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Introduction

Welcome to another issue of *Knighted: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Undergraduate Research*! Our seventh annual edition brings together student scholarship from a variety of disciplines, including social work, English, health science, and media studies, to name a few. *Knighted* highlights the breadth and depth of undergraduate research at Middle Georgia State University. The Council for Undergraduate Research says that student research should make “an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline.” Our students’ scholarship, assembled in the pages that follow, unquestionably makes such a contribution as the scholars featured here engage with topics ranging from examinations of the role of social workers in the lives of ALS patients, to historical analyses of the early years of Disney Studios, to a review of the role of libraries in LGBTQ+ communities, to a study of female autonomy in folktales. This year’s scholars have thoroughly impressed our editorial board with their innovative perspectives and commitment to scholarly research. We invite you to enjoy reading every article published in this issue of the journal.

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Mission

Knighted: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Undergraduate Research seeks to highlight the diverse array of fine undergraduate work being done across a wide variety of disciplines at Middle Georgia State University. The University's mission statement calls attention to "lifelong learners whose scholarship and careers enhance the region," and we believe that *Knighted* does precisely that by providing a public venue for students to demonstrate their research skills. In addition, the University's recent Quality Enhancement Plan, Experiential Learning@MGA, has fostered an academic environment providing students opportunities to engage in exploration and application beyond the classroom, with emphasis on the completion of research projects with support from the institution and mentorship of faculty. By going through the process of submission and peer review, students get an in-depth feel for the craft of scholarly research.

Submission Guidelines

Students may submit original work that was completed as an undergraduate at Middle Georgia State University. Original research projects, including those developed in collaboration with faculty mentors, are welcome from all departments and disciplines. Faculty in the appropriate discipline will review all submissions. The best papers from the Undergraduate Conference are automatically accepted, and submissions to the conference are eligible for faculty review for inclusion. Typed manuscripts should be submitted as MSWord files to knighted@mga.edu. They should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and in 12 point, Times New Roman font. Illustrations, tables, and figure legends should be embedded within the text at the locations preferred by the authors. Citations should be formatted in the most recent editions of the citation style appropriate to their academic disciplines, e.g., MLA, Chicago, APA, etc. The chosen format must be used consistently throughout the manuscript. Each submission to the journal requires a faculty endorsement. Have the sponsoring faculty member email the editorial board at knighted@mga.edu.

On My Honor: The Spectrum of Chivalry in Shakespeare

Amber Seabolt

FIRST PLACE, UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE BEST PAPERS

Chivalry means different things to different people. Modern society relegates it to holding doors for ladies or giving up bus seats for the elderly. Medieval knights believed chivalry was a lifestyle, a code of conduct by which they lived and died. But since its inception, the “chivalric ethos” has always encompassed more than just moral behavior or military prowess. At the heart of chivalry is honor. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes honor as the “quality of character entitling a person to great respect; nobility of mind or spirit; honorableness, uprightness . . . and strict adherence to what is considered to be morally right or just” (“honour | honor”). Honor informs and bookends all the other ideals of chivalry, including loyalty, courage, mercy, humility, respect for women, and self-discipline (Meron 11). Indeed, chivalry is often called a “code of honor.” This code guided and inspired knights, soldiers, and military men down through the ages. It also inspired numerous artists, musicians, and writers, including William Shakespeare. The Elizabethan playwright brilliantly brought the human condition to the stage and, notably, gave us a view of the full spectrum of the chivalric code of honor. In *Hotspur*, *Falstaff*, and *Benedick*—three of the Bard’s most fascinating soldiers—the audience finds chivalry that is either unchecked, dead, or well-balanced.

The Elizabethan audience was familiar with chivalry—the high age of medieval chivalry was not that long past; a wealth of military handbooks were available to the public, and local soldiers and veterans (with their stories and values) milled about in everyday life (Jorgensen 18-19). However, the sixteenth-century public was also familiar with chivalry’s decline in the face of a female, unwed monarch who despised the expenses of military conflicts (N. Jones 186). During this age of upheaval and uncertainty, many probably looked at the “old ways” with great nostalgia and a longing for more of the same civic order. Young, enthusiastic soldiers may have wished that their profession held the same glory and excitement it once did. Still, others likely regarded chivalry as a lost cause, unworthy of a second thought. Theatrical displays of soldiers and the spectrum of chivalric honor impacted all of these opinions.

Harry Percy’s infamous nickname, *Hotspur*, perfectly encapsulates his volatile persona. Hot under the collar and easily spurred to action, he represents unchecked chivalry. In *Bloody*

Constraint: War and Chivalry in Shakespeare, Theodor Meron refers to this as “honor to the point of disaster” (126). When actions and emotions are unbridled, honor deteriorates. One can hardly be merciful or temperate in a fit of rage. Hotspur always seems to teeter on the edge of childish yet dangerous fury. Although he is commended for his gallantry and nobleness by both King Henry and Prince Hal in *Henry IV Part 1*, his friends and allies frequently criticize his lack of self-discipline. His father accuses him of being an “impatient fool” who is “drunk with choler” (*IH4* 1.3.131, 244). The Earl of Worcester, his uncle, calls him “harebrained Hotspur governed by a spleen” (5.2.21). And Hotspur’s own language overflows with impulsive, war-hungry statements such as “O, let the hours be short / Till fields and blows and groans applaud our sport” (1.3.312-313). Meron further describes Sir Harry Percy as the “paradigm of an excessive, self-centered, egomaniacal knight” (126). Worse, Hotspur’s unbalanced temperament distorts and erodes other chivalric virtues that would otherwise be honorable.

