assume that Stowe did so with the slaves with the same cause (Kizer).

Even though Uncle Tom is literate, which allows him to flee at any time, he chooses to keep his faith mightily and not run away. It is interpreted

that the scene in which Simon Legree questioned Uncle Tom about the runaway slaves demonstrates the utterly submissive behavior of Uncle Tom to his master (Henderson 2547-2549). It starts with the character named Cassy, one of Legree's slaves, who drugged him, taking Emmeline with her and urging Tom, the two other slaves of Legree, to escape. However, Tom resisted this idea, thus Legree could catch and press him. Legree threatened Tom, asking him in a lion-like manner, but Tom's response was, "I know, Mas'r; but I can't tell anything, *I can die*" (Lauter 2584). Since Uncle Tom emphasizes the sentence "*I can die*," Legree takes this as an impressive provocation. This leads to the scene of Legree beating Uncle Tom until Tom cannot move, and two days later, Tom dies. No matter how cruel it is, Legree has his right as a master and as a white civilian protected by the law at that time to do so. On the other hand, Uncle Tom chooses death in lieu of freedom, which can make the readers feel enraged and sympathetic.

The anti-Uncle Tom group is highly likely to use this scene and other plots, where Uncle Tom also refuses to run away, to state that Tom, even though having faith, chooses to live lowly instead of overthrowing the white (Eschner). A group of African-Americans still hold a grudge towards this book because it created the term "Uncle Tom," which has been misused as an implication of someone who is overly obedient and inferior to the white race. This can be shown from this scene when Uncle Tom chooses to stay with his evil master even when he can predict how terrible his life is going to turn out. When putting this scene in the view of the literature period, the Romanticism, which is right after Puritanism, it can be an implication of the white violating this idea of the church setting. While no one can assure that Legree and any other emotionless masters of Uncle Tom are Puritans, the American society at that time was largely based on this church system, in which God tells folks to be kind. While Uncle Tom practices Christianity and has faith in his life, sadly, no morality can be possibly found in this violent treatment from the white priorities. It is not to mention that slavery is a sin, as the white captured and controlled the slave's faiths instead of God (Oshatz 334).

However, the whole book is not just filled with physical violence but also emotional violence, which can cause uneasy feelings for the readers as well and is shown in chapter 7, "The Mother's Struggle." In this chapter, the mother, Eliza, and Uncle Tom belonged to the Shelby family, and she had to separate from her small child who "was old enough to have walked by her side" (Lauter 2556). She had a twisted feeling of love and worry for her family, "Her husband's suffering and dangers, and the danger of her child, all blended in her mind, with a confused and stunning sense of the risk she was running" (2556). After running away to the Ohio side, she appealed to the man helping her reach that place, to save her and her child with

empathy, "'O, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy!'" (2559). Stowe applied her personal experience to express the woe of a woman losing her child. She knew that the character named Eliza, as a slave, cannot use a threat to oppress the others, like what other masters usually do, to do her a favor. Therefore, one can state that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* discusses the slavery issue through logical viewpoints and emotional appeals, which was among the reasons of this book's massive publication.

When taking all these plots into consideration, one can realize how direct, logical, and expressive *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is. She crossed the limitation of expressive writing as a religious woman notably by this book. This book does not have the purpose of rebutting Puritanism, it does show self-contradicting ideas of this church system that was practiced by the American society at that time. Besides accusing the wrongfulness of slavery, this can be considered as the early movement of feminism. Mrs. Stowe did not go against the fact that woman's works were pushed back from publication. She discussed slavery in its realistic nature despite it being a socially disgraced area for discussion. It is contradictory to the fact that slavery was socially acceptable during this time period. This act contributed to the Civil War in 1861, as the North and the South were in a strong dissent regarding this issue.

The reputation of Harriet Beecher Stowe associated with her direct political viewpoints, which are mostly found in her famous writing, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, regarding slavery. The book remained controversial, especially right after its publication. However, it is continuously appreciated by the readers around the world, which can be shown from the vast number of its publication since 1852.

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A Movement of African American Pride during the Harlem Renaissance

MeKaisha Jones-Hatcher

Throughout history, nations have gone through periods of *rebirth* known as *Renaissance*. A remarkable and well documented example of this is during the U.S. period of the Harlem Renaissance (late 1910’s to early 1930’s). A major social shift took place in the Harlem Renaissance, that forever changed African Americans’ perceptions and how people viewed their intellectual abilities. “A change..occurred between artist and intellectuals. There was a demand made for equality through novelist(s), artist(s), and educators. This was the beginning of the Renaissance.” as stated in “The Impact of the Music of the Harlem Renaissance on Society.” by Kenneth B. Hilliard, for the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute. There was an explosion of art, literature, and music that manifested a layer of American pride. African American artists, writers, singers, dancers, and public speakers, gathered together to share their unity and uniqueness in their race and their heritage. This legacy left a perpetual impact on American history and future generations.

The Harlem Renaissance brought a powerful emergence of new and unique artistic talent “that had not previously been seen in black America.. [that] received broad public support for the first time” (Harlem Renaissance Concept Guide: Art: Enoch Pratt Free Library) Aaron Douglas, was an African American artist, and also a major contributor to American art during the Harlem Renaissance period. He was described as having “created

some of the most recognizable images of the (era)” (Harlem Renaissance Concept Guide: Art: Enoch Pratt Free Library) Douglas had an original, unique, and modern way of painting his subjects. He used geometric shapes that were often boldly colored to portray his subjects. His style was regarded to have become the most dramatic visual documentation of the movement (Harlem Renaissance Concept Guide: Art: Enoch Pratt Free Library).



Study for Aspects of Negro Life: The Negro in an African Setting
by Aaron Douglas (1934)
Source: the Art Institute of Chicago

Douglas created images (such as the one above) that depicted socially hidden tasks and struggles of African Americans and their families. The Art Institute of Chicago, described Douglas’s purpose for the printed image and the associated art series, “The four-panel series *Aspects of Negro Life* tracks the journey of African Americans from freedom in Africa to enslavement in the United States and from liberation after the Civil War to life in the modern city. In this study for the first panel, a man and woman in Africa dance to the beat of drums as concentric circles of light emphasize the heat and rhythm of their movements.” (*Study for Aspects of Negro Life: The Negro in an African Setting*, the Art Institute of Chicago) Douglas’s artwork put illustrations to the historical struggles and triumphs of African Americans and their ancestors. The University College of London, wrote in *The Harlem Renaissance, art, politics and ancient Egypt*: “Douglas was the creator of some of the most iconic visual interpretations of twentieth century African-American

culture.” His bold and original way of creating art affected and resonated with spectators around the world.

Augusta Savage, an African American female artist, was revolutionary just like Aaron Douglas. Before the Harlem Renaissance period, not many African American (especially Female) sculptors were popular. It was uncharacteristic and scandalous for a woman, during this time, to use this form of art as a professional practice. Despite the circumstances, Augusta Savage created what was described as, “sculptures [that] reveal..hope and optimism”, and revealing, “a very human side of her subjects, while ...treating them with respect and admiration.”(Harlem Renaissance Concept Guide - Art - Enoch Pratt Free Library.)



Realization
by Augusta Savage (1938)
Created for/ Courtesy of
Federal Art Project, Photographic Division collection, 1935-1942.
Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Savage’s subjects were often African Americans. During this time, African Americans were thought by a mass of individuals to have a lack of emotion and debilitating inborn human physiological/psychological traits; and therefore, unqualified for human respect, dignity, or admiration. When Savage portrayed a positive and alternate perspective on African Americans, it opened up a proverbial gate for how Black Americans were perceived. NPR talked briefly in, *Sculptor Augusta Savage Said Her Legacy Was The Work*

Of Her Students, about Savage's passage through discrimination and how her art is being revisited and honored. "Born on Feb. 29, 1892, Savage leapt from the Jim Crow South to public attention in the Harlem Renaissance, but is little known today. Now, her work (was) the focus of an exhibition at the New-York Historical Society, curated by Jeffreen Hayes and coordinated for the historical society by (Asian American, Dr.) Wendy N.E. Ikemoto." Augusta Savage contributed to a major artistic breakthrough for African Americans and women during the Harlem Renaissance.

