

Enlightenment Tragedy

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This thesis is an investigation of the tragic form in relation to Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Horkheimer and Adorno claim that the culture industry has appropriated the tragic form for its own purposes and rendered it a part of the process of the conversion of the individual to exploitable circuits of value. Enlightenment Tragedy is a type of tragedy that avoids their critique, and offers the reader tools to resist the culture industry in a de-reifying moment. This thesis investigates Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, and Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People" and "Revelation" and locates the characteristics that mark them as instances of this tragedy.

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ENLIGHTENMENT TRAGEDY

Liam Sweeney

Recognition, peripety, and catharsis—Aristotle’s characteristics of tragedy—involve an implicit illusion. For Oedipus to tragically realize that he has mistakenly killed his father, he first is under the illusion that the man on the road is not his father at all. Without illusion there cannot be the recognition of something awry, and whether it is the reader or the character who witnesses the thing that brings about the tragic ending, the effective emotion is evoked in the moment of disillusionment. When it comes to illusions it must be admitted that we are living in a fruitful time.

What I mean is manifold. We have reduced identity to credit and made credit a work of fiction. We have developed a system of media that not only pervades every corner of our time, not only is conglomerated and insidious, but has achieved these distinctions in spite of itself, as a response to our public request. We have reduced our notion of what qualifies as necessary experience to all of the things that can fit onto a pocket sized screen. Of course, in many ways, we see things just as they are, more clearly, more readily: the slew of websites that provide exactly the information we want, the bank balance available at any moment, etc. But there are also things that have come into existence that we cannot see without experiencing a kind of violence. There are realities tucked among our luxuries that would haunt us into seclusion, that would make us buy canned beans, move to a tree house and do crossword puzzles for years just to not be a part of it. Whether that prediction is hyperbolic or portentous remains to be seen, but regardless such realities exist, are obscured, and beg to be exploited in the tragic form. Marxists are useful here. They have a penchant for uncovering illusions.

In his article, “‘The Special American Conditions’: Marxism and American Studies,” Michael Denning identifies four distinct “modes of marxist cultural studies” that have been significant in the development of marxist criticism in America. The lines he draws amongst the different areas of marxist thought as they affect America’s idiosyncratic cultural characteristics (namely, the lack of feudalist beginnings, the peculiar racial issues, and the nationalist “American” ideologies that are inherently opposed to marxist methodologies, as he outlines in the article) are useful in identifying which scholars are relevant to different aspects of American culture. I will be focusing my work on one of his four categorizations, and several literary implications that develop from this particular mode of study:

[Commodity/reification] is based on Marx’s account of the fetishism of commodities and Lukacs’ subsequent elaboration of the theory of reification. The effects of the commodity-form on culture: this lens dominates much of the work of the Frankfurt School and of Fredric Jameson, and finds its particular strengths both in illuminating the inscription of the social on apparently apolitical modernist and postmodernist texts, and in the analysis of the mass-produced formulas of the culture industry. (371)

This mode of marxist cultural criticism focuses on questions of value commercially, ideologically, existentially and aesthetically. Its intentions are broad, but in application to this project it is useful in that it attacks the foundations of the individual’s perception of what is real, and, through revealing the peculiar lens, allows us to revise our worlds.

Through working with the texts of the scholars in this field, I intend to show the literary reactions of William Shakespeare and Flannery O’Connor as they apply to what has been outlined by Karl Marx, Georg Lukacs, Horkheimer and Adorno, and Raymond Williams as cultural formulations of modern capitalism (in Shakespeare’s case, from what is perhaps the seminal point of reification in the Western world). Beyond this, I

hope to show how our changing conventions have complicated the readings of these important authors' texts.

The differences between Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and the two O'Connor stories I will use are vast and largely obvious. But their point of intersection illuminates many of the distinctions that the scholars of commodity/reification are interested in articulating. This point of intersection illuminates a resemblance not only between the marxist mode of interpretation and the creative works, but also between what these works mean to the reader in relation to his contemporary perspective. Their commonalities reveal their characteristics further. Wallace Stevens identifies the power of these resemblances in regards to the relationship between reality and the imagination in his essay "Three Academic Pieces," and ultimately my goal will be to emulate something of his formulation in my critical analysis:

Poetry is a satisfying of the desire for resemblance. As the mere satisfying of a desire, it is pleasurable. But poetry if it did nothing but satisfy a desire would not rise above the level of many lesser things. Its singularity is that in the act of satisfying the desire for resemblance it touches the sense of reality, it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it. If resemblance is described as a partial similarity between two dissimilar things, it complements and reinforces that which the two dissimilar things have in common. It makes it brilliant. When the similarity is between things of adequate dignity, the resemblance may be said to transfigure or to sublimate them. (77)

It seems that any endeavor to offer an imaginative perspective on some object, whether aesthetic, critical or otherwise, will inevitably become an endeavor toward what Stevens outlines here. It is my endeavor to show the resemblance that exists between the disparate texts I have mentioned, and that the intersecting point of these texts reveals something of the kind, quality, and effectiveness of a tragedy that functions as a reaction to the Enlightenment. It is the tragedy of the presumptuous, whose identities have become their

ideologies. Regardless of the distinctions between the ideologies (i.e. liberal and conservative), the adoption of such as identity serves the producer who manufactures both. Ideology, in this sense, is as the OED defines:

1. (a) The study of ideas; that branch of philosophy or psychology which deals with the origin and nature of ideas. (b) *spec.* The system introduced by the French philosopher Étienne Condillac (1715–80), according to which all ideas are derived from sensations.” And “**4.** A systematic scheme of ideas, usually relating to politics, economics, or society and forming the basis of action or policy; a set of beliefs governing conduct. Also: the forming or holding of such a scheme of ideas.

This constitutes the battlefield of the culture industry, which “leaves the body free and directs its attack against the soul” (qtd Horkheimer and Adorno 133)

The equivalency that comes to exist between identity and ideology is a force of the Enlightenment in Horkheimer and Adorno’s dialectic. They make the point that the typical sense of progression manages to obscure:

The myths which fell victim to the Enlightenment were its own products. In the scientific calculation of occurrence, the computation is annulled which thought had once transferred from occurrence into myths. Myth intended report, naming, the narration of the Beginning; but also presentation, confirmation, explanation: a tendency that grew stronger with the recording and collection of myths[...]Myth turns into enlightenment, and nature into mere objectivity. Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He knows them insofar as he can manipulate them. (8-9)

They acknowledge the Enlightenment as a force that eradicates the misconceptions that the masses have adopted (for instance, the movement from geocentric to heliocentric).

They link this popular sense of the movement to the banal acquiescence of mass produced culture, which they term the culture industry. They say,

The most intimate reactions of human beings have been so thoroughly reified that the idea of anything specific to themselves now persists only as an utterly abstract notion: personality scarcely signifies anything more than shining white teeth and freedom from body odor and emotions. The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them. (167)

To Horkheimer and Adorno, the Enlightenment implicates the individual as both contributor and victim to an oppressive hermeneutic circle, in the Heidegger/Gadamer formulation of the term. That is, the trend of mass-producing uniform parts for the individual to use in order to construct his notion of the whole ultimately leads to a mechanized reality. In the stories I investigate, there is a sense that some tinkering has been going on with things-as-they-are. The tragedy reveals itself when this tinkering leads to violence and waste, but most importantly to recognition, disillusionment.

In his commencement speech to the Kenyon College graduates of 2005, David Foster Wallace relates an applicable anecdote which bookends the now famous speech and serves as the title, “This Is Water:” “There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, ‘Morning boys, how’s the water?’ And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, ‘what the hell is water.’” If you were to alter this anecdote—exchanging the fish’s water for a hamster’s wheel, adding a level of harassment and, to top it off, you manage to convince the poor creature that it is this very quality that makes the contraption not an oppressive and useless mechanism but rather a lovely Ferris wheel, whose grandiosity is unmatched, who affords a total perspective rather than a totalitarian one—you will have constructed an environment ripe for Enlightenment tragedy, an environment Horkheimer and Adorno

believe has taken a hold of the modern psyche. The characteristics of this type of tragedy will be revealed throughout the course of this project, but broadly speaking it illuminates the obscured reality that the reader has been participating in. If it is successful it ends with the reader horrified at his similarities to the ugly or the absurd, thereby both alienating him from that which he was a part of and allowing him to empathize with those he previously saw as ugly or absurd. Successful Enlightenment tragedy forces the young hamster to ask the same question as the young fish, and while the fish's experience might best be defined as educational, the answer to the hamster's question is also tragic.

This demands an interpretation of tragedy that reacts to the changing characteristics of our world. Raymond Williams says in reaction to the "universalist character of most tragic theory," that is, the fixed and determined reading of tragedy, that:

Tragic experience, because of its central importance, commonly attracts the fundamental beliefs and tensions of a period, and tragic theory is interesting mainly in this sense, that through it the shape and set of a particular culture is often deeply realized. If, however, we think of it as a theory about a single and permanent kind of fact, we can end only with the metaphysical conclusions that are built into any such assumption. Chief among these is the assumption of a permanent universal and essentially unchanging human nature (an assumption taken over from one kind of Christianity to 'ritual' anthropology and the general theory of psychoanalysis). Given such an assumption, we have to explain tragedy in terms of this unchanging human nature or certain of its faculties. But if we reject this assumption (following a different kind of Christianity, a different psychological theory, or the evidence of comparative anthropology) the problem is necessarily transformed. Tragedy is then not a single and permanent kind of fact, but a series of experiences and conventions and institutions. It is not a case of interpreting this series by reference to a permanent and unchanging human nature. Rather, the varieties of tragic experience are to be interpreted by reference to the changing conventions and institutions. (45)

This passage implicates the tragic as a form that invokes Stevens formulation of the poetic resemblance. He sees tragedy as variable, rather than fixed, as being a kind of barometer that reacts to "the changing conventions and institutions," of a particular time.

He identifies that existentially such fixed perspectives of religion, of psychology, of anthropology (that is to say, some fields invested in studying various perspectives of humankind) have been shackled, and ultimately relieved from seeing the world through such an absolute lens. Tragedy, he says, must undergo the same transformation that these fields ultimately took in some form or another. Tragedy is a reaction, or a function; the product will change depending on the input.

In the continuous pursuit of a concise definition of the thing I am calling Enlightenment tragedy, I will engage with a critical analysis of the Enlightenment, as well as the tragic. Throughout this paper I will be dealing with the Enlightenment as a movement with ends more complicated and insidious than the standard formulation of “progress” denotes. It is something that, in revealing certain truths, obscures a great deal. It is, in the words of Horkheimer and Adorno, a movement toward “the world of administered life.” Their word “administered” has implications that are congruent with the horrors we see in the texts I will be discussing. To summarize their pursuit in their own words would be to say would be to say, “We had set ourselves nothing less than the discovery of why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism” (xi). This formulation developed largely as a reaction to World War II. It pays attention to the fascism they escaped from, but it focuses largely on observations of the culture they escaped to: the United States. It is a thing that pervades the development of our mind, it manifests itself in our culture, and it is ultimately very present in our tragedy. Horkheimer and Adorno suggest that the Enlightenment has destroyed the form of tragedy, saying, “Everyone can be like this omnipotent society; everyone can be happy, if only he will capitulate fully and sacrifice his claim to

happiness. In his weakness society recognizes its strength, and gives him some of it. His defenselessness makes him reliable. Hence tragedy is discarded[...]Today tragedy has melted away into the nothingness of that false identity of society and individual, whose terror shows for a moment in the empty semblance of the tragic” (154). Throughout the course of this document I will try to show that the illumination of such realities in fact saves the form, but insofar as it changes the form into a something that becomes a product of the Enlightenment. David Foster Wallace did not intend to leave the Kenyon College graduates with a tragic realization that the identity of his audience is, upon reflection, that which they themselves have come to loathe, sneer at or mock (though he provides the tools). The authors that I am investigating afford this very reflection, and through it a tragic catharsis. In this way tragedy has adapted to survive even Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique.