Failure to show respect for women was a serious offense against the code of honor (R. Jones, 148). Hotspur’s attitude toward and treatment of his wife calls his supposed gallantry into question. It causes Lady Percy to call his love into question:

For what offense have I this fortnight been
A banished woman from my Harry’s bed?
. . . Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not.
. . . Do you not love me? Do you not indeed?
(*IH4* 2.3.40–41, 66–67, 102)

Despite her pleas, Hotspur all but ignores her, easily giving his attention to a servant who enters to tell him about a horse (2.3.68-74). Indeed, the only answer he can give his loyal wife is that he does not trust her. “Constant you are,” he admits, “But yet a woman . . . for well I believe / Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know” (2.4.114-115, 117-118). Later, just before he goes to war, all he does is vex her, again insulting women and pestering her to sing (3.1.234-266). Although he does not forthrightly abuse or disgrace his wife, Hotspur’s devotion is far from the ideal courtly love and respect expected of a man of chivalry. Unfortunately, this lack of loyalty carries over into more grievous matters.

Paramount to chivalric honor was loyalty to one’s comrades and lord (R. Jones 146). Very early in *Henry IV Part 1*, Hotspur angrily challenges and insults the king. Not only does he refuse

to relinquish prisoners of war to the crown (as is custom), but he also labels Henry an “ingrate,” “thorn,” “canker,” and “vile politician” (*IH4* 1.3.140, 180, 250). The treasonous litany soon deteriorates into outright rebellion as Hotspur rallies supporters to stage a coup. If Shakespeare’s audience was not already weary of Sir Harry Percy’s antics, this act likely put some on edge. Current and former military leaders especially felt the sting. They understood the importance of loyalty. History scholar Robert Jones describes the interpersonal dynamic of chivalric loyalty in his book *Knight* as “a two-way thing” (147). A soldier’s loyalty to his lord was just as crucial as the lord’s loyalty (duty) to the men in his charge. This give-and-take equilibrium stabilized the military and the empire. When *Henry IV Part 1* debuted in 1596-97, the threat of the Spanish Armada and memories of the Black Plague had already unsettled England. The nation needed every ounce of stability it could muster. Shakespeare, through Hotspur, showed his audience the danger of threatening a kingdom’s stability with disloyalty. This soldier’s unhinged chivalry is an object lesson in self-control for the ages.

In sharp contrast to Hostpur, Sir John Falstaff stands at the extreme opposite end of the chivalric spectrum. Introduced as a “fat-witted” drunk in *Henry IV Part 1*, Shakespeare’s source of comic relief embodies dead chivalry (*IH4* 1.2.2). The washed-up soldier portrays a self-serving personality that may have angered many military audience members. Infamously, in the very midst of a battle, Falstaff pauses to contemplate:

What is honor? A word. What is in that word
“honor”? What is that “honor”? Air. A trim reckoning . . .
‘Tis insensible, then . . .
Therefore, I’ll none of it. Honor is a mere scutcheon.
(5.2.135–141)

Reducing the very heart of chivalry to a meaningless word, he “deliberately offends [one of] chivalry’s most sacred principles” (Meron 129). While Hotspur displays dangerously ambitious chivalry, Falstaff’s honorless lifestyle manifests most evidently in dishonesty and cowardice.

Falstaff is not only guilty of lying and thieving, but he readily attempts to justify his deeds. Responding to Prince Hal’s comments about committing robbery, the old soldier replies, “[’T]is my vocation, Hal. ’Tis no sin / for a man to labor in his vocation” (*IH4* 1.2.110-111). And lying is all but second nature to him. He frequently talks himself in circles as his lies compound, such as in Act Two Scene Four when he tells Hal and Poinc about being attacked by a “band” of thieves

(actually only Hal and Poins in disguise) and fighting them hand-to-hand (he ran away screaming). Yet somehow, he always manages to turn dishonesty around in his favor. For example, Falstaff attempts to take the credit (and reward) for killing Hotspur in the Battle of Shrewsbury, an honor that belonged to the prince. Hal's attempts to rectify the lie fall flat:

FALSTAFF. There is Percy. If [the king] will do me any honor, so; if not, let him kill the next Percy himself. I look to be either earl or duke, I can assure you.

PRINCE. Why, Percy I killed myself . . .

FALSTAFF. Didst thou? Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying.

(5.4.143–149)

He lies *and* accuses his lord of lying. As Shakespearean scholar Paul Jorgensen puts it, Falstaff is a “model in reverse” for military conduct (30). Unfortunately, Falstaff's chivalric honor only decays from there.