Josephine Baker was a well-known Female contributor to the Harlem Renaissance. She was a controversial and legendary figure during the time period of the 1920's until her death in 1975. She was characterized as a Renaissance woman. Baker was an exotic dancer, actor, jazz singer, comedian, and philanthropist. (*Josephine Baker*, National Women's History Museum) During this time, all of the mentioned roles for Baker were scandalous for women to pursue. Journalist, Jennifer Robinson, with KPBS broadcasting station, remarked, "(Josephine Baker) black entertainer who took the world by storm. Born into poverty in America's midwest, she witnessed first-hand the brutal violence of the East St. Louis Race Riots of 1917, then the worst in U.S. history. Determined to escape a life of deprivation and racial prejudice, she danced her way to New York and then Paris." Josephine Baker defied racial and gender discrimination with her international fame.

Baker was especially revered in French culture. French writer, Jean-François Staszak, wrote extensively on Baker in, *Le'cran de l'exotisme La place de Joséphine Baker dans le cinéma français/* (translation to: *Screening the Exotic: Josephine Baker and the French film industry*). Staszak remarked:

La place de Joséphine Baker dans le cinéma français. Elle fut alors en même temps la seule star de couleur et, à ce qu'on dit, la femme la plus photographiée au monde. Toutefois, elle n'échappa pas aux règles d'une société raciste et androcentrée : elle en fut le produit. (Pg. 647)

Josephine Baker's place in French cinema... She was at the same time the only star of color and, it is said, the most photographed woman in the world. However, (she) did not escape the rules of a racist and (androcentric) society: (she) was the product of it. (English translation, Pg. 647)

Baker is known for having soared past racial barriers to become one of the world's richest women during her time. Almost one hundred years before artists like Madonna and Beyonce were born, Josephine Baker had astonished people with her performances, intelligence, and unique demeanor. As the 'product of her environment', early on in Baker's career,

she used provocative clothing and performances to gain popularity. Oddly enough, she is known more for this aspect of her career than for her international civil work and philanthropy. BBC news wrote an article on Baker titled, *Josephine Baker: From exotic dancer to activist*. In the article, Jules-Rosette, (Director of the African and African-American Studies Research Center at the University of California – San Diego and author of *Josephine Baker in Art and Life The Icon and the Image*) had praised Baker on her not-as-well known accomplishments. "In Las Vegas, Baker was among the first to break down colour lines, even though history books often ignore her efforts, much to the annoyance of Jules-Rosette: "She was the first person to desegregate the Las Vegas casinos, not Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr."... "As a black woman, had she stayed in the United States, she could not have accomplished what she did "" As derived from the article: Baker spoke French/Russian/Italian, gained French citizenship, and even served as a French sub-lieutenant in World War II in which she was highly decorated with honors. During her time, Josephine Baker's international fame and uncharacteristic accomplishments influenced other African Americans, to achieve their dreams.

Artists like Aaron Douglas, Augusta Savage, and Josephine Baker, helped pave the way for the artistic movement in the Harlem Renaissance. During this time, African Americans sought to literally speak and showcase their feelings of pride and admiration for their race; they used newspapers, poetry, essays, and books to express their culture to the world. Certain African American poets were especially powerful, influential, and politically fearless during the Harlem Renaissance; these poets sought to take "on new overtones in which one, could hear the makings of an acoustic revolt." (Chaser) These as well as other writers wanted to spark a civil revolution that could be literally heard and emotionally felt. They led many African Americans to publicly voice their daily persecutions and share the admiration (or pride) they had for their culture.

During the Harlem Renaissance, "Black laughter" was a form of social rebellion used during the Harlem Renaissance. "Funny black laugh could go where the physical black body in many, cases could not and...uniquely challenge white control of public space while also or territorializing that space as a field for further political action.", as stated by the journalist Mike Chasar in the analysis, *The Sounds Of Black Laughter And The Harlem Renaissance*. The Harlem Renaissance was a time when writers and poets used words with humorous or provocative imagery to make fun of the hardships of life. This strategy, popularly known as "Black Laugh," was a clever and semi-secretive way writers/poets combated racism and stereotyping. This period of time was scandalous and dangerous for African Americans to challenge any aspect of the predominantly Caucasian society

that they lived in. Widespread racism plagued the nation. Poets and writers would use skillful wordplay that gave an underlying/hidden message to the targeted audience. Through the manipulation of words, African Americans showed pride in the culture and advanced the popularity of the Harlem Renaissance.

Claude McKay was a poet who took full advantage of “Black Laughter”. In one of his poems he described black laughter as, “The gifts divine are theirs... laughter, / All other things, however great, come after” (Chaser) Through this quote, McKay inclusively explicated: Everyone is entitled to laughter, but not much else in this world. With McKay’s stanza he also demanded African Americans to have a sense of entitlement with their poetry, music, dance, artwork, and laughter.

Slim Greer was an African American poet during the Harlem Renaissance that chose controversial, but truthfully raw, ethnic circumstances that plagued the nation. One of his poems titled, “The Tall-tale Ballad” told of a scandalous practice that is ethnically referred to as “passing”. For most of American history (up until this recent millennial), many lighter-skinned African Americans would publicly fabricate their ethnic background so that they could live a life free from the social hardships of African Americans. In “The Tall-tale Ballad”, Greer addressed with the words “man managing to pass as white in Arkansas is racially outed as {racial slur} when he sits down to play a piano and starts a-tinklin” Greer then added, “The (White male) who discovers him explains that ‘No white man / Could play like that . . .’” (Chasar) In this poem, Greer explained a man’s attempt to pass as having another color; how his ethnic roots seeped into his musical abilities, and unmistakably revealed his true identity. Greer’s poems told of unheard circumstances in the lives of African Americans that resonated with people in the U.S.. African American pride radiates off of the socially unsettling uniqueness of Greer’s literary works.

The literary movement was an important contribution to African American pride in the Harlem Renaissance. Writers like Claude McKay and Slim Greer gave African Americans the power to speak up for the struggles, pride of their race, and to share black laughter. Slim Greer spoke of unspoken circumstances in the lives of racially oppressed Black Americans. In the Harlem Renaissance, African Americans were inspired by writers like McKay and Greer.

The Harlem Renaissance is known for having birthed a musical movement. Musicians like Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, and Florence Mills, were major contributors in this musical movement. They wanted to share their pride for their race through musical notes and instruments; by this decision, they changed the way music was heard. There was one especially famous jazz singer/instrumentalist, that brought international

fame to African Americans; by the name of Louis Armstrong. During this time, Louis Armstrong started out in a band with King Joe Oliver and eventually started his own group, he called: The Hot Six (White) With his group, and his trumpet, Louis Armstrong became one of the founding fathers of Jazz. “Satchmo” Armstrong had jazz hits like “Peanut Vendor” and “What a Wonderful World”; he continued making hit songs until his death in 1971; his music still lives on today. (White) During the Harlem Renaissance, Armstrong, gave African Americans pride and international fame with their melodic birth of jazz.

Miles Davis was another major contributor to the musical movement during the Harlem Renaissance. Timothy White, a notable journalist, described Miles Davis as, “Miles Davis, a very serious trumpet performer of the bop/cool era... (a) performer of many years noted for walking around stage or performing with his back to the audience, (characteristic of the bop movement).” (White) Miles Davis brought uniqueness to the musical movement. During the Harlem Renaissance, his fame gave African Americans a publicized sense of pride in their musical abilities.