“WHAT OUGHT BUT AS ‘TIS VALUED?” THE PUBLIC’S DESIRE AND THE REIFIED IDOL IN SHAKESPEARE’S *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*

It is a relatively apparent paradox that Helen is and is not at the center of the conflict between Troy and Greece. She is an idol who signifies the conflict of the war, and yet her agency, her will, her identity, her social relations amongst the Trojans are all reduced, and ultimately inconsequential as a function independent of Greek/Trojan utility. *Troilus and Cressida* is not about Helen, but rather about what she does implicitly in representation. She is not at the center at the conflict, but some derivative of her is; a murder trial is not about the gun. Helen provides the reader with a bizarre instance of sexual politics that represents what I will term the producer-idol-public paradigm. Both nations endeavor to produce a particular cultural representation—a reflection of themselves—in order to establish their value. They want to produce something intangible, they want to offer it to what they reproduce, they need the public to produce it for them, and they use the idol, Helen, or more generally the reified woman, in order to nurture the public notion they desire. We can see this paradigm both in the satirization of the epic tale of the Trojan War, and in the contemporary advertising campaigns of the culture industry. What we see now (that is, in 2011) is the fully bloomed avarice of what was germinating in Shakespeare’s time. The reifying of social relationships and the corresponding relationship between market practices and sexual practices was present from the moment capitalism and patriarchy met. Douglas Bruster identifies the institution’s presence in the Elizabethan Era, which Marx would later critique, in his book *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare*, “The ‘Age of Shakespeare,’ in fact, could well be characterized as the Age of Commodity Fetishism, as the time the expanding market lent rededicated power to property, rendering operative and even

concretizing such concepts as fetishism, reification, and personification to an extent unprecedented as it was alarming”(42). If any of Shakespeare’s plays focus on the commodifying nature of social relationships in culture, *Troilus and Cressida* is the most apparent one.

Aside from the content of the play, the performance history strongly suggests this. Barbara Bowen identifies this in the chapter, “Resisting History,” of her book *Gender in the Theater of War*:

Because of its singular stage history—nearly three hundred years of complete neglect followed by an explosion of popularity since the Second World War—*Troilus* holds out the hope of a “usable past” in Shakespeare: a politically progressive text to be discovered, and performed, within the works of the “patriarchal bard.” The play’s long critical and theatrical neglect argues for something unique in *Troilus*—a disillusionment with war, a daring sexual politics, a deconstruction of presence—that could not be seen until the twentieth century. (28)

The very fact that the play experienced such a prolonged silence renders it ripe for provocative interpretation, and one must be careful to note the impulse to assume a correlation between the modern content of the play and the reception it has received in modern culture after being regarded as a failed play of Shakespeare’s. I will try to establish, rather than assume that correlation. Bowen has done much of this work, and goes on to say,

There is no recorded performance of the play from 1603 until 1898, yet since the Second World War *Troilus* has been continuously in performance, with sixty-three separate productions in the 1960s and 70s alone. Over and over in the records of these performances, we find directors and critics marveling at the uncanny *modernity* of *Troilus and Cressida*; one after another they cite the special ability of modern audiences—alienated, war-weary, post-nuclear—to accept this difficult play. The standard explanation for the long absence of *Troilus* from the stage is that *only* modern audiences can understand the play, that Shakespeare was straining to move ahead of his time and we have finally caught up with him. (31)

Throughout the chapter “Resisting History,” Bowen provides instances in the performance interim in which there were various attempts to rewrite the play. Dryden referred to it as, “the Tragedy I have undertaken to correct” (Bowen 36), and rewrote it as an innocent tragedy, in which Cressida is a tragic version of *Much Ado’s* Hero, innocently accused of infidelity and ultimately committing suicide. Bowen identifies John Phillip Kemble as the only other individual during the span of nearly 300 years to attempt to rewrite and perform the play, which he did in the late 1790s. The revised text never came to production.

Relevant to this peculiar performance history is Shakespeare’s intended audience. I will address this question directly in dealing with Pandarus’ epilogue at the end of this essay, but it is important to note now that the Inns of Court theory (Appendix II, Arden) has become widely accepted by Shakespearean scholars. It is the theory that the play was originally written in either 1602 or 1603, but was not performed until 1609 for an audience of young lawyers at the Inn of Court (early British law school), rather than at the Globe. Under this assumption it is speculated that the play was a purposefully difficult intellectual text, filled with philosophical debate and lecherous humor to be performed for a savvy crowd that could follow the Aristotelian references and lengthy speeches of value and order. That it is a play dealing with the absurdities of commodified social relationships is appropriate given this audience—the developing class of capitalists emerging from British feudalism.

I. The Unbodied Figure

The pining Troilus and the broker, Pandarus, introduce the love plot of the play. In the second scene we are introduced to Cressida’s wit and Pandarus’ persistent sales

technique. Scene three of the first act offers a great deal more. It vaults the play into both the ideological and the satirical realm.

As the Greek war council opens in play, things are looking grim. The war has been raging for seven years and left both parties confused as to the nature of their warring. Amongst the Greeks we see Agamemnon attempting to rally the princes, who are apparently doubting the likelihood of their victory. In any case, as the dialogue in the Greek camp opens, it appears the motivations are not focused on Helen, but rather what she can do to/for these men. Agamemnon says to his princes:

Sith every action that hath gone before
Whereof we have record, trial did draw
Bias and thwart, not answering the aim
And that unbodied figure of the thought
That gave't surmised shape. Why then, you princes,
Do you with cheeks abash'd behold our works,
And call them shames which are indeed naught else
But protractive trials of great Jove
To find persistive constancy in men,
The fineness of which metal is not found
In fortune's love? For then the bold and coward,
The wise and fool, the artist and unread,
The hard and soft, seem all affin'd and kin;
But in the wind and tempest of her frown,
Distinction, with a broad and powerful fan
Puffing at all, winnows the light away,
And what hath mass or matter by itself
Lies rich in virtue and unmingled. (I.iii.13-30)

In the entire speech Helen is not mentioned once; at no point is the loss of her as a person something significant. What is significant is this ambiguous “unbodied figure of the thought” that propelled and sustained this war. It becomes clear as the speech progresses that this thought has something to do with distinction. Apparently the princes have been arguing that the siege of Troy is an insurmountable endeavor, which no nation could be expected to overcome. Agamemnon discovers bitterly that such an impossible feat

cannot distinguish the “wise and fool, the artist and unread, / The hard and soft,” that defeat will leave the Greeks still suffering the existential question of what exactly their worth is. He poses his princes with the terrifying notion that these seven years will yield nothing, that distinction’s broad and powerful fan may in fact be filling the sails of his fleet, and leaving behind, “that which hath mass or matter by itself,” the walls of Troy.

Nestor replies with a speech affirming Agamemnon’s position, once again failing to mention Helen as a motivation to continue the war, (that is, if the sexually metaphorical aspects of the speech are ignored):

In the reproof of chance
Lies the true proof of men. The sea being smooth,
How many shallow bauble boats dare sail
Upon her patient breast, making their way
With those of nobler bulk;
But let the ruffian Boreas once enrage
The gentle Thetis, and anon behold
The strong-ribb’d bark through liquid mountains cut,
Bounding between the two moist elements
Like Perseus’ horse. Where’s then the saucy boat
Whose weak untimber’d sides but even now
Co-rivall’d greatness? Either to harbour fled,
Or made a toast for Neptune. Even so
Doth valour’s show and valour’s worth divide
In storms of fortune; for in her ray and brightness
The herd hath more annoyance by the breese
Than by the tiger; but when the splitting wind
Makes flexible the knees of knotted oaks,
And flies flee under shade, why then the thing of courage,
As rous’d with rage, with rage doth sympathize,
And, with an accent tun’d in self-same key,
Retires to chiding fortune. (I.iii.33-54)

Nestor supports Agamemnon, pointing out that great adversity should be welcomed. He suggests that such a difficult feat should not cause despair, but rather embolden the princes, whose eventual success would bring forth greater distinction than what would come from a simpler endeavor. On the part of the Greeks it is clear by the third scene in

the play that, as Hugh Grady says, the nations are “engaged in endless warfare for no larger end than self-aggrandizement” (59). It becomes clear in (II.ii) that this is the motivation of the Trojans as well.

Shortly after some debate amongst the Greeks, including Ulysses’ famous speech on order, Æneas enters with a message from the Trojans. He offers Hector’s challenge, and suggests a criteria for the challenger:

If there be one among the fair’st of Greece
That holds his honour higher than his ease,
That feeds his praise more than he fears his peril,
That knows his valour and knows not his fear,
That loves his mistress more than in confession
With truant vows to her own lips he loves,
And dare avow her beauty and her worth
In other arms than hers—to him this challenge. (I.iii.264-271)

He ends the speech saying that Hector will trumpet tomorrow “To rouse a Grecian that is true in love. / If any come, Hector shall honour him: / If none, he’ll say in Troy, when he retires, / The Grecian dames are sunburnt and not worth / The splinter of a lance” (I.iii.278-282). Women, again, have some central importance to the conflict. It is the reporting of those women, informed through the chivalrous acts of the warring parties, that is intended to provoke the Greeks to procure a hero. Agamemnon responds: “This shall be told our lovers[...]and may that soldier a mere recreant prove / that means not, hath not, or is not in love.” Agamemnon identifies love as the force that manages to publicly distinguish a soldier’s intention, identifying its ability to incite bloodshed as something elevated above violent recreation. Nestor maintains the point, claiming that if no Greek can “answer for his love” (I.iii.294), then he, “meeting him, will tell him that my lady / was fairer than his grandam, and as chaste / As may be in the world” (I.iii.297-299). The irony is apparent to the reader who knows that Achilles ultimately performs

this chivalry out of a far more literal love for his slain sexual companion, Patroclus. Achilles and Patroclus are the only lovers present in the Greek camp until Cressida is traded. By the third scene *Troilus and Cressida* has entered the realm of satire.

This satire may have become popular amidst World War II due to the mass produced propaganda that exploited this very link between war and chivalry. We see this in the following two images. The first is Japanese propaganda, and suggests that the Americans, based in Australia, are stealing the Australian soldier's woman while the Australian is off defending New Guinea. There is identical German propaganda aimed at the British, suggesting that the American stationed in Britain is seducing the British woman while her man is abroad. The second is American propaganda, suggesting that investing in the war will prevent the rape of one's fellow Caucasian women.



The exploitation of the chivalrous impulse becomes more powerful when it is made public. In the first case (and Goebbels produced scores of these sexualized dissent pieces under the title “Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda,” a title I daresay Horkheimer and Adorno were familiar with) we see the notion that the soldier

should fight for his girl undermined by confusing who the enemy is exactly (interestingly, Ulysses will confront this very subject in the *Odyssey*). The second could easily pass as Greek propaganda—the impulse is identical, and it does not have to do with the woman. Æneas blows his trumpet before announcing the challenge. He wants a public affront to the soldier’s chivalry. The public quality of propaganda is two fold: it is easier to distribute the idea, and the idea, properly packaged, will become more powerful if it is made public. The image’s coercion is compounded to the individual who sees his value in the reflection of the public, as we will see in Ulysses outline to Achilles. In order to capitalize on this reflected value the deeds must be reported. Nancy Huston notices some remnants of this relationship in contemporary culture:

The *New York Times* could not publish, on the front page, a photo of Iranian or Iraqi prisoners of war, kneeling in the age-old posture of male humiliation, hands on their heads, eyes filled with fear and hatred—without publishing on an inside page along with a continuation of the article, a photo of Iraqi or Iranian women, kneeling in the age-old posture of female bereavement, rocking back and forth, arms crossed over their breasts, eyes closed and cheeks streaming with tears. The second photograph is there *in order to give the first its meaning*. (qtd Bowen 6)

Public representation of men’s value through the lens of a woman is an old and constant force of sexual politics. What I intend to illuminate in this essay is the parallel politics that exist between the consumer and the producer. What I am calling the producer-idol-public paradigm is the pivoting point between these two disparate topics. Here is a summation of the relationships: the producer uses the idol to change the perceived value of his product; the public recognizes the established relationship between the idol and the producer; the idol reifies value in the product through affecting the perception of the public, and therefore is extremely useful to the producer. In the case of the chivalrous soldier this becomes existential—the product is his reputation, and he is the producer of

it. In commercialism the product may be a literal product, an ideology, a vote, etc. In establishing this paradigm I will hope to show the relationships that must exist for such a dramatic absurdity as the Trojan War to be believable (paying close attention to the satirical tone in Shakespeare's representation of the argument), as well as the correlative absurdities that exist in the culture industry, as it is known to us in the 21st century. I argue that commercial civilization has not escaped, but rather found disguises for the barbarism inherent in *Troilus and Cressida*, and that the rise in popularity of the play in the 20th century is evidence of that.