Considering that valor is a vital tenet of chivalry, it is no surprise that Falstaff is quite the coward. During the Battle of Shrewsbury, while his fellow soldiers valiantly fight and die to prevent an insurrection, Sir John “plays dead” on the battlefield. As always, he justifies his actions, saying, “To die is / to be a counterfeit . . . The better part of valor is discretion, in the / which better part I have saved my life” (*IH4* 5.4.117-118, 122-123). In other words, bravery is pointless, and dying (even nobly) is a farce. Jaded soldiers and laissez-faire Elizabethans disinterested in chivalry may have rooted for Falstaff. Many others, military and civilian, knew that a world without honor—without chivalry—was destined for turmoil. Falstaff's foolish behavior and eventual demise are a stern warning against operating without honor.

In the reliably balanced middle of the spectrum, *Much Ado About Nothing's* Signior Benedick models the ideal chivalric soldier. Professor of English Philip Collington describes him as “reasonable and practical . . . the ‘middle-way’ . . . between soldierly roughness and courtly refinement . . . between self-advancement and service to his prince” (284). He is lauded by fellow characters throughout the play. A messenger proclaims he is “stuffed / with all honorable virtues” while his commanding officer says, “he is of / a noble strain” (*MA* 1.1.55-56, 2.2.369-370). Essentially, they say, “Chivalry is not dead as long as Benedick lives.” The one opposing voice comes from his rival/love interest, Beatrice. The kindest compliment she can muster is that

Benedick has a healthy appetite. Although Beatrice's insults are part of the comedic drama—to set up the subplot of her and Benedick's unusual courtship—Shakespeare may be using her in another way. She could represent the voice of the “naysayer” Elizabethan, who felt chivalry was “neglected” and “devalued” (N. Jones 186) and, thus, served no real purpose other than mockery. After all, art has an interesting way of imitating life. Nevertheless, Benedick's value and distinction as a soldier (and a gentleman) is well-established by his peers and would stick in the audience's minds.

Several acts later, Benedick finds himself at an awkward crossroads regarding his chivalry. His commanding officer, Don Pedro, and his good friend, Count Claudio, have just publicly (and erroneously) maligned the lady Hero as she stood at the altar with Claudio. Sensing something is amiss and likely shocked at his comrades' deplorable conduct, Benedick decidedly stays behind when the Prince and Claudio leave. It is a telling turning point in the play. As previously mentioned, loyalty to one's comrades and honorable protection of ladies are paramount ideals in the chivalric code of honor (Meron 5). Benedick leaves no doubt he has love and loyalty for the men he has fought with and befriended when he says, “[M]y inwardness and love / Is very much unto the Prince and Claudio” (*MA* 4.1.256-257). However, his sense of duty and honor outweighs that in the face of what he has witnessed: “Yet, by mine honor, I will deal in this . . . justly” (4.1.258-259). Benedick faces the stark reality of challenging his prince's actions, complicating the plot, and testing the chivalric ethos of any military audience members. Many may have thought, “What would *I* have done in Benedick's shoes?”

On the heels of the disastrous wedding scene and to fulfill his promise to Beatrice, Benedick confronts Claudio and Don Pedro. In defense of Hero's honor, he challenges the Count to a duel, calling him a “villain,” a murderer, and—should he forfeit the fight—a coward (5.1.158-163). Benedick's preexisting displeasure with Claudio may have made the encounter easier. In act two, he bemoans the Count's sudden deterioration of manly chivalry in exchange for weak, distracted courtly love. However, as Benedick takes his leave of the pair, he is careful to pay honorable respect to the prince and settle things between them: “My lord, for your many / courtesies I thank you. I must discontinue your / company” (5.1.200-202). He has followed the etiquette of chivalry to the letter by issuing a direct and justified challenge (which he does in private, perhaps as a veiled affront to the glaringly public offense committed by Claudio) and graciously discharging himself from the prince's envoy. Unlike Hotspur's naïve and undisciplined

rebellion, Benedick is standing up for the truth and acting in the interest of the greater good. As Professor Collington says, “Benedick’s willingness to defend a wronged lady’s honor, even to the point of defying his prince, distinguishes him as having achieved the highest level of service” (296). He understands the balance of power and honor; he knows when defiance is appropriate. Throughout the play, Benedick progressively proves his merit as a balanced gentleman and soldier.

Hotspur, Falstaff, and Benedick represent every angle of chivalry itself as well as every opinion of the code of honor held by Shakespeare’s audience. Whether a raging wildfire, a dying ember, or a controlled burn, these soldiers both caution and inspire. Hotspur and Falstaff prove that self-focus erodes honor. Benedick demonstrates how selfless sacrifice nurtures chivalric honor and, typically, produces positive results for the greater good. Balance is the key. Extremes do not profit anyone; they only distort that which is true and good. Whether the theater-goers viewed chivalry in a positive, negative, or neutral light when the productions began, all undoubtedly left with fresh, thought-provoking perspectives.