Florence Mill was an honored musical artist during the Harlem Renaissance. She was an African American female jazz musician; her originality, popularized beauty, and high vocal range, sparked international popularity. In the article, “The Impact of the Music of the Harlem Renaissance on Society,” her fame is described to have “had such a profound impact on Harlem that as many as 500,000 people watched her funeral though the streets of Harlem.” (White) Florence Mill brought musical pride to the African American community during the Harlem Renaissance.

In New York, the musical industry was quite competitive during this time, “These musicians performed and sometimes competed against one another in some of the world’s most renowned clubs.” (The Impact of the Music of the Harlem Renaissance on Society.) These clubs were a huge success and brought money and pride to the African American community. During this time, many public facilities were segregated for African Americans. Clubs were an environment where Blacks could be free from racial barriers, share their musical talents, and socialize. “Many of these clubs are still in existence today, some under different names, but without them the musical renaissance in Harlem could not have happened.” as quoted from “The Impact of the Music of the Harlem Renaissance on Society” From the Harlem Renaissance, a new idea of musical innovation, was created. The idea emerged in a place called, The Apollo Theatre. “The Impact of the Music of the Harlem Renaissance on Society” described the theater as being “known as the shire of black music and live entertainment.. It features(d) new (/)old singers, vocal groups, comedians, and other acts. Amateurs from all walks of life would compete for first place” The Apollo

Theatre was the “Pre-” American Idol or X Factor and added to the sense of African American pride.

Throughout the centuries, African Americans have contributed to every essence of American Art. One of the greatest and most documented examples of their contribution is during the Harlem Renaissance. During this period, contributions of art, literature, and music, established a publicized sense of American pride for African Americans. The Apollo Theater, as well as other clubs, was a refuge for African American artists and citizens. Renaissance women like Josephine Baker gave African Americans the spirit and pride they needed to achieve their dreams. Black laughter portrayed by poets like McKay gave African Americans a safe outlet to share their feelings and pride for their race. Musicians like Louis Armstrong shared their pride through music and instruments. During the Harlem Renaissance, African Americans flooded the nation and the world with the pride in being African American. It was a movement that had an everlasting impact on American history.

The younger generation is responsible for carrying the fruits (whether good or bad) of the former time periods. Perhaps this specific generation is most impacted by historical movements such as the Harlem Renaissance. Dr. Michael E. Dantley, a revered advocate, expert in the field of education and different social justices, as well as Senior Pastor of Christ Emmanuel Christian Fellowship Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, once remarked in a sermon, “We (referring to the former generation) lived through the revolutions. (This current generation) are the products of the revolution.” He affirmed that the widespread movements, throughout U.S. history, have helped mold the disposition of this current generation. Therefore, the African American contributors of the Harlem Renaissance hadn’t only affected their generation but that of our current generation.

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“Hot Wishes”: Whitman and the Erotic

Andrew Evans

Nineteenth century poet Walt Whitman was never one to shy away from the senses and the sensuality in his poetry. In his quest to represent the fullness of the human experience he touched on many experiences of physicality, from the feel of cool grass, to the strain of physical labor, to, least not among these, the thrill and terror of sex. Many of Whitman’s poems contain vague references to the “beautiful body,” often with homoerotic undertones (“The Sleepers” 359). However, it is less often that Whitman dives directly into the experience of lovers and those who lust for physical love. When he does, he shows a remarkably sophisticated grasp of the complexities and paradoxes of human sexuality. Whitman never lets sex become one thing and one thing only in his writing; rather, he displays many types of eroticism. Throughout many of his works, such as “The Sleepers” and “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” Whitman shows that the range of sex can encapsulate base and transcendental experiences, but that the value of sex is reliant primarily in the emotional reciprocity involved in the act.

One poem in which this plurality is on stark display is “The Sleepers,” an 1855 poem in which Whitman imagines himself observing and dreaming with the people asleep all over the country. At the close of the first section of this poem, Whitman takes the perspective of a dreaming woman, “she who adorn’d herself” while lying in wait for her “truant lover” (358). This is the tail end of the introductory section, in which Whitman begins to “dream in [his] dream all the dreams of the other dreamers” (357). Having explained his premise, he spends a lengthy stanza detailing all the people he becomes

in this state, including “the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician” and many more besides (358). He then launches into this particular dream before ending the section. Whitman, in the voice of his female speaker, implores “darkness” to “receive” her (358). This is due to the absence of the “truant lover” for whom she has prepared herself. Interestingly, it seems ambivalent whether or not the lover ever actually arrives on the scene. According to the first couplet, he “has come” for her. However, the darkness, in response to the woman’s earlier apostrophe, “takes the place” of the lover, and “rises,” a possible euphemism for an erection. These lines would seem to suggest that the darkness, a metaphysical presence all around her, is filling in for her lover, providing a fantasy that the lover is there while the woman lies alone, undergoing an erotic experience without the presence of another person. In this interpretation, the darkness provides the necessary illusion that another person is there; therefore, the woman can fantasize she is in a mutual experience. Her lover “will not let [her] go without him,” which necessitates this fantasy, the folding of his image into her experience. While she makes love to the darkness, the woman can still “feel the hot moisture” she remembers from her real lover. In this passage, Whitman seems to conceptualize the sexual experience as something which must be undergone in a mutual way, either with a real person or with a fantasy. It is reciprocal, transcending the physical pleasure of one person, even if done alone.

In this same passage, though, Whitman also portrays sex as being intimately tied to the physical act. His female persona is acutely aware of the physical sensations of sex between two people, even in their absence. “Darkness,” she says, “you are gentler than my lover, his flesh was sweaty and panting” (“The Sleepers” 358). At the end of her experience, she can “hear the heart-beat,” which she then follows, a heart beat which is echoed in the structure of the poem itself. Whitman’s prior three stanzas have lines numbering four, six, and four again. The moment the woman appears though, he switches primarily to couplets, with a stand-alone line and a triplet mixed in. This dual beat with a skip here or there echoes the exciting heart, once again tying the transcendental erotic to the audible workings of a very physical bodily organ.

In another section of “The Sleepers” near the end, Whitman circles in on himself briefly to provide a rather different view of sexuality from the one near the beginning. This time, he describes how “the bare arm of the girl crosses the bare breast of her lover, they press close without lust, his lips press her neck” (363). This couple contrasts with the adorn’d lady in several significant ways. First, they are together, in a truly mutual experience as lovers. As such, they are able to be “without lust,” since they are a pair. Even though there is pressing of lips and draping of arms, this does not drag the interaction into the realm of the physical. This results in the second contrast:

there is no line between the physical and the spiritual in this type of sexual experience. The two are a pair, linked within the line by the sequence of nouns. Arm, girl, breast, lover. The two lovers are woven together with their bodies, linking them verbally without a line break or excessive language between their initial mentions. The adorn'd lady is introduced in a separate line from her lover, with an unrelated description of her folded hair between them. Rather than a link, her body is a barrier. This later couple, in contrast, are a unit, together in verbal brevity, leading to the absence of lust between them. They embrace out of a metaphysical desire for each other, not for the desire of their bodies.

Another structural contrast is in the context surrounding this pair of lovers. Whereas the adorn'd lady is in her own lengthy section of couplets, the couple occupy a single line in a litany of other complementary pairs. Whitman also devotes lines to father and son, mother and daughter, scholar and teacher, and slave and master. All of these are defined by their relationship to each other. Thus, the girl and her lover are a pair who cannot be separated. There can be no daughter without a mother, no slave without a master. Therefore, Whitman shows here a sexual experience which cannot exist with only one person. This lustless, more-than-bodily love is grouped near the lines about family, showing a bond that is just as strong and relevant as one of blood.