II. Sex and Capital

The language of *Troilus and Cressida* is so overtly aware of these commodified relationships that it seems predictive of such intellectual developments. There are a number of places in the text of where the commodification of Helen and Cressida is made explicit. We see one example of this commodification as Diomedes tries to pull Paris into a negotiation of Helen's worth:

Diomedes. She's bitter to her country: hear me, Paris –
For every false drop in her bawdy veins
A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple
Of her contaminated carrion weight
A Trojan hath been slain. Since she could speak,
She hath not given so many good words breath
As for her Greeks and Trojans suffer'd death.
Paris. Fair Diomed, you do as chapmen do,
Dispraise the thing that they desire to buy;
But we in silence hold this virtue well,
We'll not commend, that not intend to sell.
Here lies our way. (IV.i.69-80)

Paris catches Diomedes attempting to devalue Helen, just as a consumer would devalue something desired in the marketplace. Diomedes is unsuccessful. Paris knows that a

reaction praising Helen would begin to resemble a negotiation, and the Trojans have come to find that her value is beyond anything the Grecians can offer.

In contrast, there is Hector who insists amongst the Trojans, as if looking at a balance sheet, that, “She is not worth what she doth cost the keeping” (II.ii.52). Hector eventually yields to the will of the others, recognizing that she is “A cause that hath no mean dependence / Upon our joint and several dignities” (II.ii.193-194). The use of “joint,” and “several,” here represents the language of business partners. The Arden footnote for dependence reveals its full meaning: “*dependence*] consequence: i.e. the propriety of keeping Helen will appear, in so far as our honours are known to be engaged in the quarrel. (There is a further sense of *dependence* – ‘affair of honour, awaiting settlement’: OED 6 b—which, while not fitting the logic of the sentence, may explain Shakespeare’s choice of the word in arguing from the motives of an honourable dispute)” (168). Hector can see the absurdity, but cannot escape the coercion present when eyes are drawn to the argument. Troilus points out, “Why, she is a pearl, / whose price hath launch’d above a thousand ships, / And turn’d crown’d kings to merchants” (II.ii.82-84). She could not be more explicitly be commodified. And in this line the link between the commodified idol and the producer is established. This is no longer feudal or heroic. It is a reified marketplace. We are in a world where kings are businessmen, and questions of exchange-value lie at the heart of everything. As Troilus asks, “What’s aught but as ‘tis valued?” (II.ii.53). Hector replies, “But value dwells not in particular will” (II.ii.54). The players are confounded. The rules of the game are obscure, and ultimately are a creation of the powerful for their amoral utility.

Cressida is commodified similarly. Pandarus, the self proclaimed “broker” between the two, enters the room of the two lovers the morning after their consummation, saying, “How now, how now, how go maidenheads? Here, you maid – where’s my cousin Cressid?” (IV.ii.23-24). Pandarus is asking the price of virgins, and in a moment of wit pretends not to notice Cressida, as if it is apparent from looking at her that she does not fit into this market. The sexualized market place reveals itself much more literally in Calchas’ exchange of Antenor for Cressida as part of his defection to the Greek camp. Calchas says, “And [Antenor] shall buy my daughter; and her presence / Shall quite strike off all service I have done / In most accepted pain” (III.iii.27-29). It becomes clear by (IV.v) what the Greeks were buying. Cressida is passed from Greek to Greek, a sexualized toy, until finally retiring to Diomedes’ tent. Through this exchange we can infer that the Greeks see their acquisition of Cressida as some kind of reciprocation for their loss of Helen. This can be gleaned from Ulysses’ aside amidst the polyandry. As Patroclus takes his turn kissing Cressida, Ulysses exclaims to the crowd, “O deadly gall, and theme of all our / scorns” (IV.v.29-30), both in reference to Patroclus’ comment to Menelaus and to the current mockery of the loss of Helen with Cressida. Thus, the nature of the women’s power over men is that it is completely independent of her will; rather it is dependent on her public image. It is not present until it is reflected.

We can understand the sexualized idol and the commercial idol in the same register. An idol has a peculiar relationship to a producer. While the laborer is reduced to his use-value to pull a lever, and thus commodified, the idol’s actual existence, her ability to be exchanged as a social currency, is what becomes the commodity. It is her reputation, her public image that is the use-value to a producer. In this case there is a

parallel not only between the commodification of the respective personhood of the sex idol and the commercial idol, but also between both of those and the commodification of art, as Horkheimer and Adorno have discovered in bourgeois American culture in the 1940s: “The principle of idealistic aesthetics—purposefulness without a purpose—reverses the scheme of things to which bourgeois art conforms socially: purposelessness for the purposes declared by the market” (158). Horkheimer and Adorno apply to culture what Marx observed about the social relations of labor. They go on to say,

What might be called use value in the reception of cultural commodities is replaced by exchange value; in place of enjoyment there are gallery-visiting and factual knowledge: the prestige seeker replaces the connoisseur[...]One simply “has to” have seen *Mrs. Miniver*, just as one “has to” subscribe to *Life* and *Time*. Everything is looked at from only one aspect: that it can be used for something else, however vague the notion of this use may be. No object has an inherent value; it is valuable only to the extent that it can be exchanged. (158)

This position is familiar to anyone who has name-dropped a book, an artist, a movement, or anything that affords a cultural currency for the purposes of self-aggrandizement. Accessing cultural currency for self-aggrandizement is precisely what the Trojans and the Greeks are trying to achieve through Helen. Her exchange-value is her ability to offer cultural currency to the group she represents, just as artistic knowledge has become an exchange-value in the culture industry. To be exchange-value something must be publicly valuable, and that is where the similarity lies. Her use-value becomes her exchange-value—her ability to be a reified asset that adds value to the perception of those donning her.

The idol has the ability to change the consumer’s perception of the product without actually changing the quality of the product (‘product’ can be thought of both traditionally, and in terms of ideology. That is, in the case of subscribing to *Time* the

product is the image produced for a person). And for this ability they hold an extremely high value with producers. It is the woman's ability to impart honor on her respective nation that is valued. Troilus shows this as he overcomes Hector in a debate over Helen's value:

Hector. Hector's opinion
Is this in way of truth: yet ne'ertheless,
My spritely brethren, I propend to you
In resolution to keep Helen still
For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence
Upon our joint and several dignities.

Troil. Why, there you touch'd the life of our design:
Were it not glory that we more affected
Than performance of our heaving spleens,
I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood
Spent more in her defence. But, worthy Hector,
She is a theme of honour and renown,
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,
Whose present courage may beat down our foes,
And fame in time to come canonize us;
For I presume brave Hector would not lose
So rich advantage of a promis'd glory
As smiles upon the forehead of this action
For the wide world's revenue. (II.iii.189-207)

Here we can see that it is not Helen's person that is valuable, but rather that she is "A theme of honor and renown, / A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds." Agamemnon spoke of some ethereal "distinction," which would soon fan away all but what had matter. In fact, as is apparent here to Troilus, Helen is this fan of distinction. As Virginia Woolf concludes in *A Room Of One's Own*, "Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice his natural size" (36).

Cressida's role is equivalent for the Greeks. The fact that the Greeks were willing to trade their prisoner Antenor for her speaks volumes to her value. Antenor will now

return to the battlefield to slay more Greeks, while Cressida will objectively add nothing to the Grecian cause of winning the war. However, Antenor's use-value is equivalent to that of a laborer pulling a lever. The value he can add to the nation is bound by his ability to keep Helen for the Trojans. Cressida is, in effect, a Helen to the Greeks. Their sharing of her in (IV.v) shows their satisfaction in imitating what has been done to Helen.

In Diomedes' tent an interesting exchange occurs between he and Cressida, which shows her use-value as exchangeable sexual currency to him. Cressida gives Diomedes the sleeve that Troilus gave her as a token of his love. Then, in a change of heart she asks for it back, perhaps feeling guilty. Diomedes asks, "*Diom*: Whose was [the sleeve]? / *Cress*. By all Diana's waiting-women yond, / And by herself, I will not tell you whose. / *Diom*. Tomorrow will I wear it on my helm, / And grieve his spirit that dares not challenge it (V.ii.90-94)." As she is a representative of Diomedes she increases the perceived value of him. The challenge that Diomedes is looking for is a challenge of whether that perceived value is in fact valid or not. This method of establishing one's identity points out the link between women and war, showing that chivalry is, in fact, a search for an evaluation of one's self in the market. In this way Helen and Cressida reflect value onto the man, to be seen by all those watching him. It is in fact the public who dictate such conflicts. The use-value of the women after the exchange is a product of public will.

III. The Real and The Reified

Troy and Greece have engaged in a war being fought over the desirable effects of a looking glass. The paradoxical nature of this conflict is apparent when considering the desired ends of the two nations. Both are attempting to improve the value of their own

names. Through this process they, in fact, cause some significant destruction to themselves. An example of this can be seen in the marketing strategies of Dell and Apple.

A number of years ago Dell had an advertising campaign called “Dude, you’re getting a Dell,” which was geared toward making Dell the brand of choice for college students. The commercials consisted of a stoner like character often explaining the wonderful qualities of Dell computers to the parent of a lame student (that the “Dell Dude” was fired for being precisely what he was idolized as speaks to the flirtatiousness of the culture industry. It must only ever imply to seduce. The explicit realization of implicit representations becomes unmanageable; it ends the charade). Apple’s more recent advertising campaign, “Get a Mac,” also juxtaposed a laid back character who represented a Mac with an uptight, business like character who represented a PC. Both advertising campaigns were designed to establish the particular laptop with a desirable crowd in order to develop a culture that upcoming college students would find appealing. The upcoming college students (public) recognize a desirable spokesperson (idol) as linked to a company (producer).

But what about the people who made the computers? In the spring of 2010 the *New York Times* covered a story about the suicides in a Chinese electronics factory, Foxconn. The factory produces products for both Apple and Dell. Many of the suicides as well as the surprisingly high employee turnover rate are considered to be a reaction to the extreme pressure and low pay in the factories. As the *Times* reports, “They complain about military-style drills, verbal abuse by superiors and ‘self-criticisms’ they are forced to read aloud, as well as occasionally being pressured to work as many as 13 consecutive days to complete a big customer order—even when it means sleeping on the factory

floor.” As far as pay is concerned, one of the suicide victims, Ma Xiangqian, had, “worked 286 hours in the month before he died [71.5 hr/week], including 112 hours of overtime, about three times the legal limit. For all of that, even with extra pay for overtime, he earned the equivalent of \$1 an hour.” Between Ma Xiangqian’s suicide January 26th and the publication of this article on June 6th there have been 12 suicides or suicide attempts.

This case appears to be morbidly evocative of Marx’s observations of commodity fetishization. The fact that this is an unnatural representation of human relations is apparent in that the commodified relationship between the Foxconn executives and the factory workers was, in a capitalistic sense, wildly successful and yet incongruent with one’s will to live. This is the nature of reifying commodities: enormous resources are spent in order to change the consumer’s perception of a product, and, as a consequence, the factors of production and/or the product itself undergoes a qualitative decrease in value. As Lukacs says,

The fetishistic character of economic forms, the reification of all human relations, the constant expansion and extension of the division of labour which subjects the process of production to an abstract, rational analysis, without regard to the human potentialities and abilities of the immediate producers, all these things transform the phenomena of society and with them the way in which they are perceived. (6)

The consumer has no interest in supply side economics. We may see the product first, or perhaps the representative for the product, or the brand, then the price. We do not see further. From this “rational analysis” producers have come to place a huge value on the ability to change what people think of a product without changing the product itself. In 2009 Apple’s advertising budget was \$501 million and Dell’s was \$811 million. These budgets are representative of the importance the companies place on changing the

consumer's perception of the product. This is not to say that it is impossible to advertise a product without trying to establish an abstract emotional connection with the consumer. It is only to say that idolization is two-fold wasteful: it is intended to distort the consumer's image of the product, and it consumes a significant portion of the producer's resources.