“Honor is an absolute; it either exists entirely or it vanishes into air” (Collington 303). Professor Collington’s words could easily have been Shakespeare’s. The Bard repeatedly demonstrated the importance and continued relevance of chivalric honor via the stage. This influence continues today, notably in military circles. The United States Army affirms, “Of all the Army values, honor is the one that embodies all the others” (Gibson). These “other values” are the same ones medieval knights pledged their lives to: “respect, duty, loyalty, selfless service, integrity, and personal courage” (Gibson). Those knights and their values, in turn, inspired works such as *Much Ado About Nothing* and *King Henry IV Part 1*. The soldiers in Shakespeare’s audience, inspired by characters like Benedick (and cautioned by the likes of Hotspur and Falstaff), paved the way for modern military men and women. It is a living example of how chivalry is not dead, thanks to the immortal words of William Shakespeare.

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Looking for “Her Kind” in *Transformations*

Teagan McSweeney

SECOND PLACE, UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE BEST PAPERS

Often when people write about “Her Kind,” the fact that Anne Sexton began her public readings with it is mentioned. As Clare Pollard writes, “Her Kind” was Sexton’s “signature” (4). The poem represents the body of her poetry, as it keys into the era’s attitude; she was predominately concerned with the role of the housewife in the twentieth century. The speaker of “Her Kind” is a woman trapped in the Cold War era’s expectations of nuclear suburban womanhood. Her poetry in *Transformations* recasts and subverts the villainesses and heroines of fairy tales into victims and perpetrators of their oppression trapped within the confines of the Cold War era patriarchy. Sexton’s “Her Kind” acts as a motif for the poems within *Transformations*. With considerations for the structure and imagery of “Her Kind,” Sexton lays the foundations for the patriarchal subversion in *Transformations*.

First, the era is essential to understanding Sexton’s reinterpretations in *Transformations* and the images and attitudes in “Her Kind.” During the post-war era of the 1950s, “adverts and magazines...commonly used the rhetorical tactics of viewing American Woman as the sum of her various activities” of keeping the home, which were demanding and stifling (Pollard 3). The incongruity between the promised life of a housewife depicted in the advertisements and the reality is the foundation of Sexton’s “Her Kind.” As Pollard writes:

The suburban house with all-electric kitchen offered no shelter from the darker side of human experience...Sexton puts on three costumes in three verses—witch, housewife and adulteress...the roles blur into each other and the subscribed boundaries are transgressed. (1-4)

The blurred line accommodates the idea of women’s complexity and the confining role of housewives. The adulteress is the witch; the witch is the housewife. The housewife is a disguise all women wear to hide the desires, temperament, and appetites improper for the Cold War woman. Thus, Sexton acknowledges the breadth of female experience that womanhood, defined by the patriarchy, has been unable and unwilling to accommodate.

Each stanza of “Her Kind” individually represents different ways a woman is oppressed by womanhood, how the expectation of womanhood destroys her, and how she perseveres despite it.

For example, stanza one depicts a listless woman who wanders outside her home “like a possessed witch” (Sexton line 1). She is stifled by her suburban life of “plain houses” and ashamed of her desire for more (4). The imagery of the witch suggests a desire to turn her life into something dark and malignant. As folklorist Ashliman outlines, the witch motif in folklore can express taboos and fears of women abandoning children (2). The speaker has this desire, referring to it as “dreaming evil” (Sexton line 3). She says, “A woman like that is not a woman, quite,” with wry acknowledgment that she cannot fit the strict Cold War ideal of womanhood (6). Therein, she defines womanhood by the patriarchal expectations for housewives of the nuclear family.

However, such a definition reveals women like her result from patriarchal expectations; they are not the anomaly. The witch motif and what she represents “possessed” her, yet the nuclear family creates this desire by confining women to the notion that they must be fulfilled by such things as kitchen appliances and what they cook with them (1). By using the witch motif and subverting it, Sexton normalizes the taboo and secret desires of wives and mothers. She blurs the witch with the housewife. Her suggestion is clear: women desire to escape their nuclear families, to be selfish.

The motif of selfishness and a mother’s relationship with her child is explored in “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves” through the notion of beauty. The image of a mother villainized for her selfish desire for beauty at the expense of her daughter, appears with the Queen’s attempts to kill the beautiful, virginal Snow White. The quest for beauty “poisons” the stepmother as her envy for Snow White’s youth grows (Sexton line 33). However, like the witch of “Her Kind,” her want of beauty over her daughter’s life makes her a sympathetic figure of patriarchal oppression. Francisco José Cortés Vieco writes, “As a slave of rituals of beautification to maintain her attractiveness, the Queen perceives that Snow White’s menarche, allied with patriarchal forces, is the fiend who devalues her majestic power and jeopardizes her safe position at court” (14). At the poem’s conclusion, the Queen is humiliated at the wedding feast between Snow White and the prince to dance with gracelessness in “red-hot iron shoes / in the manner of red-hot roller skates” (Sexton lines 200-201). To be labeled graceless is a punishment reserved by society for older women who try to remain beautiful, therefore powerful, past their expiration date.

The Queen echoes the witch motif of “Her Kind,” but so does Snow White. While Snow White revels in her cruelty, secure in the power of her beauty, the poem anticipates that another virginal girl will usurp her. Snow White concludes the poem by repeating the pattern of vanity.