In a natural extension of this contrast present in “The Sleepers,” another poem called “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” delves into eroticism devoid of any connection whatsoever, whether real or in fantasy based upon real life. Here, Whitman speaks of his “lust, hot wishes [he] dared not speak” (138). Unlike the experiences of either the couple or the lady, this first-person experience has no real partner to speak of. Whitman speaks of “young men” who he meets on the street, men who he does not know personally, but who inspire in him these lustful feelings. Once again Whitman ties in the physical body to this one-sided sexual experience. He “felt their arms on [his] neck” and the “negligent leaning of their flesh,” but all in his mind. He makes this clear by the fact that he “never told them a word” in real life. This one-sided experience of the erotic exists only for Whitman, and only in the body. These men inspire nothing in his spirit or mind, and he cannot even bring himself to speak, to derive inspiration for words. His lust is purely physical, providing nothing of worth to the mind or spirit.

Whitman explicitly makes this singular experience an object of shame. He never condemns his singular lady in “The Sleepers,” whose one-sided sexual experience rests in a fantasy of a real lover. But his “Brooklyn Ferry” fantasies have no emotional basis. Because of this, he uses them as an example of how “dark patches fall” upon him, the same as any other person (“Brooklyn Ferry” 138). Section six of the poem lists many of these “dark

patches,” not all of which are sexual. Whitman has been “wayward, vain, greedy, shallow,” and many things besides. But he focuses in on betrayals of emotional love, such as the “cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish,” all of which involve the denial of an erotic connection based on emotion in favor of sexual feelings for another person. The experiences with young men then take center stage, becoming the lengthiest and most prominent exposition of Whitman’s imperfection. They are his ultimate proof that he knows “what it was to be evil,” a harsh denouncement of physical lust without emotional love.

Throughout these two poems, Whitman shows the full gamut of erotic passion. There is the couple from “The Sleepers,” whose eroticism is loving without physical lust. There is the woman from the same poem, who roots her lonesome experience in thoughts of a real lover, thus walking the line between the physical and spiritual. And finally, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” shows a man who lusts for the bodies of young men without speaking or feeling anything for them personally. Whitman shows how diverse erotic experiences can be, and he shows how sex can be both physical and emotional in every experience. However, in these two poems Whitman decisively shows his view that the erotic without the emotional is not worth the effort; the two ought to be linked, and to have the erotic without the emotional is a waste indeed.

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Exploring Gender Roles Amongst Vampires in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Benjamin J. Fooks

It is evident that the gender roles throughout *Dracula* are well defined amongst both the vampires and the humans. While Dracula and the female vampires are segregated by gender, they do not abide by the same gender confines as their human counterparts. Instead, these unique vampiric genders determine the basis for multiple elements, including their supernatural abilities, whom they are allowed to devour, and their mental capacity. All of these qualities are essential to their gender roles, as they are all derived through the bite of Dracula instead of having these qualities impressed upon them by a society of their peers. The characteristics essential to the vampiric female mirror those associated with the New Woman of the Victorian era. The gender divide between vampires represents the Victorian male's fear of changing gender norms with the establishment of the New Woman.

To the New Woman, independence was valued above all. New Women rejected several historic gender roles in exchange for a more liberating position in Victorian society. While discussing how the ideals of women have changed in literature, Cunningham said, "The ideal is essentially the old one: woman's nature defines her place, in domestic surroundings with the right man at her side. But the New Woman influence directs that she should take up her position freely, protected by law, qualified to achieve

financial independence and, perhaps more significantly, with a mature awareness of her own sexuality" (Cunningham 155). Women's nature defining their place in society is the essentialist perspective that the gender roles impressed upon women are, in fact, innate to their gender. In other words, it is the idea that women are maternal because they are born with the predisposition to be maternal. The New Women rejected the idea of their gender roles being essential; instead, the New Women pointed out that, throughout their lives, women were subject to societal influences which encouraged their subjugation. However, in *Dracula*, the New Women (or female vampires) have traits which seem to be essential to their gender. By implementing an essentialist New Woman, Stoker undermines one of the main ideals of the New Woman. Instead of being represented as free from essential gender traits, the women in *Dracula* move from one state of essential gender traits to another. The essentialist gender traits ascribed to the female vampires are representative of the fears and misconceptions of the New Woman by men in Victorian society.

One of the first steps in defining the distinctive genders of vampires is to determine how they are separate not only from members of their own species, but also from their human counterparts. Something that separates the female vampires from human females is that the female vampires are extremely sexualized, especially when they are being described by Jonathan Harker, who states, "[t]he other was fair, as fair as could be, with great, wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires... All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips" (Stoker 44-45). This sexual magnetism is only associated with women that have already been transformed into vampires. In agreement with the idea that sexuality is an essential trait of the vampiric female, Swartz-Levine states that, "Stoker does not ascribe sexual traits to women without either turning them into the Un-Dead or fragmenting them into disembodied physical features. Sexuality is not associated with real women but rather with debased aberrations of the category of woman" (Swartz-Levine 3). This advances the idea that the female vampires exist in a separate classification of gender from their human counterparts. This sexual nature is one of the first facets in breaking down the gender norms of the vampiric female.

It is also noteworthy to examine how Dracula differs from his human male counterparts. Throughout *Dracula*, The Count is depicted as taking up gender roles which are normally associated with both men and women. In his paper, '*Kiss Me with Those Red Lips: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula*', Christopher Craft argues that Dracula is depicted as fulfilling feminine gender roles when he is feeding Mina the blood from his breast: "Such fluidity of substitution and displacement entails a confusion of Dracula's sexual identity, or an interfusion of masculine and feminine

functions, as Dracula here becomes a lurid mother offering not a breast but an open and bleeding wound" (Craft 19). Dracula is presented as a man living in a world where gender roles have been distorted and he is forced to take up both male and female gender norms. His new role as both provider and nurturer appears to be a necessity due to the vampiric female's lack of nurturing tendencies. This absence of maternal instinct amongst the female vampires can be seen throughout *Dracula*, when Dracula's three brides are seen feasting upon the infant and Lucy is depicted drinking the blood of children. This outlines some of the new gender norms seen between the vampires: in this new society of vampires which The Count is attempting to create, males must take on the role of nurturer where the females are lacking.

Jennifer Swartz-Levine agrees with Craft that Dracula takes up the gender roles of both men and women, and argues for a completely new classification of his gender: "By acting as lover, husband, mother, and provider, he makes traditional sex and gender roles collapse into each other and reform in a new and perverse sexual taxonomy" (Swartz-Levine 9). Dracula takes up the roles of both men and women, leaving female vampires with a void in their identities that separates them from the male vampire. The vampiric female's lack of maternal instinct reflects the ideals held by the New Woman. The New Woman believed in "[r]ejecting the home and traditional motherhood as the only acceptable occupation for women" (Giorgio and Prescott 488). Dracula's taking the role of nurturer represents the fear held by Victorian men that they will have to rear children to replace the non-maternal New Woman.

The next step in evaluating essential gender roles amongst vampires is to analyze the differences in supernatural abilities between the two genders. The intense sexualized depictions of the female vampires exhibit most of the powers they display throughout the novel. The female vampires are not depicted as possessing any of the powers that are displayed by Dracula. The female vampires' power stems from their enhanced good looks and the ability to seduce men into allowing the women to drink their blood. This is in contrast to the many powers The Count possesses which aid him in obtaining the blood of women. Dracula is depicted as possessing immense supernatural strength; as Jonathan Harker notes upon first meeting him, "his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince" (Stoker 22). This strength is also depicted later on in the novel when he kills Renfield as well as when he is able to lift his earth box, which took the strength of several normal men to lift. Dracula also displays several other powers throughout the novel, including telepathic powers, the ability to control wolves, and mist. This difference in powers, and the means by which both genders of vampires obtain their meals, represents the first major difference

between the vampiric genders. Where the male vampires use strength and physical powers in order to ensnare their prey, the female vampires use their sensuality and seduction to attract the men they attempt to eat. In this way, the female vampires are depicted as possessing a sexuality that is innate to their gender. This represents the Victorian male's fear that the New Woman will realize power associated with her sex and use it against men; however, this also acknowledges that men in this universe still hold more, greater powers.