Troy and Greece, as we have seen, have found a way to accomplish such reification. The women have an ability to increase the value of the name without objectively improving anything about the society. The subjectivity of value is a theme that Shakespeare addresses directly in the play. In an ideological discussion with Achilles, as he is attempting to manipulate Achilles into returning to the field, Ulysses reveals the theme of reified value explicitly:

Ulyss. A strange fellow here
Writes me, that man, how dearly ever parted,
How much in having, or without or in,
Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection,
As, when his virtues shining upon others
Heat them, and they retort that heat again
To the first giver. (III.iii.95-102)

Ulysses establishes the argument in order to convince Achilles to forgo his stubbornness and return to combat. His argument, that you cannot boast but by reflection of your qualities, is represented on the macro level in the entire conflict of the Trojan War. Achilles responds, oafishly assuming that the gist is simple, that value is discovered in reflection:

Achill. This is not strange, Ulysses.
The beauty that is borne here in the face
The bearer knows not, but commends itself
To others' eyes; nor doth the eye itself,
That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,

Not going from itself; but eye to eye oppos'd
Salutes each other with each other's form;
For speculation turns not to itself
Till it hath travell'd and is mirror'd there
Where it may see itself. This is not strange at all. (III.iii.103-111)

But Ulysses explains that the notion is rather that value doesn't exist at all until it is made public. It is not waiting to be realized, but waiting to be created:

Ulyss. I do not strain at the position—
It is familiar—but at the author's drift,
Who in his circumstance expressly proves
That no man is the lord of anything,
Though in and of him there be much consisting,
Till he communicate his parts to others;
Nor doth he himself know them for aught,
Till he behold them form'd in the applause
Where th'are extended; who, like an arch, reverb'rate
The voice again; or, like a gate of steel
Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
His figure and his heat. (III.iii.112-123)

The logic here would follow that it is then not the thing itself, but the public perception of the thing that determines its value. This passage locates an active force in the world of the play; the thing itself is recklessly abandoned for the perception of it.

Paris epitomizes this reified perspective. We might imagine John Stewart's contemporary method of satire as parallel to Shakespeare's in this instance: a blunt juxtaposition of glaring contradictions. For instance, immediately after the heartbreaking separation of Troilus and Cressida we see this interaction between the Trojans:

Paris. Hark, Hector's trumpet!
Aeneas. How have we spent this morning!
The prince must think me tardy and remiss,
That swore to ride before him in the field.
Paris. 'Tis Troilus fault: come, come, to field with him. (IV.v.137-141)

In fear of seeming cowardly, Paris faults Troilus for their tardiness. The irony is then highlighted with Æneas' line,

Deiph. Let us make ready straight.
Æneas. Yea, with a bridegroom's fresh alacrity
Let us address to tend on Hector's heels.
The glory of our Troy doth this day lie
On his fair worth and single chivalry. (IV.v.138-146)

Troilus, the present bridegroom, is robbed of his "alacrity." Diomedes and Æneas manage to run off to war with it. This is a continuation of the language that links the boldness of the soldier to the passion of the lover, as we saw in Æneas' speech in the first Act to the Greeks. The absurdity of all of this language is apparent as our protagonist mourns the loss of his lover, whom the Greeks have acquired through market transaction in order to simulate something of the "rape" of Helen in their own camp.

Paris and Æneas' reaction comes immediately after hearing the pleading Cressida, a fellow Trojan, rejecting the decision to defect to the Greek camp. She says to Pandarus, "I will not, uncle. I have forgot my father; / I know no touch of consanguinity, / no kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me / As the sweet Troilus!" (IV.ii.99-102). This is something that resembles love, the pretension under which the entire war is being fought. And yet Paris, the figure attempting to develop this artificial significance to the name of Troy, is so aloof from the reality of these emotions that he sees this bi-product of his endeavors as a mere nuisance.

Compounding this absurdity, Paris is depicted as rather indifferent to Helen. Pandarus asks Helen if she knows where Troilus is: "*Pand.* What says my sweet queen?—My cousin will fall / out with you: you must not know where he sups. / *Paris.* I'll lay my life, with my disposer Cressida" (III.i.82-84). The footnote of the Arden

edition of this play unpacks the difficult term ‘disposer,’ as “She who can do what she will with me (OED dispose v 8). That this is the sense of the word is suggested by III.94-9: Helen half-suspects an affair between Paris and Cressida” (188). In the line the footnote refers to, Pandarus has said of Cressida, “*Pand.* My niece is horribly in love with a thing you / have, sweet queen. *Helen.* She shall have it, my lord, if it be not my Lord / Paris. *Pand.* He? No, she’ll none of him: they two are twain. / *Helen.* Falling in after falling out may make them three” (III.i.94-99). From this interaction we can glean that Paris is considering infidelity, and is suspected of it. Paris’ comment is not even an aside, but rather open to Helen; it is her duty to prevent such threats from taking form. Despite this indifference to her, he is quite aware of how lucky his kinsmen are to be able to die in her defense:

There’s not the meanest spirit on our party
 Without a heart to dare or sword to draw
 When Helen is defended: nor none so noble
 Whose life were ill bestow’d, or death unfam’d
 Where Helen is the subject. Then, I say,
 Well may we fight for her whom we know well
 The world’s largest spaces cannot parallel. (II.ii.157-163)

Paris suggests that the “meanest spirit” of Troy is lucky to have the opportunity to die for Paris’ sexual conquests. His indifference to the Trojan soldier, to Helen, and to his “disposer” Cressida are all equivalent. This is the nature of the reified world that we find present in the Trojan War. In the same way that these characters destroy the thing they are simultaneously striving to appreciate, the corporation intent on brand building allocates enormous resources toward no greater end than self-aggrandizement. The entity attempting to artificially produce a more valuable perspective ultimately sacrifices the quality of the thing it is promoting. What small percentage of Apple or Dell’s marketing

budget could have been used to elevate the quality of the factors of production to a point at which employees worked in some kind of peaceful and respectable working environment? As for what was accomplished by the expenditure of the resources, we see only trickery—the manipulation of the consumer’s unconscious.

IV. The Alienating Epilogue and Enlightenment Tragedy

If it is given that such commercial reification of a commodity is wasteful then it becomes clear that it is the consumer’s consciousness of the reified structure that must be the tool used to eliminate such waste.

This begs the question, who is responsible for this war? Or, if we consider the suicides at Foxconn casualties of capitalism, who is responsible for those deaths? It feels a little wrong to us modern readers to consider the war to be Helen’s fault. Our celebration of free will might cause us to see a woman who leaves a forced marriage to sleep in the bed of her choice as justified, and that the absurd reactions of men are their own. Indeed, it is easy to say that Foxconn is responsible for the deaths and the powers of Greece and Troy are responsible for the Trojan War: Menelaus, Agamemnon, Paris and Priam. But if we can see Greece and Troy as institutions functioning under one principle, that of achieving honor or self-aggrandizement, then we can see that one party, that invisible third party, has absolute control over what actions will be taken to achieve such ends. If we, the collective readers of humanity, the listeners of stories, the impressionable, find great valor in what has been accomplished by Greece at the end of the play, then they have achieved their ends successfully. On the contrary, if the common sense of the time had been to react in disgust to such territorial war mongering and the dehumanization of the female sex under the veil of chivalry, then the powers of the nation

surely would have reacted accordingly. Hector would have won his argument with Troilus, who would no longer have been able to claim that honor would be bestowed upon the victor.

The play concludes with this sentiment. Pandarus' epilogue is, fundamentally, a curse upon the audience of the play. It is initiated by a curse that Troilus lays upon him. "Hence, broker-lackey! Ignomy and shame / Pursue thy life, and live eye with thy name" (V.x.33-34). The last couplet within the world of the play invokes the market terminology of commodified human relations that has pervaded the play, and curses it. Pandarus then turns to the crowd, saying:

A goodly medicine for my aching bones! O world, world! Thus is the poor agent despised. O traitors and bawds, how earnestly are you set a-work, and how ill requited! Why should our endeavor be so loved, and the performance so loathed? What verse for it? What instance for it? Let me see.

Full merrily the humblebee doth sing,
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting;
And being once subdued in armed tail,
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail (V.x.35-45).

The Arden edition offers a reading of the couplets:

42-5.] Pandarus means, apparently, that the happiness of the pander is lost when he is no longer effective (song ceases with honey and sting). His argument in ll. 37-40 says (a) that the employer of panders comes to detest the agent who procured for him, and (b) that the rejected pander, once so desirable, becomes impotent (something which belongs with his *aching bones*). He appeals, in effect, to the sexual pattern—expectation, attainment, revulsion—as Cressida did (I.ii.295-6): "that she was never yet that ever knew / Love got so sweet as when desire did sue" (302).

This "instance" is for the reception of the performance as the crowd desired it. It appears this epilogue keeps in Shakespeare's humbling tradition, in which he typically hopes the play was satisfying or is afraid it wasn't. But this particular epilogue assumes the crowd is displeased, and then addresses their displeasure. He claims to have shown them the

thing as it was, and, like the sexual excitement that Cressida recognizes as flawed perception, it turned out to be revolting rather than pleasant. But he avoids blaming the crowd for this in a peculiar way. He identifies with them.

The epilogue has a peculiar history, along with the rest of the play. Here, again, the Inns of Court theory becomes relevant. Arden says, “Late 1602, therefore, seems to be the date of composition of the play, for want of better evidence; yet the text was not printed until 1609, and it is possible that some alterations were made during those seven years.” One of these alterations seems to be Pandarus’ epilogue. Arden goes on to say, after taking into account the Epistle in Q (1609) that claims *Troilus* to be “a new play,” that,

Some second thoughts show through in both Q and F: the two different places for the rejection of Pandarus (in F) indicate clearly that at one stage Shakespeare meant the play to end with Troilus’

But march away.

Hector is dead, there is no more to say.

Pandarus’ epilogue is therefore a substantial addition to the original design[...] It is clear that in the Epilogue Pandarus is teasing the audience[...]the direct address is there to make a point: in two months’ time, in this same place, Pandarus will make his will. The usual comment on the lines is that the lawyers are being mocked, Pandarus is comically dying (Lechery eats itself), and there is just enough legal reference to support Alexander’s theory. This is reasonable: Pandarus might well make his will at an Inn of Court. (20-21)

The theory is expanded in “Appendix II The Inns of Court Theory,” in the Arden edition. They deal with bureaucratic evidence, an epistle written anonymously, and the content of the play itself. Arden suggests that the audience at an Inn of Court would be more likely to catch some of the legal jargon, philosophy, and irony that is idiosyncratic to this text. And it cites the epilogue as a one of the places where such legal terminology becomes evidence of that.