Now the queen, Snow White, turns away from her stepmother, “referring to her mirror / as women do” (Sexton lines 117-224). She suffers from the same patriarchal desire for beauty that traps women. Sexton, then, suggests the idea that the stepmother was not selfish but rather a product of society. A woman’s power comes from her beauty; the stepmother’s beauty fades, and she is usurped by the young and virginal beauty, Snow White. Snow White does not realize that she, too, will be the aged woman, desperately clinging to power through a mirror.

More faithful to the idea of the witch speaker becoming “possessed” by the dark thoughts the nuclear family inspires is the blunting of the princess’s character in “The White Snake.” This poem gives voice to the quiet way the husband in “Her Kind” destroys his wife. The servant tastes the secret white snake dish, giving him the wisdom to seduce princesses. The text paints the princess as haughty and powerful, describing and vilifying her as “ever woman” and “Ever Eve” (82-88). The comparison to Eve suggests a damning lust for something more significant than the simple things the servant can offer her; “ever woman” is derisive and coded in the patriarchal language (82). The princess, then, is proud and vain like a woman, ungrateful like a woman for rejecting the servant. He gives her the “apple of life,” symbolizing the promise of safety and happiness women often associate with marriage, and the promise housewife propaganda seemed to guarantee (90). Consequently, her life reaches a blunting suburban dead end when she marries the servant.

He becomes a husband and leader of the house, and the princess loses her title when she tastes his apple. She becomes his wife and a mother, but never the princess. Thus, she loses her power when she marries. The ants, birds, and fish that occupied the fantasy land before their marriage die with the advent of the nuclear family. Now, in the suburbs, they “were placed in a box” of societal expectations to “[live] happily ever after” in “a kind of coffin, / a kind of blue funk” (113-118). The apple, the promise of happiness, was false. The princess dies in her suburban coffin, powerless and numb. The nuclear family works like an atom bomb, disintegrating anything that made the princess who she was before she was a wife.

Continuing the focus on the consuming expectations of women in nuclear families, the second stanza of “Her Kind” depicts how the role of womanhood and keeping the house eats away at the speaker and literally deadens her. She says she has “fixed the supper for the worms and the elves,” drawing on the image of a martyr as she expends her body to become worm food and food for fickle elves (Sexton line 11). She is expected to give all of herself to her children, who eat away

at her. Resentful, she dehumanizes them, “worms and elves,” to rationalize the way she destroys herself for them (11). Nevertheless, she is not the woman to give herself so freely—she is the witch and the adulteress, too (Pollard 4). Hence, her being “twelve-fingered” creates a deformity subtle enough to hint at a wrongness (Sexton line 5). The extra fingers symbolize her desire, that she was meant to grab more than she currently has in life. The speaker is not the housewife she is meant to be. It is not her nature. The suburban home cannot confine her, and she finds herself seeking fulfillment and thrill elsewhere to revive the life that deadened her.

Women being diminished by the nuclear family and its expectations appear in “Hansel and Gretel.” Sexton acknowledges the correlation between mother and witch, a motif from “Her Kind.” The witch-mother resolutely rejects society’s expectations, and she attacks the foundations of Christian values within the nuclear family by choosing her survival over her children (Sexton lines 32-36). During the era of the witch trials in Europe, it was believed that “participants” of a witch’s sabbath “would sacrifice infants in a perverse variation on the Christian mass” (Young 166). The versions of the fairytales Sexton drew from were steeped in this patriarchal vilification of women; Ashliman notes that the “standard evildoers” are often women because patriarchal societies would not want to tarnish male characters, the closest reflection of God’s image, per Christian belief (Ashliman 47). Since the nuclear family is a microcosm of God’s creation, the witch-mother’s desire to disrupt her nuclear family is a hellish and direct confrontation with the Christian order. Combining the elements of the witch’s sabbath and patriarchal notions of female villainy, the witch-mother’s desire to cannibalize Hansel is compared to a “a feast/ after a holy war” (Sexton lines 78-79). She, then, is the imagined conquering figure of the patriarchy. Had she been successful, she would have destroyed a new generation of patriarchy, leaving the world for her daughter’s inheritance.

Nevertheless, in an ironic twist, Sexton illuminates the reality of motherhood. Even the most wicked mothers are martyrs like the mother of “Her Kind,” who wastes away to feed her children. Sexton concludes the poem by dressing the mother as a Christ figure, and the family eats her flesh “like something religious” (Sexton line 123). The children are purified by her sacrifice though they damn her. Like Snow White attacks her stepmother, Hansel and Gretel attack the witch, burning her and recalling the speaker’s persecution in “Her Kind.” They recognize their martyred mother by the smell of the witch’s flesh as they eat what they believe is “chicken leg[s]” (119-220). Sexton cements in the text the idea that women must martyr themselves, drawing literal

comparisons to Christ's sacrifice to save man from original sin. The patriarchy sees a selfish woman, but even she sacrifices herself more than her nuclear family could ever credit her.