Another important aspect of the New Woman is her freedom of choice. While describing the New Woman's newfound freedom, Cunningham said, "She could make her own choice about having children, either with or without the authority of a marriage license, and she could demand complete freedom from either parental or legal control in selecting her sexual partner" (Cunningham 10). In *Dracula*, the female vampires are depicted as maintaining similar freedoms. These New Women freedoms amongst vampires are considered dangerous, just as the men of the Victorian Era viewed the freedoms of the New Woman as dangerous. The freedom of selecting a sexual partner in *Dracula* is represented through the female vampires' freedom to select their next meal. This freedom negatively impacts the lives of both men and children and represents the fear of negative repercussions of the New Woman's sexuality.

Another aspect of the vampires that demonstrates their essential gender confines is the apparent representation of whom they are allowed to eat. Female vampires are only depicted drinking the blood of human males and small children, while Dracula is shown feasting upon multiple women but refraining from meals featuring the blood of his same gender. Craft argues this lack of vampires devouring humans of the same gender is in order to avoid the fulfilment of any homoerotic desires: "Dracula's ungratified desire to vamp Harker is fulfilled instead by his three vampiric daughters, whose anatomical femininity permits, because it masks, the silently interdicted homoerotic embrace between Harker and the Count... Dracula's daughters offer Harker a feminine form but a masculine penetration" (Craft 4). All of the vampires are drawn to meals of the opposite sex; this proves that heterosexual feasting is essential to the vampiric race. The confines imposed on vampires that decide whom they are allowed to eat are similar to the confines imposed on Victorian society that define who men and women are able to copulate with. While there are similarities between human sexual partners and whom the vampires are able to eat, they are not the same. While the humans are limited in their number of sexual partners, there is no such limit imposed upon the meals of the vampires. There are similarities

in gender roles, but the aspects of vampires controlled by gender are not the same as the aspects of humans controlled by gender.

These dietary gender confines become clearer with the sexualization of the transfer of bodily fluids. Throughout *Dracula*, there are no explicit sexual acts; instead, they are replaced with thoroughly suggestive acts that imply sexual penetration. Craft suggests that one of these sexual acts occurs when Lucy is receiving her four blood transfusions: "These transfusions, in short, are sexual (blood substitutes for semen here) and constitute, in Nina Auerbach's superb phrase, 'the most convincing epithalamiums in the novel'" (Craft 15). This accretion of transfusions being linked to sexual acts is supported in the text when Arthur equates his blood flowing into Lucy as the consummation of their marriage: "Arthur was saying that he felt since then as if they two had been really married, and that she was his wife in the sight of God" (Stoker 185). Since the transfer of blood is equated to sexual acts in *Dracula*, the bite of the vampire and the transfer of blood in that situation, too, can be equated to a sexual act. The rigid structure that commands who the vampires are allowed to eat, along with the transfer of blood being likened to sex, leads to a form of heteronormative feasting amongst the vampires.

Another aspect of the vampires that further separates them along gender lines is the displayed mental capacity essential to either gender. Count Dracula is portrayed as possessing the ability to maintain multiple thoughts in his head at one time. The Count is able to balance his hunger with the fulfillment of his overall plan for the vampiric invasion of England. This depicts Dracula as possessing ulterior motives throughout the novel other than consuming to simply sustain himself. Dracula's ability to separate his desire to feed from his desire for knowledge, as well as desire to enact his plan, is best represented when Jonathan cuts his neck and The Count is able to resist eating him. After Harker cuts his neck, Dracula says, "[T]ake care how you cut yourself. It is more dangerous than you think in this country" (Stoker 33). Dracula's ability to refrain from consuming Jonathan separates him from the females of his race who are not displayed as possessing the capacity to resist a meal. The female vampires are constantly compelled to eat the nearest available human male. The unquenching thirst of the female vampires represents the Victorian male's view of the oversexualized nature of the New Woman. Giorgio and Prescott describe the patriarchy's view of the New Woman's sexuality: "[T]he conservative press, sees these women as simply 'erotomaniacs' who are obsessed with improper sexual freedom" (Giorgio and Prescott 491). This New Woman's obsession with sexuality is demonstrated through the female vampires' sensuality and their depiction of

only being able to focus on obtaining their next meal. The men in the novel view this sexuality as dangerous, just as the Victorian men viewed the New Woman as dangerous to societal confines.

An example of this one-track mindset which seems to be essential across the entire vampiric female gender is when Lucy drops the child she had been feasting upon and begins to attempt to seduce Arthur: "She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace said: - 'Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband come!'" (Stoker 226). This demonstrates that Lucy's mind only centers around her desires, because, instead of running from the men that have come to kill her, she focuses only on obtaining her next meal. This trait can be observed in all the female vampires, as the three female vampires in Dracula's castle are only ever depicted as either attempting to eat Jonathan or Van Helsing. Since these female vampires have had no previous contact with each other, sensuality must be essential to their gender.

The vampires throughout *Dracula* exhibit inherent traits that distinguish them from humans, and each other, along gender lines. This stratification of genders is the determining factor for the ability to perform certain superhuman acts, which gender of human the vampires can eat, and the ability to maintain multiple thoughts in their heads at once. The gender norms of the vampiric female include increased sensuality, aggressive feeding practices upon males and infants, and a limited range of thinking which is centered around eating. Gender norms associated with the vampiric male include a range of various supernatural abilities, tactful feeding practices on beautiful women, and the ability to set aside hunger to pursue other desires. It is clear that Stoker uses these vampiric gender norms in order to represent possible future gender roles with the advent of the New Woman in Victorian society.

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A Discussion on The Strippers, JFK and Stalin

Danielle Heiert

A common topic of grammatical discourse is the Oxford Comma. The rules of usage for the Oxford Comma aren’t commonly known; this often results in the choice to simply ignore it in writing. Those who understand how to use the Oxford Comma often debate over whether it should be used in everyday writing. This has led to some interesting arguments across all kinds of platforms, including academic articles, social media disputes, and even memes. While some of the related arguments are more reputable than others, they are each informative. It is important for everyone to be well-versed on the rules of usage for the Oxford Comma, and to use it correctly in their writing. Do the current trends of usage of the Oxford Comma in the English language reflect its history? To answer this question, we must first understand the rules of the Oxford Comma.

What is the Oxford Comma, and how is it used?

The Oxford Comma is also commonly known as the Serial Comma, the Series Comma, and the Harvard Comma. *The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* defines the Serial Comma as “a comma used to separate the second-to-last item in a list from a final item introduced by the conjunction *and* or *or*” (Merriam-Webster). For example, in the sentence “I went to the store to buy some apples, bananas, and strawberries,” the comma immediately following the word “bananas” is functioning as an Oxford Comma because it is separating the second and third items in the list, which

are also separated by the word “and.” Without the Oxford Comma, this sentence would be read as “I went to the store to buy some apples, bananas and strawberries.” In this example, the lack of the Oxford Comma doesn’t alter the meaning of the sentence, but the Oxford Comma does help clarify to the reader that I am buying apples, bananas, and strawberries each separately, as opposed to buying bananas and strawberries together in one container. However, this could quickly become confusing; another example that shows similar usage can be seen in the cartoons below.

WHY I STILL USE THE OXFORD COMMA

shortee.tumblr.com

WITH: I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.



WITHOUT: I had eggs, toast and orange juice.



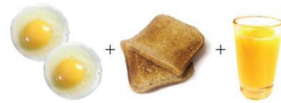
Figure 1

Source: Shortee, Tumblr

WHY I STILL USE THE OXFORD COMMA

shortee.tumblr.com

WITH: I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.



WITHOUT: I had eggs, toast and orange juice.