In the first half of the epilogue, Pandarus categorizes the audience within the producer-idol-public paradigm. The public in the culture industry is prone to experience disillusionment after the transaction, whether sexual or material, is undergone. But if this audience is full of budding lawyers, they are not likely to be confined to the public category very long. And so Pandarus switches after his couplets and begins addressing them as fellow brokers, as part of the industry of production:

Good traders in the flesh, set this in your painted cloths:
As many as be here of Pandar's hall,
Your eyes, half out, weep out at Pandar's fall;
Or if you cannot weep, yet give some groans,
Though not for me, yet for your aching bones.
Brethren and sisters of the hold door trade,
Some two months hence my will shall here be made. (V.x.46-53)

Again, Arden is necessary to unpack parts of this: “painted cloths] painted hangings for rooms (less elaborate than tapestries), often containing moral commonplaces as well as moral exempla.” “Pandar's hall” is the guild of panders. “Your eyes half out” is a reference to a venereal disease, as is aching bones. So we have Pandarus playfully equivocating on this meta level. Trader is also a pun on the earlier traitor—and to be both a trader and a traitor in the flesh is a provocative thing indeed. It condemns the broker: the profession of trading commodified humans, as has been revealed throughout the play, is an ugly business. For some master species to conduct such a market upon us would be cruel, but to do it to one another becomes traitorous. And so, their trading of flesh infects their flesh, just as Pandarus' is. Pandarus, seeing that the end is near, wishes to make his will to the lawyers. This is one of the strong pieces of evidence supporting the Inns of Court theory. And the two months may suggest, as Arden says, the two-month period between Twelfth Night and Ash Wednesday in the religious calendar (21). Pandarus

needs that time to conceal the symptoms of his venereal disease, the “galled goose of Winchester”

It should be now, but that my fear is this,
Some galled goose of Winchester would hiss.
Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,
And at that time bequeath you my diseases. (V.x.54-57)

So it becomes possible, given the Inns of Court theory and the Arden theory that the play was performed as part of a Twelfth Night festival, that Pandarus is going to write his will at the start of lent, bequeathing (his commodities, or diseases,) to the lawyers. In this interpretation of the epilogue, Pandarus is basically claiming that he's going to get rid of these rotten commodities for his Lenten purgation. In this particular edition made for the lawyers, the play ends either comically or tragically. They are mutually exclusive, and depending on the reading both are possible.

To the audience who receives the epilogue as a purely sexualized joke the epilogue becomes a trite rebuke to a displeased crowd over a failed play. This reading involves taking the inclusion of the crowd as “brethren and sisters of the hold door trade” as merely poking fun. However, the more pressure one puts on the speech, the less this reading holds up. How can we understand that he is willing diseases to the crowd? How can the crowd be a part of the same profession, a broker in the flesh, and this still be received as a comedy? It is only by refusing to take these lines seriously that such a conclusion can be reached. It is terribly easy, though, to refuse to take such lines seriously when they are condemning to an audience who came to be entertained.

The play ends tragically to the audience who takes this epilogue to heart. This is an instance, likely the first, of Enlightenment tragedy. Enlightenment tragedy has the quality of being easily mistaken for comedy. It makes a mockery of things, and then it

turns its critique to the audience, suggesting that this is you, too. If the audience misses this then the performance or the text remains mocking of something other. If the audience recognizes themselves as implicated then they are able to access the text in a self-reflexive way. They see that they are the ones being mocked. They are a part of the “other” that has been shown to be absurd, callous, cruel. If that category has been made sufficiently ugly, the reader will be unlikely to accept himself as one of “them.” He will immediately alienate himself from the thing that he recognizes is similar between himself and the mocked category. And it is in this alienation that tragic catharsis is realized. As an available work of Enlightenment tragedy, *Troilus and Cressida* devalues the heroes of the public, then devalues the public, not only for making such figures their heroes, but for engaging in an equivalent barbarism. The audience who recognizes this glimpses the disappointing end that it all will come to, a recreation of the sexual narrative ending in revulsion. This realization allows for change, for alienation, and for self-reflexive horror to end in catharsis. It took nearly three hundred years for the audience to recognize and value this.

“A SMILE NEVER HURT ANYONE:” FLANNERY O’CONNOR’S DIALECTIC OF PLACATION

Humorous, yes, but also uncanny, inexplicable, demonic, so you could never laugh at it as if you understood. Because if you pretended to understand, you, too, would find yourself among her demons practicing contempt...The only way to be saved was to stay out of it, not to think, not to speak.” (Qtd Zornado 28)

A prison cell for the body is one in which some exterior physical thing obstructs your ability to move around as you like. A prison for the mind functions differently; it is a point at the center of thought and it holds all other thoughts to it. Rather than being something you cannot get around, it is something you cannot get away from. The fiction of Flannery O’Connor tunnels into this prison, rather than out of it. It forces you to either close the book or latch on to the collar of any thought, follow the chain back to the obscured point of origin, and begin reconstruction.

The pervading theme of her fiction is found in the manifestation of various social realities, the incongruent ideologies that develop in these realities, and the violence that is produced from the interaction of the respective subjects of these different worlds—a product of their ideology. In this sense O’Connor’s work is interested in the relationships that exist amongst minds consumed, skewed, fixed and disfigured in their own confidence, a confidence that theirs is all there is to see. The fuel to her fiction is the exposure of categorical minds to one another. These minds recognize the distinctions of their categories, but through a filter that assures them of their own omniscient perspective of the world. In their volatility their absurdity becomes realized. This is fertile ground for Enlightenment tragedy. Raymond Williams identifies the development of tragedy, correlative with the development of culture, and applicable to what we will see O’Connor

do in her two stories, “Good Country People,” and “Revelation.” He says, “Tragedy is then fundamentally associated with the great crises of human growth: the Greek conflict ‘between man and fate’, and the dualism of man in the Renaissance. Comparable crises recur, and in modern tragedy the conflict extends to the Idea itself: ‘not only shall the relations of men to moral concepts be debated, but the validity of those moral concepts’” (36). To Raymond Williams, tragedy has explored and finally engulfed our notion that we are masters of the world. When once it was thought that the kind of ideologies leading to a successful and prosperous community were completely apparent, and tragedies occurred from one’s inability to follow that very clear but difficult road to perfection, now tragedy addresses the issue of the road itself. The tragic moment includes one’s realization that they have been so diligently engaging in farce, which is also their identity.

Horkheimer and Adorno, on the other hand, believe that the culture industry, in destroying the individual, has destroyed the tragic form. A semblance of the form remains for the utility of the culture industry, “Tragedy is reduced to the threat to destroy anyone who does not cooperate, whereas its paradoxical significance once lay in a hopeless resistance to mythic destiny. Tragic fate becomes just punishment, which is what bourgeois aesthetics always tried to turn it into” (152). They see tragedy now as merely reaffirming the tenets of the culture industry, and providing some crucial role in the façade. It suggests that there is no charade, that the public is quite aware of what is going on:

By emphasizing the “heart of gold,” society admits the suffering it has created: everyone knows that he is now helpless in the system, and ideology has to take this into account. Far from concealing suffering under the cloak of improvised fellowship, the culture industry takes pride in looking it in the face like a man, however great the strain on self-control. The pathos of composure justifies the world which makes it necessary. That is life—very hard, but just because of that

so wonderful and so healthy. This lie does not shrink from tragedy. Mass culture deals with it, in the same way as centralized society does not abolish the suffering of its members but records and plans it. That is why it borrows so persistently from art. This provides the tragic substance which pure amusement cannot itself supply, but which it needs if it is somehow to remain faithful to the principle of the exact reproduction of the phenomena. Tragedy made into a carefully calculated and accepted aspect of the world is a blessing. It is a safeguard against the reproach that truth is not respected, whereas it is really being adopted with cynical regret. (151)

Perhaps a good example of this would be the Peter Weir film, “Dead Poets Society.” The excellent teacher inspires a student to experience the kind of moments that we would exclude from the culture industry, that we would say are individual. The student, against the wishes of his father, performs Puck in a school production of *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. His disapproving father arranges for him to go to military school to learn discipline and to fall in line, the boy kills himself, and the school makes it seem like it is the fault of the excellent teacher. The film leaves the audience with the sentiment that it is a shame. We live in an imperfect world that is cruel to those who attempt to form such identities that are incongruent with an institution. At the end anyone who doesn’t conform is excluded. This tragedy seems to be repudiating an aspect of the culture industry (in this case more specifically the institution that breeds an affluent white patriarchy), but in reality it plays a distasteful but useful role. It makes the institution appear self-aware. It would measure its success in confirming what is already known. The demographic ripe for a self-reflexive tragic moment is limited to ornery old principals and fathers who hold a totalitarian authority over a spirit striving for freedom—a narrow demographic.

Horkheimer and Adorno go on to identify the process of the abolition of the individual through establishing the process of capitulation. Through this process there is a

transition from the individual to the collective culture industry, and the resignation of anyone who does not capitulate to the category of homo sacer:

Everyone can be like this omnipotent society; everyone can be happy, if only he will capitulate fully and sacrifice his claim to happiness. In his weakness society recognizes its strength, and gives him some of it. His defenselessness makes him reliable. Hence tragedy is discarded. Once the opposition of the individual to society was its substance. It glorified “the bravery and freedom of emotion before a powerful enemy, an exalted affliction, a dreadful problem.” Today tragedy has melted away into the nothingness of that false identity of society and individual, whose terror still shows for a moment in the empty semblance of the tragic[...]. The capacity to find refuge, to survive one’s own ruin, by which tragedy is defeated, is found in the new generation[...]. The liquidation of tragedy confirms the abolition of the individual. (153-154)

Enlightenment tragedy manages to escape this formulation. It is a form intent on redirecting the typical tragic characteristics—recognition, peripety, pity, fear—toward the reader. It mocks some category, makes it grotesque. If the reader allows it to become self-reflexive he experiences, in one sweeping moment, recognition of his participation in that very category. In this moment there is peripety—a reversal of the way he sees the world. It allows him to empathize (a word that, if it was available to Aristotle, may have replaced or at least heavily overlapped his terms “pity,” and “fear” as a characteristic of tragedy). But it also alienates him from the category. If the category is a part of the culture industry he will withdraw from it and regain something of the individuality he offered for admittance.

I. The Cripple

In my reading of O’Connor’s two stories I hope to show how they provide an instance of this tragedy. Even given the formulation that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* offers, that in the culture industry the individual is destroyed as bodies become part of a communal mind to be exploited, there still exists genuine tragic catharsis in certain texts.

Horkheimer and Adorno suggest amusement has replaced catharsis, “Amusement carries out that purgation of the emotions which Aristotle once attributed to tragedy[...]. The culture industry reveals the truth about catharsis as it did about style” (144). But within Enlightenment tragedy the reader achieves catharsis when he recognizes himself as the grotesque, in the empathetic and alienating moment. Flannery O’Connor’s “Good Country People” shows an example of this tragedy. She presents two instances of recognition/peripety, one within the story, and one that escapes the text and enters the world of the reader. The first of these moments is Hulga’s, duped and incapacitated in the barn loft. The second, the reader’s, is made clear in O’Connor’s choice to give Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell the bookend scenes.

The first of these scenes, seemingly innocuous, opens with a description of Mrs. Freeman’s expressions: “Besides the neutral expression that she wore when she was alone, Mrs. Freeman had two others, forward and reverse, that she used for all her human dealings. Her forward expression was steady and driving like the advance of a heavy truck. Her eyes never swerved to left or right but turned as the story turned as if they followed a yellow line down the center of it” (271). To take this metaphor seriously, which the story begs we do, Mrs. Freeman’s forward expression is driving something somewhere. We color what the something and the somewhere are with the further characteristics O’Connor provides. It is apparent that the reader’s conclusions are pivotal here. It is made apparent through repetition. We are shown this expression in the final paragraph of the story. As Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman watch Manley run off with Hulga’s artificial leg in his valise, “Mrs. Freeman’s gaze drove forward and just touched

him before he disappeared under the hill” (291). Her gaze is mentioned nowhere in the story but the first and last paragraph.

The second page of the story introduces us to a few important characteristics of Mrs. Hopewell’s. One is that, “Mrs. Hopewell had no bad qualities of her own but she was able to use other people’s in such a constructive way that she never felt the lack” (272). She fancies herself omniscient. The next is a useful listing of her favorite sayings, “Nothing is perfect. This was one of Mrs. Hopewell’s favorite sayings. Another was: that is life! And still another, the most important, was: well, other people have their opinions too. She would make these statements, usually at the table, in a tone of gentle insistence as if no one held them but her” (273). This is a pluralizing characteristic. She is convinced that she sounds nothing at all like the people whom she sounds exactly like. She closes the story with a similar kind of observation about Manley ““He was so simple,’ she said, ‘but I guess the world would be better off if we were all that simple”” (291). The limits of this ideology are completely transparent to the reader, but to Mrs. Hopewell, the notion that there even could be limits to her perspective is illogical. Her logic is based on her ideology, which has become her identity. If something contradicts her understanding of the world, she would still have a way of reducing it to her perspective. We are not given the opportunity to think that she would elaborate her perspective to understand the contradiction.