The final motif in stanza three of "Her Kind" blends the witch and the housewife with the unfaithful wife. Earlier in "Her Kind," the speaker, as the witch, left the house literally. Now, her escape is emotional and sexual, as the imagery of her persecution suggests. The speaker proclaims, "I have ridden in your cart, driver / waved my nude arms at villages going by / ...survivor / where your flames still bite my thighs" (Sexton lines 15-18). The imagery recalls the historical execution of witches by funeral pyres, yet the speaker appears unafraid of her kind's repeated executions. She identifies with this shamed depiction, claiming, "A woman like that is not afraid to die / I have been her kind" (20-21). She is a woman who gives her body for pleasure rather than as a martyr, who is self-centered because she centers her needs and wants above other things. The poem concludes with a powerful statement about the secret lives of women and the women who are unafraid to live them regardless of the consequences.

The unfaithful wife motif also shows up in "The Little Peasant." The miller's wife is "at her game," indulging in the feasts and the parson's romantic and sexual attention (Sexton lines 41-75). The miller's wife is unsatisfied and discontent with her life as a housewife. Her discontent is represented in the absence of decadence in her treatment of her husband. Her sexuality is compared to a meal. As in "Her Kind," the head of the nuclear family, the husband is the silent source of her discontentment and her desire for escape. So, when the miller says, "My stomach is empty," and she responds, "She had no food / but bread and cheese," there is a clear depiction of her sexual dissatisfaction with her husband (98-100).

In comparison, she cooks the parson, her paramour, "roast meat, salad, cakes and wine" (Sexton line 75). His eyes are a luxury, "black as caviar" (76). Her sexual relationship with the parson is rich and fulfilling. She indulges in the parson, and the relationship echoes the unapologetic tone within the unfaithful wife motif. The imagery is powerful considering the time, especially when the parson hides in the cupboard (Sexton line 91). Pollard writes, "standardized uniformity of [suburbia] seemed almost patriotic" (11). Housewives were essential to the "myth of suburbia" and maintaining the "symbol" of the "superiority" of Nixon's America (11). Sexton revolts against this mainstream power by placing the interloper, the parson, within the suburbs' epicenter, the kitchen. Thus, the unfaithful wife's body and her food become a place of resistance to the housewife, the Cold War era's patriarchal standard for true womanhood.

Given these points, “Her Kind” is essential to understanding Anne Sexton’s body of poetry. As her manifesto against the stifling Cold War patriarchal standard of true womanhood, “Her Kind” becomes a motif that reappears in her other works, such as her anthology of fairytale retellings, *Transformations*. Applying the motifs of “Her Kind” to *Transformations* clearly shows how Sexton subverts the villainous women and the heroines of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tales to comment on the trappings of the patriarchy within the nuclear family.

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Optimizing Engagement: Crafting a Comprehensive Volunteer Model for Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation

Jessica Furtney

Abstract

A Post COVID-19 Pandemic Volunteer Acquisition, Management, and Retention Model is proposed for bridging the volunteer engagement gap for youth-based NPOs, based off data from a distributed Kingdom Boxing Volunteer Experience Survey. The model suggests a hybrid strategy harmonizing digital communication with direct personal interactions, complemented with specialized training, integration-gearred infrastructures, and increased alumni influence. The suggested model is designed to rejuvenate volunteer involvement, empowering NPOs like the Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation to sustain and amplify their mission of nurturing youth and enhancing community welfare in a post-pandemic world.

Keywords: non-profit organizations (NPOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation (KBFF)

Introduction

In 2023, Warner Robins, Georgia, witnessed the establishment of the youth-based non-profit organization (NPO) entitled the Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation (KBFF), an initiative of the Kingdom Boxing Gym established in 2018. This paper postulates the necessity of a structured volunteer model tailored to reinforce and sustain the KBFF's mission of holistic youth empowerment. The proposed model has been developed around key elements of recruitment, training, retention, feedback and adaptation, and transition of Alumni, with the purpose of increasing its applicability to all youth-based NPOs, not just the KBFF.

Literature Review

The Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation (KBFF) offers pathways for youth to attain athletic prowess, career guidance, and personal development. A key feature of its operations is a virtuous cycle of mentorship. Non-profit organizations (NPOs) like the KBFF offer crucial support systems for otherwise underserved youth, a sentiment echoed by Naomi Camper in 2016 [3]. As the need for supportive services escalates, so does the demand for dedicated volunteers.

Kingdom Boxing engaged in many volunteer strategies before COVID-19, relying heavily on in-person volunteer recruitment events and word of mouth to acquire a strong volunteer base. The organization's pre-pandemic reliance on direct interaction was abruptly halted due to the lockdown, as depicted in the COVID-19 Kingdom Boxing Volunteer Acquisition Model illustrated in Figure 1. The lockdown led to a shutdown in traditional volunteer management and a subsequent

shift to online platforms to maintain engagement. Despite these adjustments, the organization experienced a stark increase in the student-to-coach ratio post-lockdown, suggesting that the digital outreach could only partially compensate for the face-to-face volunteer recruitment hiatus. This disparity points to the need for an in-depth exploration of alternative volunteer acquisition and retention strategies that could sustain organizations like Kingdom Boxing during crises and beyond.

This literature review focuses on key areas instrumental in creating an optimal volunteer outreach model, including the importance of youth-based NPOs, escalating demand for volunteers post COVID-19, obstacles that hinder the acquisition and retention of volunteers, and suggested volunteer acquisition and retention strategies.