Figure 2

Source: Shortee, Tumblr

In these examples, the sentence “I had eggs, toast, and orange juice” uses the Oxford Comma immediately following the word “toast.” In Figure 1, which is a post taken from shortee.tumblr.com’s blog, removing the Oxford Comma causes the viewer to read the sentence as if they were eating orange juice on their toast. Unless the creator of this cartoon enjoys eating soggy orange juice toast, it is clear that they believe the Oxford Comma is necessary. Figure 2 is a version of the same post from [shortee/tumblr.com](http://shortee.tumblr.com)’s blog with “a few added doodles” (“Eggs, Toast, and Orange Juice”). In Figure 2, the person who added the new doodles reads the sentence without the Oxford Comma as a statement directed toward a personified version of the soggy orange juice toast. These cartoons are meant to grab the viewer’s attention and to assert the view that the Oxford Comma is necessary in writing through a humorous visual aid. While this example is extremely simple and silly, and readers probably wouldn’t have any trouble discerning

the meaning of the sentence, it is clear that the simple inclusion of the Oxford Comma would eliminate any possible comprehension problems for readers. These are very basic examples of how the Oxford Comma can be used, but the problems that arise by omitting this comma are made more obvious in increasingly complex sentences. An example of this can be seen in Figure 3 below.

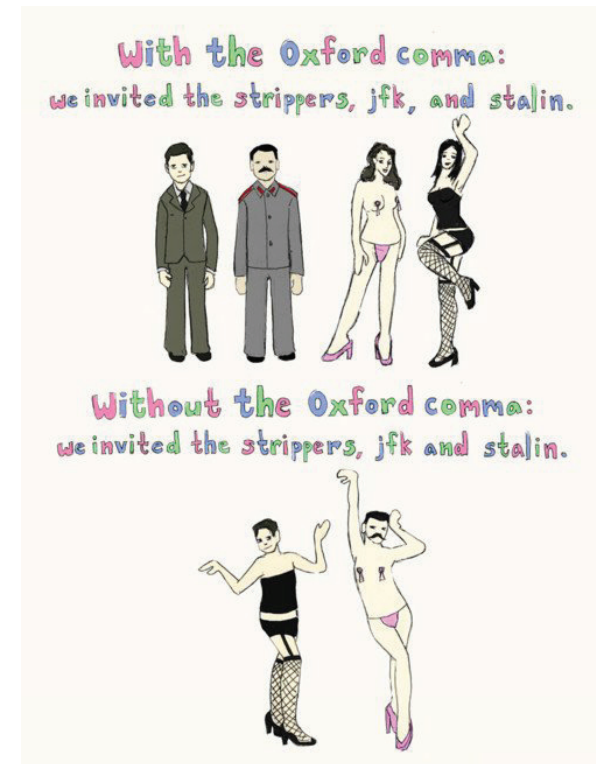


Figure 3

Source: Thagoodlife, Reddit

With the presence of the Oxford Comma, it is known exactly who is being invited. When the Oxford Comma is removed, things quickly go downhill. While this sentence is still technically grammatically correct, since the Oxford Comma is optional in the eyes of many writing and style guides, it has become ambiguous. Are JFK and Stalin being used to rename “the strippers,” or are JFK and Stalin being invited in addition to the strippers?

Of course, we know that neither JFK nor Stalin were strippers, so it is easy to determine what is meant, but think about what would happen if “JFK” and “Stalin” were replaced with more generic names. The sentence would now read something like “We invited the strippers, Mike and Gemma.” Since the reader presumably has no prior knowledge as to what Mike and Gemma do for a living, they could very easily assume that Mike and Gemma are the strippers being invited. This cartoon displays a very real problem that occurs without the use of the Oxford Comma, and makes the viewer remember it with a humorous image that they surely won’t forget anytime soon. By including the Oxford Comma in instances like these, writers can eliminate the ambiguity and ensure that their audience has no doubt of what they are trying to say. It is the writer’s job to make sure the audience is understanding what they convey through their writing, and the Oxford Comma functions as a tool in aiding them to do so.

How did the Oxford Comma come to be?

The Oxford Comma was given its name because of its origins in the Oxford University Press, where it is commonly used by editors, readers, and printers. Before 1978, the Oxford Comma was used, but “had no name until Peter Sutcliff referred to the Oxford comma” in his book, *The Oxford University Press: An Informal History* (“Where Did the Oxford Comma Come From”). Usage of the Oxford Comma before it was given its name can be traced through writing manuals, like the *Fowler’s Modern English Usage* series.

The first edition of the *Fowler’s* writing manuals, written in 1926, does not include a separate entry for the Oxford Comma (or any of its aliases), but does use the Oxford Comma in its examples for using commas correctly. This first edition includes an entry on “Stops” which is divided into categories of different kinds of stops (such as commas, periods, semicolons, colons, etc.), and subsets within those categories that explain different forms of proper usage. In the section on commas, the first subset of usage is “enumerations” (Fowler, 2009, p. 566) which describes the rules for commas in lists. In this subset, ten of the thirteen examples provided on correct comma usage include the Oxford Comma. In fact, the entire entry for commas has twenty-eight examples, thirteen of which use the Oxford Comma. For the many uses of commas which this manual discusses, the Oxford Comma makes up almost half. This shows that even though it is not named, the Oxford Comma was very important to writers at the time of this publication.

In the second edition of Fowler’s manuals, however, the Oxford Comma is said to be redundant, and thus should be omitted when possible. The example sentence given to explain this point is as follows: “French, German, Italian, and Spanish, are taught” (Fowler, 1965, p. 587). In instances like this one, *Fowler’s* recommends removing the comma after “Italian,” because “the

commas between *French and German* and *German and Italian* take the place of *ands*” (Fowler, 1965, p. 588). Since the word “and” is present between “Italian” and “Spanish,” *Fowler’s* suggests removing the Oxford Comma to prevent redundancy. In spite of this, the manual uses the Oxford Comma in its own writing in multiple occurrences. For example, the writing manual uses the following sentence when directing users to where they can find explanations of certain uses: “The *who* starts a defining relative clause; see THAT (REL.) 1, WHICH 7, WHICH, THAT, WHO 9, and WHO AND WHOM 3” (Fowler, 1965, p. 588). One could argue that in this case, as the writing manual has stated, the Oxford Comma here is actually not needed, since the font and case changes in the text make it clear that the “and” is separating two items in the list. Based on *Fowler’s* instructions for usage, the Oxford Comma should not have been used here. It seems to be an underlying feeling that the use of the Oxford Comma displays “perfect” writing, which would explain why the *Fowler’s* manual uses the comma in its writing. It does not explain, however, why the manual instructs users to omit the Oxford Comma yet uses the comma itself in the very section explaining why said comma is redundant.

With the publication of the third edition of the *Fowler’s Modern English Usage* manuals, the *Fowler’s* team’s view of the Oxford Comma changes once again. In this edition, originally published in 1996 and revised in 2004, the Oxford Comma is mentioned by name for the first time. Burchfield gives a few example sentences which display the Oxford Comma, then notes that “The ‘Oxford Comma’ is frequently, but in my view unwisely, omitted by many other publishers” (Burchfield, 2004, p. 162). Burchfield continues to note that the other publishers in question tend to see it as a rule to omit the Oxford Comma in their everyday writing but will insert it if they believe there is danger of misunderstanding. He makes it clear that, while use of the Oxford Comma is not a rule that can be technically right or wrong, it can’t hurt to add a comma, and therefore, it should be used. This concept gives cause to question whether this change in views between the second and third editions of the *Fowler’s* manuals is due to the change in author. Even so, all of the *Fowler’s Modern English Usage* manuals are published by the Oxford University Press (the very same group that coined the name “Oxford Comma”), so the publications should all reflect the views of the group regardless of the opinions of the author.

It is also important to look at other writing manuals to see how the views differ. The *Garner’s Modern American Usage* writing manual, published in 2009, speaks of the Oxford Comma in a positive way. Garner admits that the Oxford Comma has been the source of disagreements among writers, but that “it’s easily answered in favor of inclusion because omitting the final comma may cause ambiguities, whereas including it never will” (Garner,

2009, p. 676). He gives the example of a sentence with the word “and” within items in a list: “A and B, C and D, E and F[,] and G and H” (Garner, 2009, p. 676). In this example, omitting the comma between “F” and “and” will cause confusion over which subjects are grouped together, and which are not. Garner states that by assuming the rule to always include the Oxford Comma, situations like these will never be a problem. Because of this, he gives the impression that we should always include the Oxford Comma in our writing as a general rule.