From reading the first few pages and the last two paragraphs there is no horror visible. Freeman and Hopewell begin entrenched in their respective beliefs and qualities, and by the end of the story they are distinctly still upholding them. It is Hulga’s story that is horrifying. While Hulga has glaring differences from Mrs. Freeman and Mrs.

Hopewell, such as her education, her rudeness, her introspection, etc., she seems to maintain their solidarity in her intolerance of others beliefs, and she also upholds their characteristically blinding appreciation for their own individual perspectives of the world. Hulga's language is different, her perspective is different, but her limitations are the same. She reveals this in a passage on page 276, in which the narration is close to Hopewell, "And she said such strange things! To her own mother she had said—without warning, without excuse, standing up in the middle of a meal with her face purple and her mouth half full—'Woman! Do you ever look inside? Do you ever look inside and see what you are *not*? God!' she had cried sinking down again and staring at her plate, 'Malebranche was right: we are not our own light. We are not our own light!' Mrs. Hopewell had no idea to this day what brought that on. She had only made the remark, hoping Joy would take it in, that a smile never hurt anyone." Many readers might be inclined to agree with Hulga to some degree. She, like the reader, can see the "simplicity" of Mrs. Hopewell, the self-placation. But it is an outburst grounded in the assumption of a superior perspective.

While in the previous scene we see an impulsive reaction of Hulga's, after her meeting with Manley we see her method of disseminating Enlightenment ideals through narration,

During the night she had imagined that she seduced him. She imagined that the two of them walked on the place until they came to the storage barn beyond the two back fields and there, she imagined, that things came to such a pass that she very easily seduced him and then, of course, she had to reckon with his remorse. True genius can get an idea across even to an inferior mind. She imagined that she took his remorse in hand and changed it into a deeper understanding of life. She took all his shame away and made it something useful. (284)

Another way to say this would be that Hulga wanted to remove his crutch, the crutch of his simplicity that presumably attracted him to these religious convictions. Horkheimer and Adorno address this impulse of the Enlightenment, which Hulga is ultimately fulfilling, “To the Enlightenment, that which does not reduce to numbers, and ultimately to the one, becomes illusion” (7) We might see her agreeing with this passage: “Only he who always submits survives in the face of the gods. The awakening of the self is paid for by the acknowledgement of power as the principle of all relations. In view of the unity of this *ratio*, the divorcement between God and man dwindles to the degree of irrelevancy to which unswervable reason has drawn attention since even the earliest critique of Homer. Man’s likeness to God consists in sovereignty over existence, in the countenance of the lord and master, and in command” (9). That is to say, our discovery of things more powerful than ourselves develops our system of worship, and our ability to reason ultimately reveals what was worshiped as an illusion. But she is yet to find, “The only kind of thinking that is sufficiently hard to shatter myths is ultimately self-destructive” (4). Hulga adopts the Enlightenment’s analytic reducibility in her assessment of Manley, which labels itself as sophisticated, but is later discovered as presumption. Hulga’s impulse is one typical of the Enlightenment when it encounters a dated version of itself. The process that is occurring is built into Hulga’s perspective, like a kind of software who converts older editions into its likeness when it encounters them. But it has not taken everything into account.

As the story unfolds things seem to be going according to plan for Hulga. Manley kisses her at the edge of the woods, and on the way to the barn she begins to unload atheist doctrine to him and believes she is seducing him. When he asks her to prove her

love the narrator, close to Hulga, says, “She smiled, looking dreamily out on the shifty landscape. She had seduced him without making up her mind to try” (288). In the following lines she asks how to prove her love, and Manley says, “Show me where your wooden leg joins” (288). The point at which she believes she has succeeded is the point at which her process of recognition/peripety begins.

At the climax of the story Hulga experiences the disillusionment that comes from the discovery of Manley’s true identity. When he takes the prosthetic leg from Hulga—her literal crutch is taken as opposed to his figurative one—we see Hulga physically crippled and intellectually confused. This maneuver is artfully ironic in its implications of the Enlightenment. In the Enlightenment we see patterns of reducibility from the tangible to the abstract: Vinyl becomes Compact Disc becomes MP3; coins become cash become card; mail becomes the telephone becomes cell/email becomes the iPhone or Blackberry; Polytheism becomes monotheism becomes atheism. In this moment of Hulga’s recognition/peripety there is a reversal of this trend from something tangled in the psyche to something tangible and critical to health. Poor health is embarrassing to the Enlightenment—it is a failure of science. The soul is where it aspires to focus its energy. In her attempt for, “true genius to get an idea across to an inferior mind,” she exhibits the kind of typical and crippling arrogance that is found in such a totalitarian and artificial reality, which is not only the case for Hulga, but for Freeman and Hopewell, too.

This is Hulga’s tragic moment. It has been established in such a way that the reader has a basic understanding of how crippling this scene would be to her future confidence in her own intellect, in addition to the self-consciousness that will arise from losing her wooden leg: “She was as sensitive about the artificial leg as a peacock about

his tail. No one ever touched it but her” (288). In Hulga the reader can imagine a character in the world of the story whose perception of reality is shattered in a grotesque and traumatic way. And so the reader looks at Hulga, perhaps with a little sympathy, and perhaps with a slight satisfaction that such extreme arrogance has been corrected.

But the story does not end with Hulga’s disillusionment, and with that relatively comfortable sentiment for the reader. Instead it shifts its focus to two characters that seem to have nothing at all to do with the course the story has taken. Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman make their respective comments about the simple country boy, which is clearly now dramatic irony, as the reader knows something about Manley that complicates him beyond either of their imaginations. In this moment “Good Country People” has the potential to enter the realm of Enlightenment tragedy, if the reader will notice the mockery pointed now at him.

Hulga’s moment of horror comes in her moment of realization, but that realization maintains a corrective, while extremely painful force. And, in this case, the horror is bound to the characters of the story. However, O’Connor chooses to end the story with the maintained ignorance of Hopewell and Freeman. The ending is brief enough that I will quote the text:

Then the toast-colored hat disappeared down the hole and [Hulga] was left, sitting on the straw in the dusty sunlight. When she turned her churning face toward the opening, she saw his blue figure struggling successfully over the green speckled lake.

Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman, who were in the back pasture, digging up onions, saw him emerge a little later from the woods and head across the meadow toward the highway. “Why, that looks like that nice dull young man that tried to sell me a Bible yesterday,” Mrs. Hopewell said, squinting. “He must have been selling them to the Negroes back in there. He was so simple,” she said, “but I guess the world would be better off if we were all that simple.”

Mrs. Freeman’s gaze drove forward and just touched him before he disappeared under the hill. Then she returned her attention to the evil-smelling

onion shoot she was lifting from the ground. “Some can’t be that simple,” she said. “I know I never could.” (291)

This is the imperative moment. Here I will repeat Friedman’s quote: “Humorous, yes, but also uncanny, inexplicable, demonic, so you could never laugh at it as if you understood. Because if you pretended to understand, you, too, would find yourself among her demons practicing contempt[...]. The only way to be saved was to stay out of it, not to think, not to speak.” This is the moment where, if the reader keeps his distance, the text remains a comedy. It is a humorous story that characterizes some horrible characters in their hellish world. As long as everyone remains ridiculous to us, the reader does not experience the tragic moment that Hulga did.

But this does not account for importance of the circular ending, the repetition of that haunting phrase, “Mrs. Freeman’s gaze drove forward and just touched him.” The reader is aware of the truly sinister that is obscured by the limits of Hopewell and Freeman’s perception. It shows them content in darkness, oblivious to the grotesque and the horrific, which they label simple thanks to their own simplicity. And the true horror of this finds its way into the reader’s consciousness. The true horror lies in the question of what, exactly, as we establish our concepts of reality based on our own choices of meaning and our own worldly perceptions, what great evils could be lurking among us daily and be completely obscure to us, based on our own arrogance and indignance at the prospect of something being incongruent with the reality we are very comfortable with. We say to ourselves, “those poor oblivious souls, there is so much they will never know,” just as they say the same thing to themselves. And so the question must become self-referential. How certain can we be, really, that we are not pushing a forward gaze onto

the complexities of the world, manipulating our idea of something sinister and foreign until it is simple enough to understand, and we are placated?

It is Hulga, the character with agency, a kind of agency the reader sees as grotesque that finally is corrected. The much more common character who does not seek out such adventures is left without the tools of self-improvement. When Freidman says the only way to be saved from seeing yourself as a demon is “to stay out of it, not to think, not to speak,” this is what he’s talking about. That these characters aren’t particularly identifiable is convenient for the reader. For if he allows himself to identify with this world he will see he perhaps ought to establish some agency of his own, allow his convictions to be destroyed and begin rebuilding, as Hulga does. That “Hope” and “Freedom” remain for characters who do not so venture forth is the most horrifying social critique of all. All of a sudden the story ceases to be funny. The reader finds himself looking around the room, turning off the Academy Awards. Perhaps he connects Mrs. Freeman’s turning of her attention to the evil smelling onion shoot with his own exposure to the reaction that Guantanamo Bay will not, actually, be shut down—he refreshes his facebook page, checks his news feed, links to a YouTube video of a band he half likes. If the reader identifies some correlative ugliness in himself, the reaction turns from laughter to fear. This is meta-peripety. The reversal of expectations happens in the moment of the reader’s recognition. And this is where tragic catharsis becomes available. In the turn to self-reflexivity the reader is humbled. Not only does empathy become available toward the characters (who are suffering the same condition as the reader) but it becomes available toward a whole spectrum of individuals that had previously been reduced to

something simple. We needn't lose a limb to access such awareness. We can read, instead.

II. Turpin's Everything

O'Connor's story, "Revelation," offers another example of the blinding force of adopting ideology as identity. The first line of the story prompts the reader to pay close attention to the way the environment is going to change for the protagonist: "The doctor's waiting room, which was very small, was almost full when the Turpins entered and Mrs. Turpin, who was very large, made it look even smaller by her presence" (488). We can see from the beginning that the narration will mimic Turpin's disability, her self-centeredness. Throughout we see that her mere existence changes the environment drastically, to the point of violence. But even this violence leaves her unchanged, despite hearing her ghastly echo return to herself, "Who do you think you are?" (507) in the final scene.

The narrator identifies the characters in the room as a function of Mrs. Turpin. She isn't offered a seat in the crowded waiting room and so: "Mrs. Turpin remained standing. The only man in the room besides Claud was a lean stringy old fellow with a rusty hand spread out on each knee, whose eyes were closed as if he were asleep or dead or pretending to be so as not to get up and offer her his seat" (488). It is an apparent wryness and a subtle narrative sarcasm that indicates Turpin's inability to acknowledge the existence of others for their own sake, but to insist on them existing for hers, a characteristic that we see in her lines on slavery as well. We can see that the apparent sleep or death is only relevant insofar as it affects Mrs. Turpin. The haggard man is merely acting to inconvenience her, despite his troubling appearance.

Again, through the use of repetition O'Connor characterizes Turpin for us acutely. Mrs. Turpin has a peculiar idea of what constitutes "everything." She says, "If you want to make it in farming now, you have to have a little of everything. We got a couple of acres of cotton and a few hogs and chickens and just enough white-face that Claud can look after them himself" (493). So, we are to gather that what the Turpin's farm is, in fact, everything that there is to farm. We see a similar sentiment expressed on page 497 about her character,

If Jesus had said, 'you can be high society and have all the money you want and be thin and svelte-like, but you can't be a good woman with it,' she would have had to say, 'Well don't make me that then. Make me a good woman and it don't matter what else, how fat or how ugly or how poor!' Her heart rose. He had not made her a nigger or white-trash or ugly! He had made her herself and given her a little of everything. Jesus, thank you! She said. Thank you thank you thank you! Whenever she counted her blessings she felt as buoyant as if she weighed one hundred and twenty-five pounds instead of one hundred and eighty.