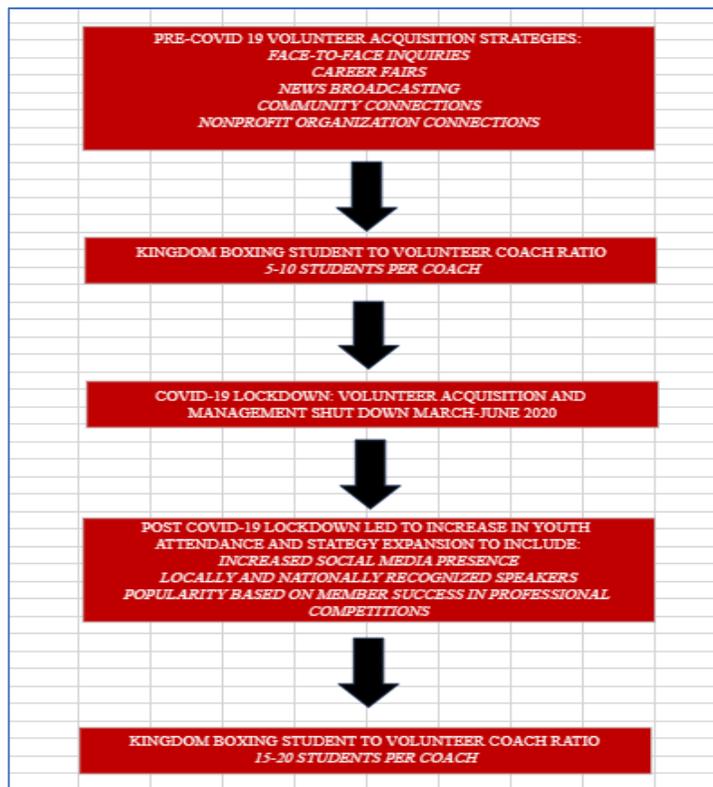


Figure 1. COVID-19 Kingdom Boxing Volunteer Acquisition Model. Source: Furtney.

Importance of Youth-Based NPOs and Community Outreach Increased by COVID-19

Research conducted by Molly A. Miller (2019) regarding the Son of a Saint (SOAS) mentorship program indicates that the need for youth-based NPOs and Community-Based Organizations

(CBOs) to continue their hard and diligent work has increased to the point where community run organizations outnumber state or federal organizations seeking to serve the same purpose [7]. As government resources to meet the needs of at-risk youth and their families are exhausted, CBOs and NPOs play an essential role in helping these individuals and their youth obtain critical services and support, allowing them to adjust to the post COVID-19 era [2]. The research of Miller and others emphasizes the need for NPOs like KBFF to maintain a steady influx of resources by which they can provide their services.

Need for Volunteers Following COVID-19

During COVID-19, the need for volunteers to support NPOs and their efforts increased. As Ginger Abbot (2021) of LAProgressive indicates, COVID-19 significantly impacted NPOs as well as their financial and human resources [1]. This impact was largely due to the economic standstill and lag brought about by the pandemic, as well as the social distancing protocols put in place to stem the spread of the virus.

As the initial lockdown was lifted, the evolving efforts employed by NPOs to manage themselves and engage in community and volunteer outreach minimized face-to-face interaction requirements. Additionally, social distancing led to many NPOs maximizing social media and other technologically based efforts, including holding virtual meetings amongst administrative members and their teams [11]. Despite the additional efforts made at virtual communication, many NPOs like Kingdom Boxing have failed to experience the influx their strategies were geared towards providing, primarily due to the strain placed on the personal connections with donors and potential or current volunteers [11]. This resulted in the human resources of NPOs such as Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation being stretched thin by drops in acquisition and retention rates and increases in their communities' needs for their continued efforts.

Factors Impeding Volunteer Acquisition and Retention in a Post-Pandemic Landscape

NPOs have historically faced challenges regarding lack of funds, trust, cooperation, and support. Related directly to these assets are organizational factors, generational factors, and Person-Organization (P-O) fit.

In terms of organizational factors, the following influence volunteer acquisition, engagement, and retention: input, organizational capacity, output, and outcome. As Samad and

Ahmad (2021) state, organizational capacity “reflects [an] NPO’s ability to generate outputs or outcomes effectively” based on inputs requested and acquired from community outreach programs [10]. An NPO publicly perceived to have excellent organizational capacity will encourage greater volunteerism rates.

NPOs such as Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation must contend with individual-based factors as well, namely generational factors which impact individuals’ likelihood to volunteer or continue to volunteer. As Choi, Lee, and Park (2023) indicate, there are marked differences in the tendencies of generational cohorts regarding their likelihood of volunteering their time and financial resources [4]. Presently, most volunteers are of the Millennial or Gen Z generational cohorts. The volunteer behavior of Millennials and Gen Zers can be divided between two contradictory sides [4]. These two sides are referred to as the “self-centered” or “apathetic” “Generation Me” sector and the more “optimistic” and “community-focused” “Generation We” sector [4]. Because of the “Me/We” separation and an observed aversion to religious-based organizations, it has become difficult for NPOs to appeal to Millennials or Gen Zers.