Overall, it seems that the history of the Oxford Comma gives evidence in favor of its use. Each of these writing manuals assert the position that the Oxford Comma should be used, either by directly stating this to the users, or by using it within their own writing.

How is the Oxford Comma used today?

In modern writings, the Oxford Comma is still a topic of disagreement. It is common knowledge among scholars that the Oxford Comma tends to be discouraged in British English, but encouraged in American English. As seen above, discussions of the Oxford Comma take many forms, including memes. A majority of these seem to be in favor of using the Oxford Comma as opposed to against it, holding a similar ideology to that of Garner: a sentence could be ambiguous without the Oxford Comma, but adding it into a sentence (when used correctly) can never hurt, so it should always be used.

Some of the disputes over the Oxford Comma have even turned into lawsuits. A case from Portland, Maine follows the employees of a dairy farm who were not receiving the money which they believed they had earned. In 2014, three of the company’s truck drivers sued the company for “more than four years’ worth of overtime pay that they had been denied” (Victor). A law in Maine requires that employees are paid 1.5 times their hourly rate for each hour of overtime worked, but this law also gives a few exceptions. The law states that the overtime rules do not apply to “the canning, processing, preserving, freezing, drying, marketing, storing, packing for shipment or distribution of: (1) Agricultural produce; (2) Meat and fish products; and (3) Perishable foods” (Victor). In this statement, the Oxford Comma would be placed between “shipment” and “or,” but it was not included in the official printing of the law. The omission of the Oxford Comma here caused discrepancies within the company if the law exempted the distribution of the goods – which would mean the truck drivers earned no overtime pay at all – or if it means to exempt only the time spent packing the goods. The truck drivers took the sentence to mean that only the packing of goods was exempted, so they should indeed get overtime pay; the dairy company took the sentence to mean that the distribution of the good was exempted, so the truck drivers should not get paid overtime. Because of the

lack of the Oxford Comma, the court sided with the truck drivers, and said that “the absence of a comma produced enough uncertainty to rule in their favor” (Victor). This lawsuit over a comma cost the company “an estimated \$10 million” (Victor). This is only one instance of problems caused by the Oxford Comma in court. Many other lawsuits have taken place over the inclusion of this comma. This goes to show that one small comma can have severe consequences, so it’s best to make sure all writing is clear to those reading it.

Overall, the Oxford Comma is simply a tool to help writers ease the audience’s understanding of their writing. It is the writer’s job to ensure that those reading their writing are able to understand their true meaning with ease; it is not the reader’s job to search through a work to find the author’s intentions. Leaving out this comma can cause ambiguity and confusion in writing – as well as spark bigger conflicts over intended meaning – but including the comma can never hurt, so it is best to always include it in everyday work. Whichever way a writer leans in the debate over the Oxford Comma, it is crucial that they stay consistent within their writing to avoid unnecessary confusion. The Oxford Comma may seem small, but it carries powerful effects in writing.

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Influences On *The Lord Of The Rings*

Nolan Willett

In the foreword to the second edition of *The Fellowship of The Ring*, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien expresses that his magnum opus is neither "allegorical nor topical" and that he "cordially dislikes allegory in all its forms, and always have done so since I grew old and weary enough to detect its presence" (*Fellowship*, Foreword). Tolkien notoriously detested his work being read as allegory, as it takes freedom away from the reader. As stated in Benjamin Saxton's discussion of *The Lord of The Rings* and the polyphonic novel, Tolkien "resists the constraints of allegory in which the characters and plot are merely instruments that are 'dominated' by the author's engineered moral or idea." Yet the discourse persists: while *The Lord of The Rings* may not be the direct Christian allegory that many readers desire it to be, it's clear that it's not free from external influences, conscious or unconscious; Tolkien even admitted that "An Author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience...One indeed has to come under the shadow of war to feel fully its oppression" (Livingston, 78). If not allegorical, *The Lord Of The Rings* is assuredly analogous; Tolkien's experiences in war, his Catholic piety, as well as his ardour for mythology and literature, aided him in producing his creation.

In "The Shell Shocked Hobbit", Michael Livingston quotes one of Tolkien's letters, written to a Professor L.W. Forster, claiming that the two world wars did not have any "...influence upon either the plot or the manner of its unfolding. Perhaps to its landscape. The Dead Marshes and the approaches to the Morannon owe something to Northern France after

the battle of the Somme,” (Livingston, 77). This is not a negligible detail: I would contend that the characterization of the landscape itself is paramount to the plot, as it testifies to the onerous and taxing nature of Frodo’s tribulations; “It was dreary and wearisome...The only green was the scum of livid weed on the dark greasy surfaces of the sullen waters,” (Tolkien *Towers*, 259). This vivid illustration is unequivocally evocative of a war torn field, not unlike the decrepit aftermath of a shelled Somme.

Frodo’s burden of carrying the ring is also increasingly evident in this scene: “He seemed the most weary of the three, and slow though they went, he often lagged.” Frodo’s burden bearing the ring through this decayed landscape, taken in conjunction with Tolkien’s admittance that the scenery was based off the aftermath of the Somme, supports the interpretation that what Frodo experiences after the War of The Ring is akin to the PTSD a veteran may suffer upon returning home, which Tolkien most certainly would have seen in his fellow soldiers or even gone through. Immediately after the destruction of Ring, when Frodo is in Ithilien for a feast honoring him, Frodo tells Gandalf, “I do not wish for any sword,” (*Return*, 250), when presented with Sting. Livingston remarks on this, expressing that “an aversion to violence is a common post-traumatic symptom of combat veterans in particular,” (Livingston, 84). Frodo’s PTSD symptoms are even manifested in physical pain, a real-life occurrence for veterans who have lost limbs or, in Frodo’s case, a finger. This pain is severe enough that it justifies to the elves Frodo’s journeying to Valinor in order to heal and recover from his PTSD symptoms, which can be construed as a sort of wish-fulfillment for Tolkien, the concept of a country of peace and serenity where the memories of the horrors of war can be forgotten.

Tolkien’s own Catholic beliefs also make their presence known in his work. *The Lord Of The Rings* is inundated with Tolkien’s own spiritual beliefs, and Christian motifs make their presence known throughout the story. In the journal article, “Beyond Hope He Saved Us,” Carolyn Scott acknowledges that Tolkien’s mythology is one of his own devising, not defined by its relationship to Christianity; however, in a letter to theologian Robert Murray, Tolkien states that “*The Lord Of The Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously at first, but consciously in the revision,” (*Letters*, 142). Tolkien, in lieu of direct references to any belief system, imbues the inherently Christian themes of grace and redemption. Scott comments, “*The Lord of The Rings* makes use of the Trinitarian analogies that lie at the heart of the medieval Catholic views of the structure of the world. The novel’s three books correspond to the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Main characters Aragorn, Gandalf, and Frodo embody the qualities of the three persons of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” (Scott, 132). *The Fellowship Of The Ring*

corresponds to the virtue of hope as “the members of the Fellowship, all from different races of hobbits, men, elves, and dwarves are initially only bound by their commitment to help Frodo in his mission to destroy the ring. It is during the course of the journey that their trust in each other grows,” (Scott, 134). This faith in one another culminates in the unbreakable bond between Frodo and Sam, when Frodo attempts to travel to Mordor alone, Sam tells him “But not alone. I’m coming too, or neither of us is going. I’ll knock holes in all the boats first” (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, 457). The second book, *The Two Towers*, emblemizes the Christian theme of hope, mostly emanating from Gandalf: when Gandalf returns and “Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli finally recognize him, Aragorn exclaims

‘Beyond all hope you return to us in our need’...and that return of hope characterizes Gandalf throughout the book” (Scott, 135). Gandalf as a hope bringer is made evident in numerous occasions in *The Two Towers*, a notable example occurring when he breaks the siege at the battle of Hornburg: “The hosts of Isengard roared, swaying this way and that, turning from fear to fear...The White Rider was upon them, and the terror of his coming filled the enemy with madness.” Finally, *Return of the King* contains the theme of love. Merry, “filled suddenly with love for this old man”, swears service to Theoden; we also witness the love between Eowyn and Faramir, as well as Aragorn and Arwen, the latter’s union being the foundation for a new age of Gondor.