Superficially this seems to be an impressively well adjusted thought process for Mrs. Turpin, in spite of the explicit bigotry. One could, from a certain angle, perceive a charm in her buoyancy and self-love. Beyond the fact that charm is a particularly uncommon characteristic of O'Connor's fiction, Turpin's categorization of "everything" indicates that there is something more complex and sinister at play here than a simple healthy and content perspective. Mrs. Turpin defines the word "everything" in terms of what she has. She has been allotted everything, and anything else is missing something by virtue of the fact that it is not hers. They do not farm everything, but Mrs. Turpin defines everything by what they farm. She does not, of course, have a little of every amiable quality. She defines everything in terms of the qualities she has. It is as if she believes that the only numbers in existence are the ones on her lottery card, as if every individual in the room

has been written for only that waiting room scene, and will disappear the moment they do not exist in relationship to her.

Another example of the limits of her perspective is seen in her thoughts on class on page 491. As we can see here, Mrs. Turpin has a very good idea of the layers of social classes until she gets to her own. She has difficulty going any higher than that:

Sometimes Mrs. Turpin occupied herself at night naming the classes of people. On the bottom of the heap were most colored people, not the kind she would have been if she had been one, but most of them; then next to them—not above, just away from—were the white-trash; then above them were the home-owners, and above them the home-and-land owners, to which she and Claud belonged. Above she and Claud were people with a lot of money and much bigger houses and much more land. But here the complexity of it would begin to bear in on her, for some of the people with a lot of money were common and ought to be below she and Claud and some of the people who had good blood had lost their money and had to rent and then there were colored people who owned their homes and land as well. There was a colored dentist in town who had two red Lincolns and a swimming pool and a farm with registered white-face cattle on it. Usually by the time she had fallen asleep all the classes of people were moiling and roiling around in her head, and she would dream they were all crammed in together in a box car, being ridden off to be put in a gas oven.

Once again, it becomes clear that Mrs. Turpin's understanding of reality is limited to the point at which she can consider herself the master of it. She can very clearly identify the classes of people below her but she becomes confused about the classes above. Her perception of the world beyond her own control becomes opaque and ultimately disappears. And when she is forced to see people in a way that she is not the master of, there is the imaginative gas oven waiting, linking this thought process to that great horror that O'Connor was a contemporary of. Fascism, as Horkheimer and Adorno note, may go to such ends in order to match reality to their perspective of it. But such dangers are not limited to Fascism. Burning the things that don't suit one's perspective is an activity any mind is capable of.

As Turpin's character is established as having these limitations, we are made aware of the glaring Mary Grace, a student at Wellesley, reading a book titled *Human Development*. The conversation passing between Mrs. Turpin and the pleasant lady eventually evokes a hideous face from the girl,

“There's a heap of things worse than a nigger,” Mrs. Turpin agreed. “It's all kinds of them just like it's all kinds of us.” “Yes, and it takes all kinds to make the world go round,” the lady said in her musical voice.

As she said it, the raw-complexioned girl snapped her teeth together. Her lower lip turned downwards and inside out, revealing the pale pink inside of her mouth. After a second it rolled back up. It was the ugliest face Mrs. Turpin had ever seen anyone make and for a moment she was certain that the girl had made it at her. (495)

Mrs. Turpin cannot imagine anything possibly strange or unpleasant about her interaction with the lady sitting across from her, and yet this interaction is enough to elicit a malicious reaction from the girl. She uses the same clichés that Hopewell uses in “Good Country People,” and the repetition of these clichés are no accident. When Mary Grace throws the book in the moment of violence on page 499, the event is preceded by similar sort of platitudes, also identical to the ones used in “Good Country People:” “‘It never hurt anyone to smile,’ Mrs. Turpin said. ‘It just makes you feel better all over’” (499). This is then followed by Turpin's speech, in which she makes public the very sentiment that locates her in that pleasant prison:

“If it's one thing I am,” Mrs. Turpin said with feeling, “it's grateful. When I think who all I could have been besides myself and what all I got, a little of everything, and a good disposition besides, I just feel like shouting, ‘Thank you, Jesus, for making everything the way it is!’ It could have been different!” For one thing, somebody else could have got Claud. At the thought of this she was flooded with gratitude and a terrible pang of joy rang through her. “Oh thank you, Jesus, Jesus, thank you!” (499).

It is at this moment that the book is thrown.

The choice to make this moment the one that is significant enough to incite violence in Mary Grace is strange. It isn't at her sneering and dismissive comments to the "white trash," it isn't her racial slurs, stating that African Americans want to "improve their color" (496) that the book is thrown. These are moments of alienation, of revulsion. It is rather when Mrs. Turpin says something sweet and sentimental. When her thoughts are loving and grateful that she is attacked. That is to say, at perhaps the only moment that O'Connor allows the reader to imagine themselves saying such things, at the only moment that Turpin becomes uncharacteristically identifiable to the reader, she is struck down. This forces the reader to have a similar moment of horror to "Good Country People" in order to understand the decisions O'Connor is making. That a book is the weapon is apt. She pries open the possibility that the reader's existence is equivalently ugly, and that the reader is equivalently unconscious of that ugliness, by waiting to strike Mrs. Turpin at the moment when Mrs. Turpin's sentiments become sentiments that the reader is familiar with or desirous of. And this evokes, once again, Freidman's passage. In order to avoid such a stunning realization the reader must not fully participate in what O'Connor forces the pages to do.

There is a stark resemblance to Mary Grace and Hulga, as they both react to the same line. On page 276, the scene in which Hulga exclaims, "Woman! Do you ever look inside? Do you ever look inside and see what you are *not*?" is a response to the same line stated in "Revelation" just before the violence ensues, "Mrs. Hopewell had no idea to this day what brought that on. She had only made the remark, hoping Joy would take it in, that a smile never hurt anyone." We are dealing with strikingly similar foils in these two stories.

There is a brief and strange moment in “Revelation” that suggests we are not dealing with characters so much as some kind of institutionalized culture that has inhabited them, and is much older than any one human. The narrator says of the girl’s demeanor toward Mrs. Turpin on page 495, “She was looking at her as if she had known and disliked her all her life—all of Mrs. Turpin’s life, it seemed too, not just all the girl’s life.” This is repeated on page 500, just after Mrs. Turpin has been attacked by the girl, “Mrs. Turpin’s head cleared and her power of motion returned. She leaned forward until she was looking directly into the fierce brilliant eyes. There was no doubt in her mind that the girl did know her, knew her in some intense and personal way, beyond time and place and condition.” It is in this paradox that the relationship between the two becomes clear. The girl hasn’t known Mrs. Turpin for all of Turpin’s life. What Mrs. Turpin perceives is an ageless movement glaring at her through a college girl. She is viewing the spirit that has, like a hermit crab, adopted the body of this girl. And it appears to be a version of the culture industry. It is not some idyllic truth that is staring at Mrs. Turpin; if that much is not clear in “Revelation” then it certainly is in “Good Country People.” The conflict that exists between Mrs. Turpin and Mary Grace is not a conflict between two people, but rather it is the conflict between two incongruent ideologies. They have adopted their respective bodies, informed them of their respective tenants, and allowed the arms and legs to run their natural course.

Mrs. Turpin’s first impression of Mary Grace is ‘pitiful,’ “The poor girl’s face was blue with acne and Mrs. Turpin thought how pitiful it was to have a face like that at that age” (490). Just before the violence occurs the pleasant lady, speaking less than cryptically about her own daughter, says, “I think people with bad dispositions are more

to be pitied than anyone on earth” (498). These women, who fancy themselves as pleasant, select the emotion of pity for Mary Grace’s characteristics. We see this sentiment in Mrs. Hopewell’s attitude toward Hulga. Speaking of Hulga’s bad attitude, the narrator says, “Mrs. Hopewell excused this attitude because of the leg (which had been shot off in a hunting accident when Joy was ten). It was hard for Mrs. Hopewell to realize that her child was thirty-two now and that for more than twenty years she had had only one leg. She thought of her still as a child because it tore her heart to think instead of the poor stout girl in her thirties who had never danced a step or had any *normal* good times” (274). This thought is expanded on page 276, “Here she went about all day in a six-year-old skirt and a yellow sweat shirt with a faded cowboy on a horse embossed on it. She thought this was funny; Mrs. Hopewell thought it was idiotic and showed simply that she was still a child. She was brilliant but didn’t have a grain of sense. It seemed to Mrs. Hopewell that every year she grew less like other people and more like herself— bloated, rude, and squint-eyed.” It is assumed then that Mrs. Hopewell falls into this category of other people, which Hulga is growing away from. This is the characteristic of pity that lends itself to O’Connor’s fiction. Pity is an emotion that implicates someone as other. The distinction here can be seen in comparison to empathy, which implicates another, or a singular other, equally separate from yourself and anyone else. Pity is categorical, it seems. One pities the enlisted man who died as one of a hundred enlisted men in a senseless battle. It isn’t until his circumstances are made identifiable to your own in some sense that empathy becomes available. It is an understanding on an individual level and an interaction or imagining of someone else’s sensations that evokes empathy. Pity does not go as far. It stops before reaching the point of imagining.

O'Connor has established the limits on the perspectives of her characters: Mrs. Hopewell, whose favorite sayings are the most banal clichés, which she insists on saying as though she invented them; Mrs. Turpin, who is sure that the definition of everything is limited to the things she has; Hulga, whose crusade to enlighten leads her to give away a body part unwittingly. But "Revelation" leaves us with the sense that they are all the same. In "Revelation" the violence occurs in the middle of the story, rather than at the end. After the waiting room scene ends Mrs. Turpin returns to her home, haunted by Mary Grace's phrase, "Go back to hell where you came from, you old warthog" (500). Mrs. Turpin finds herself maliciously hosing a hog in the eyes and yelling at it, ultimately asking, "Who do you think you are?" She receives the echo of the line. The line seems to refer back to the earlier violence. The pigs are as unaware of the reasoning of their antagonist as Mrs. Turpin is of hers. In considering the pig's perspective we can see what they would have to know in order to understand the shouting and aggressive spraying. They would need to know that Mrs. Turpin had been attacked, that confusing and hateful things had been said to her and she was trying to come to grips with it. If we apply the same thought process to the waiting room we can reasonably imagine Mary Grace at Wellesly, infuriated at the way the northerners link her accent to the southern stereotype, and that Mrs. Turpin's performance of this stereotype instigated a reaction. This only seems likely, and the evidence for it is tenuous. But regardless, Mrs. Turpin ends with a revelation in which she sees them all equalized, all the same, marching up to heaven. The truth that there are resemblances between everyone, that similarities abound, that differences are meaningful but largely blinding to these similarities is something that O'Connor recognizes as an ethereal truth, and Horkheimer and Adorno recognize as a

fact integrated into the manipulation of the culture industry. The culture industry, in recognizing the similarity, manufactures the differences:

The ruthless unity in the culture industry is evidence of what will happen in politics. Marked differentiations such as those of A and B films, or of stories in magazines in different price ranges, depend not so much on subject matter as on classifying, organizing, and labeling consumers. Something is provided for all so that none may escape; the distinctions are emphasized and extended. The public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification. Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type. Consumers appear as statistics on research organization charts, and are divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique is that used for any type of propaganda. (123)

That these reified ideologically worlds are entirely unrelated is apparent to anyone who is in them. that they share a mother is in fact the moment of tragic recognition that the reader experiences at the end of either of these stories of O'Connor's.

I conclude the discussion of Flannery O'Connor with a quote of David Foster Wallace's. It developed from a conversation with David Lipsky, and was recorded in the book, *Although of Course You End up Becoming Yourself: a Road Trip with David Foster Wallace*. It speaks to the impulse to evacuate yourself as frequently as possible, filling the vacancy with something manufactured, something that offers a surrogate identity. Or, instead, finding an escape in which the reader experiences a turn on himself that causes reflection. It speaks to the available catharsis of Enlightenment tragedy, and the kind of places one can find it:

I guess what I'm talking about is entertainment versus art, where the main job of entertainment is to separate you from your cash somehow. I mean that's really what it is...And I'm not, there's nothing per se wrong with that. And the compensation for that is it delivers value for the cash. It gives you a certain kind of pleasure that I would argue is fairly *passive*. There's not a whole lot of thought involved, the thought is often fantasy, like "I am this guy, I'm having this adventure." [...]So I think it's got something to do with, that we're just—we're

absolutely dying to give ourselves away to something. To run, to escape somehow. And there's some kind of escape—in a sort of Flannery O'Connorish way—that ends up, in a twist, making you confront yourself even more. And then there are *other* kinds that say, "Give me seven dollars, and in return I will make you forget your name is David Wallace, that you have a pimple on your cheek, and that your gas bill is due (81).

IDENTITY AND IMITATION; RESEMBLANCE AND RESISTANCE

I have spoken now, to some length, of a mechanized existence that is administered amongst the bodies of the modern world. In *Troilus and Cressida* we saw a conflict that dealt with the reified relationships between people as a process of capitalism, and the public's role in that process. I suggested that by connecting the individual's unconsciousness to the grotesque and satirized content of the performance the reader/audience experiences the catharsis of alienation, which established the play as an early work of Enlightenment tragedy. Flannery O'Connor subsequently provided us with the division of culture (similar to the specialization process inherent in capitalism's division of labor), which specifies the mechanical characteristics of various realities that polarize individuals in order to offer the semblance of individuality. In learning that the distinctions one makes amongst those he finds abhorrent are, in fact, artifice, and our consciousness is conflated with this artifice, one alienates himself from his preconceptions and sees, "nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" (Stevens). Or, to put it another way, he has a perspective change that affords him a personal resemblance. It is this point that I would like to elaborate, through the introduction of Wallace Stevens' poetics.

The summer fiction issue of the *New Yorker* featured twenty writers under the age of forty that the *New Yorker* deemed "captured the inventiveness and vitality of contemporary American fiction." They were each posed the question, "In your opinion, what makes a good piece of fiction work." Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche answered, "Emotion. The ability to make me feel and care. The ability to move me in some way.

The ability to touch something inside me that is often left untouched by newspaper articles.” It seems that she might be getting at something like a resemblance that must take place in order for a work of art to resonate. Stevens identifies this similarly, also making the distinction between the newspaper and the work of art, in identifying what a personal resemblance is not:

We are not dealing with identity. Both in nature and in metaphor identity is the vanishing-point of resemblance. After all, if a man’s exact double entered a room, seated himself and spoke the words that were in the man’s mind, it would remain a resemblance. James Wardrop, in *Signature*, said recently: *The business of the press is to furnish an indefinite public with a potentially indefinite number of identical texts.* (72-73)

Stevens, in quoting James Wardrop, makes the very point Adiche made. There is something unsatisfying about a text whose purpose is convey identity.

The relationship between identity and resemblance is apparent upon looking the word up in the OED. Five of the example sentences in sections a and b of the first definition of identity include the word resemblance. The definition they offer for identity is this: “The quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness.” When applied to Stevens poetics this becomes curious. He claims a oneness that is accessible through resemblance, but in a different way. Stevens goes on to say, “Nature is not mechanical to that extent for all its mornings and evenings, for all its inhabitants of China or India or Russia, for all its waves, or its leaves, or its hands. Its prodigy is not identity but resemblance and its universe of reproduction is not an assembly line but an incessant creation. Because this is so in nature it is so in metaphor” (73). Here we come to the difficult business of this distinction. The real difference

between identity and resemblance, the beauty we find in one and not the other, can be seen in looking at the way they reproduce. To reproduce an identity is to clone something. To reproduce identity is to make something identical. Resemblance is not “an assembly line but an incessant creation.” Resemblance is fecund. But it remains only potential until our imagination delivers it. When two dissimilar people make a child, that child is not a *reproduction* of identity, it is the *product* of a resemblance. Resemblance begets the life that identity cannot. Stevens goes on:

Nor are we dealing with imitation. The difference between imitation and resemblance is a nicety. An imitation may be described as an identity manqué. It is artificial. It is not fortuitous as a true metaphor is. If it is an imitation of something in nature, it may even surpass identity and assume a praeter-nature. It may very well escape the derogatory. If it is an imitation of something in metaphor, it is lifeless and that, finally, is what is wrong with it. (73)

If imitation tries to reproduce identity and, rather, it produces something slightly different, it is then not the same thing as a resemblance. Both are distinct, but in its distinctness imitation fails and resemblance succeeds. Imitation must be lifeless. It will inevitably either fail to mimic something or manage to mimic something that had life. But that thing, the metaphor, did not manage to live in such a way, and its life cannot be reproduced in such a way. Much like life as we know it, an instance of it cannot be reproduced.

One way of looking at Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique of the art, or lack thereof, in the culture industry is through this lens of identity, imitation, and resemblance, “Every detail is so firmly stamped with sameness that nothing can appear which is not marked at birth, or does not meet with approval at first sight” (128). Horkheimer and Adorno claim that the qualities of the culture industry are trending toward some kind of

fixed identity, in which the reproduction of its materials will become clone like. They concede that there will inevitably be variations amongst the characteristics, but a calculated variation, “Whenever Orson Welles offends against the tricks of the trade, he is forgiven because his departures from the norm are regarded as calculated mutations which serve all the more strongly to confirm the validity of the system” (129). The fear is that the culture industry will manage to produce a world in which the identity of the thing is reproduced, but as identity manqué—the mannequin—with blue eyes this time instead of green. This is not failure, but calculated. You, therefore, can establish your preferences. The semblance of your own identity is maintained. This is the impulse of bourgeois identity, as Kenneth Burke suggests in *Attitudes toward History* as it is excerpted in Jonathan Arac’s “Toward a Critical Genealogy of the U.S. Discourse of Identity: *Invisible Man* after Fifty Years:”

Bourgeois naturalism in its most naïve manifestation made a blunt distinction between “individual” and “environment,” hence leading automatically to the notion that an individual’s “identity” is something private, peculiar to himself. And when bourgeois psychologists began to discover the falsity of this notion, they still believed in it so thoroughly that they considered all collective aspects of identity under the head of pathology and illusion. (qtd Arac 203)

In this way we can see the appeal to the culture industry of promoting the reproduction of variations of one identity (the variation of these identities does not quite make them imitations. Imitation intends mimicry). By calculating the variation on “style,” the culture industry can create the illusion of a personal identity for the participant.

If the public notion of identity consisted of the whole of matter, a universal identity, then an individual might see himself as a part of the whole. The marxist aesthetic critique is then realized: the object is not seen as having value in and of itself,

but rather it is connected to the labor used to make it. It is not commodified. Identity becomes irrelevant as it becomes totalizing. But when a mass of individuals grasp for their own identities an industry of reproduction develops. Great art, as Horkheimer and Adorno outline, becomes that which avoids the reproduction of style:

Style considered as mere aesthetic regularity is a romantic dream of the past. The unity of style not only of the Christian Middle Ages but of the Renaissance expresses in each case the different structure of social power, and not the obscure experience of the oppressed in which the general was enclosed. The great artists were never those who embodied a wholly flawless and perfect style, but those who used style as a way of hardening themselves against the chaotic expression of suffering, as a negative truth. The style of their works gave what was expressed that force without which life flows away unheard. Those very art forms which are known as classical, such as Mozart's music, contain objective trends which represent something different to the style which they incarnate. As late as Schonberg and Picasso, the great artists have retained a mistrust of style, and at crucial points have subordinated it to the logic of the matter[...]That factor in a work of art which enables it to transcend reality certainly cannot be detached from style; but it does not consist of the harmony actually realized, of any doubtful unity of form and content, within and without, of any individual and society; it is to be found in those features in which discrepancy appears: in the necessary failure of the passionate striving for identity. Instead of exposing itself to this failure in which the style of the great work of art has always achieved self-negation, the inferior work has always relied on its similarity with others—on a surrogate identity. (130-131)

To understand the successful artist as failing to find identity takes some work. That the inferior work would rely on a similarity with others, and that would be considered a surrogate identity appears to be very close to the poetics of Stevens. One way to make sense of the “failure” that is necessary for successful art would be to say that in an attempt to become something with “oneness” the artist either manages to bring forth life, to incarnate some new thing through the production of a resemblance, or he imitates the accepted style, perhaps with his own calculated variation, and achieves a surrogate identity:

In the culture industry this imitation finally becomes absolute. Having ceased to be anything but style, it reveals the latter's secret: obedience to the social hierarchy. Today aesthetic barbarity completes what has threatened the creations of the spirit since they were gathered together as culture and neutralized[...]By subordinating in the same way and to the same end all areas of intellectual creation, by occupying men's senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning with matter that bears the impress of the labor process they themselves have to sustain throughout the day, this subsumption mockingly satisfies the concept of a unified culture. (131)

To Horkheimer and Adorno this secretive obedience to the social hierarchy is the very thing that art can manage to be reduced to, given Burke's analysis of bourgeois identity.

The individual who sees himself as something complete will be very ready to see the thing in front of him as something complete too, and will be very content within the narcissism of compounding his own imagined identity with the trinkets afforded him.

That he would never buy Jiff instead of Skippy, never listen to Bruce Springsteen rather than Bon Jovi, has no time for Stephen King but is crazy for John Grisham (my preferences are the reverse of these three) affords him his identity. The contrast is a farce, evidence of the oligopolies that establish culture.

The distinctions between such cultural categories are meant to be public and fixed. By publicizing themselves they more efficiently profit from their oligopoly. This is not saying that a "real" artist doesn't go on a book tour. It is saying that a "real" artist does not need his work to conform to someone's preexisting identity. The effect of the thing is not going to be fixed. I think Stevens calls the identity-reproduced-with-variations "public resemblance" at times, and that this provides a useful distinction:

The resemblance of the baby's shoes to the baby, by suggestion, is likely to be a resemblance that exists for one or two alone. A public resemblance, by contrast, like the resemblance of the profile of a mountain to the profile of General Washington, exists for that great class of people who co-exist with the great ferns in public gardens, amplified music and minor education. What our eyes behold may well be the text of life but one's meditations on the text and the disclosures

of these meditations are no less a part of the structure of reality. It quite seems as if there is an activity that makes one thing resemble another (possibly as a phase of the police power of conformity). What the eye beholds may be the text of life. It is, nevertheless, a text that we do not write. The eye does not beget in resemblance. It sees. (75-76)

That “the eye does not beget in resemblance. It sees,” is to say that a resemblance in and of itself does not produce anything. It is, as Stevens goes on to say, the imagination that begets. And the function of the imagination is diminished in the culture industry, in the public gardens, amongst the “police power of conformity.” The McDonald arches may resemble a particular type of fast food, it may do this for an obscene number of people, and it is very far from qualifying as a poetic resemblance. The reason for this has something to do with the kind of imaginative act that one experiences when one looks at the arches. There is an unconscious imagining that is available. It is defined, reified, and reduced to an identity. It isn’t exactly clear what is wrong with our imaginations uniformly and unconsciously accepting the meaning of such an icon. After all, mathematics exists in the same way. But there is a reason these public icons abound. They indulge our desire to give ourselves away, to capitulate, to function in a world that we have come to understand, to compound our identities that we are completely comfortable with. Enlightenment tragedy complicates these identities. It exhausts the imagination that the public world has atrophied. But like rebuilding the muscle, the exercise that weakens it ultimately allows for growth. I will close with another excerpt from David Foster Wallace’s speech, “This is Water,” in which he illustrates something of the different kinds of freedom that we are afforded given the different ways we can use our imaginations:

The so-called real world will not discourage you from operating on your default settings, because the so-called real world of men and money and power hums merrily along in a pool of fear and anger and frustration and craving and worship of self. Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom. The freedom all to be lords of our tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the centre of all creation. This kind of freedom has much to recommend it. But of course there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talk about in the great outside world of wanting and achieving.... The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day.

That is real freedom. That is being educated, and understanding how to think. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing.

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