According to Paul Kerry however, author of *The Ring and The Cross*, “Catholic scholars are engaged in an interpretive struggle with those who would read the pre-Christian setting of *The Lord of The Rings* as a celebration of heathenism or at least a rejection of Christian doctrine, ritual, or theology. Tolkien himself feared that ‘readers might create a sort of new paganism around his legendarium,’” (Kerry, *Cross*, 239). Tolkien’s fear that readers may interpret his world with a pagan or non-Christian attitude carries the connotation that Tolkien meant his work to be inherently Christian. Catholic critic Joseph Pearce expounds that he “sees in Gandalf a ‘Prophet or Patriarch,’ a ‘Christ-like’ figure who lays down his life for his friends’, and in

Aragorn, the exiled king, one who represents the ‘glimmer of hope for a restoration of truly ordained, i.e. Catholic, authority,’” (*Cross*, 239). Thus not only do we see the presence of Christian motifs, but we can interpret his characters as correspondences to biblical figures, or at least embodying and propagating their qualities.

Tolkien was also susceptible to the influence of mythic and legendary traditions. In Annie Kinniburgh’s article, “The Noldor and the Tuatha De Danann: J.R.R Tolkien’s Irish Influences,” Kinniburgh cites Tolkien’s 1936 lecture on Beowulf, saying that he “chastised the literary

and academic community for dissecting the Beowulf legend historically, anthropologically, and linguistically, and thereby reducing the power of myth as a whole,” (Kinninburgh, 27). Despite this, he has acknowledged the influence of the Welsh and Finnish languages on his own Quenya and Sindarin languages, and the influence of Norse “mead-hall” culture, that is most famously represented in Beowulf, had an effect on the feudalistic societies of Gondor and Rohan. Perhaps most evidently is his mythological influences demonstrated in the elves of his world; many cite the light and dark elves of Norse mythology, but parallels exist between the Noldor elves in particular and the Irish Tuatha De Danann: “Although placed within a human social organization, the Tuatha De Danann are immortal, with the ability to shift shapes at will, use enchantments in battle, summon the very elements to their aid, ride chariots over water, and impose unbreakable curses,” (Kinninburgh, 31). These qualities will sound instantly familiar to anyone has read the series before. For example, in Frodo’s flight to Rivendell from the nazgul, the ford of Bruinen seems to come to his aid: “At that moment there came a roaring and a rushing; noise of loud waters rolling many stones...White flames seemed to Frodo to flicker on their crests and he half fancied that he saw amid the water white riders upon white horses with frothing manes,” (*Fellowship*, 242). The elements come to Frodo’s aid, just as he reaches the cusp of Rivendell, home of immortal beings. Furthermore, Elrond, the leader of the elves in Rivendell, is a renowned figure for his wisdom and knowledge of the lore of middle-earth, and it is he who confirms what the one ring, an archetypical “cursed object”, really is.

Tolkien’s mythological influence does not cease with Celtic or even Norse legends; Tolkien, in his desire to create an “English mythology”, turned to the east. He wrote in one of his letters that the men of Middle-Earth that are “the better and nobler sort are in fact the kin of those that had departed to Numenor, but remain in a simple ‘Homer’ state of patriarchal and tribal

life,” (Risden, *Tolkien’s Intellectual Landscape*, 149). E.L Risden furtherly states, “Tolkien got from Homer, and I suspect to some extent from Vergil as well, the sense of the Heroic World that encompasses the Classical epics. They touch very little on the life of ‘ordinary’ people, focusing instead on the noble heroes whose skill in battle, whose wrath, whose duty to the gods, and whose dates drive them to the liminal boundaries of existence,” (Risden, *Landscape*, 150). This Homeric influence of focusing on extraordinary people with extraordinary characteristics, while keeping unextraordinary, normal people minimal to the story is evident in Tolkien’s works: even the hobbits-a race of leisure and tradition that detest adventures- that are showcased

in the story accomplish seemingly superhuman feats and demonstrate immense courage and skill, such as Merry’s wounding of the Witch King of Angmar, whose destruction would not be possible otherwise, and Pippin’s

participation at the battle of Pelennor fields, a decidedly un-hobbit like thing to do. At the siege of Gondor, upon hearing the call of Faramir, the guard Beregon “sprang away and ran off into the gloom”, while Pippin “ashamed of his terror, got up and peered out,” (*Return*, 76). The nobility, honor, and courage of even a minor character such as Beregon, who is a lowly soldier and not some captain or prince, is showcased and celebrated, while the actions and victimizing of common citizens are not.

The Lord Of The Rings seems paradoxical in its interpretations. Despite Tolkien’s acclaimed dislike for allegory, the many parallels and analogs that exist in the series make it hard to deny he was at least heavily influenced by his own life experience, and allegorical interpretations of the series, while contested, remain valid. While Middle-Earth and Arda are prototypical in their creation, they nevertheless exhibit many counterparts and similarities to Tolkien’s wartime struggle, his Christian spirituality, and his love for myth-which stems into a desire to create his own. Thus the academic conflict over whether or not to read *The Lord Of The Rings* as allegorical still remains, and in all likelihood will remain.

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Benjamin Fooks is an English Major in his last year of undergraduate studies. He began writing this paper in Dr. Gazzaniga's course, Writers in Context. Ben plans on continuing his education at Chase College of Law next fall. He first found his love for literature in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympian's series. Something interesting about Ben is that he is the president of the wrestling club here at NKU.

Danielle Heirt

Danielle Heirt is in her junior year and is seeking an English major with a marketing minor and a focus in publishing. She would love to work in publishing Young Adult fiction, or in social media marketing. Danielle was inspired to write her piece, "A Discussion on The Strippers, JFK and Stalin," after seeing the meme (included in the essay!) from which the title of her piece is derived. Danielle has always been described as a "grammar nerd" by friends and family and seeks to prove to others that grammar can be fun!

MeKaisha Jones-Hatcher

MeKaisha Jones-Hatcher is a Junior at Northern Kentucky University (NKU). She is pursuing a dual major: special education/middle grades education and a Spanish minor. She aspires to be an educator, a social justice advocate, and to fulfill her destiny. She believes that the major historical accomplishments and contributions of African Americans are chronically undermined; This is the foundation for her featured work, "A Movement of African American Pride during the Harlem Renaissance."

Lê Nguyễn Phương

Phuong Le, or Lê Nguyễn Phương in her first language of Vietnamese, is a sophomore English major and Asian Studies and Japanese minor. She enjoys interacting with people, learning about their cultures, and helping them integrate into different societies. Thus, she hopes to work for the international office of any companies or academic institutions. With this idea in mind and her reading of Uncle's Tom Cabin in Vietnamese when she was about 12 years old, she decided to have an official opportunity to look at this book and its social setting to learn more about the early movement and importance of racial diversity, which she discusses in her piece, "Harriet Beecher Stowe and Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Nolan Willett

Nolan Willett recently graduated last December with his B.A in English (Congratulations, Nolan!). He is planning on attending Chase Law School this upcoming Fall. Nolan is intensely passionate about literature, and writing is what he spends most of his free time doing. His piece, "Influences on *The Lord of the Rings*," is his first published work and, in time, he would love to get some of his creative works published.