A final factor that plays a part in determining volunteer interest is Person-Organizational (P-O) Fit. If an individual feels that an NPO’s values and mission align best with their own, they are more likely to donate to the NPO in terms of time, energy, and resources [4]. Conversely, if an individual feels that the values and mission of an NPO are not aligned with their own, they will be less likely to contribute.

Strategies for Increasing Volunteer Acquisition and Engagement

Strategies for improving volunteer acquisition, management, and retention include marketing strategies for NPO branding, task management or optimization, and value fulfillment.

The brand image of an NPO is its “face” to the public and to potential investors or consumers. As Mitchell and Clark (2021) indicate, the presentation of an NPO’s brand “is a powerful influence on the decision to volunteer” [8]. Marketing an NPO’s accomplishments and values to a target volunteer market comprised of individuals of the Millennial and Gen Z generations is a viable NPO volunteer outreach strategy. This involves utilizing technological platforms for information conveyance and face-to-face interactions.

Kaur and associates (2022) offer that through optimization volunteers can be more motivated to invest their resources in NPOs such as Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation [6]. By

utilizing a deterministic model to balance volunteer needs and values with organizational tasks, Kaur and associates (2022) posit that volunteer engagement and retention can be increased [6]. This strategy employs careful management and placement of volunteers and their resources to benefit the NPO and volunteers and falls in line with the concept of P-O fit as a volunteer determining factor.

The third strategy suggested by the literature for NPO volunteer acquisition and retention involves value fulfillment for volunteers. According to a study by Fait, Cillo, Papa, Meissner, and Scorrano, a focus on providing volunteer-valued intellectual capital and value fulfillment is important for NPOs seeking to maintain volunteer engagement and retention [5]. By prioritizing Knowledge Sharing Intention (KSI) and Volunteer Employee Engagement (VEE), NPOs can further drive volunteer engagement and improve their sustainability [5].

Methodology

To gather insights into the experiences of volunteers at Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation (KBFF), the Kingdom Boxing Volunteer Experience survey was designed and distributed ethically to current KBFF volunteers to gain an understanding of their opinions and intentions regarding volunteerism with KBFF. This tool was crafted to collect demographic details and explore volunteers' expectations, ambitions, perspectives, and plans about the youth-focused non-profit organization (NPO), including its mission and values. Created with Survey Monkey, the survey was disseminated for volunteers to fill out anonymously. The survey questions were designed along six distinct sections, each tailored to draw insights on specific domains identified in the volunteer model. The sections are as follows: demographics, the efficacy of existing training protocols, retention, the effectiveness of existing feedback mechanisms, the alumni and transition experience, and motivations and intentions.

Results

The first demographic analyzed for the sake of the present study was the predominant age ranges of the Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation's current volunteers. As shown in Figure 2, the ages of the respondents ranged from under 18 years old to 44 years of age.

The age demographic data displays a robust younger demographic engagement, with 45% of respondents being under 18, 33% between the ages of 25-34, and the remaining 16% within the

35-44 bracket. However, the data show a sharp cut down in volunteer representation when it comes to the 18-24 age group, where the 45% representation experienced by those under 18 declines sharply to 6%, suggesting a significant dip in volunteer engagement until representation picks up again in the 25-34 age bracket.

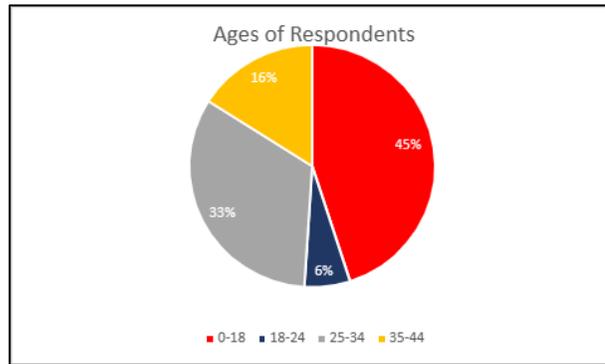


Figure 2. Ages of Respondents. Source: Kingdom Boxing Volunteer Experience Survey.

According to the surveys, the monthly Youth Game Nights hosted by the organization serve as a primary catalyst for drawing new, younger participants of the under-18 demographic bracket. The survey’s dominant younger demographic reinforces this event’s popularity among a younger audience. Another noteworthy outreach initiative of the foundation is the annual back-to-school backpack and school supplies giveaway community event, often occurring at summer’s end. While the Youth Game Nights appeal to the younger demographic, the backpack and school supplies giveaway appeals more to the 35 and over age brackets. These events and age demographic data underscore the organization’s strong alignment with its vision of fostering a mentor-mentee continuum in its community, actively involving youth and middle-aged and older adults in its mission.

Figure 3 provides a detailed insight into the educational attainment levels of participants associated with the Kingdom Boxing Fitness Foundation’s programs. The demographic data regarding education levels among Kingdom Boxing volunteers revealed a significant spread across the educational spectrum, with 45% indicating some high school education and 33% possessing a bachelor’s degree or higher. 22% of respondents had completed high school or obtained a GED.

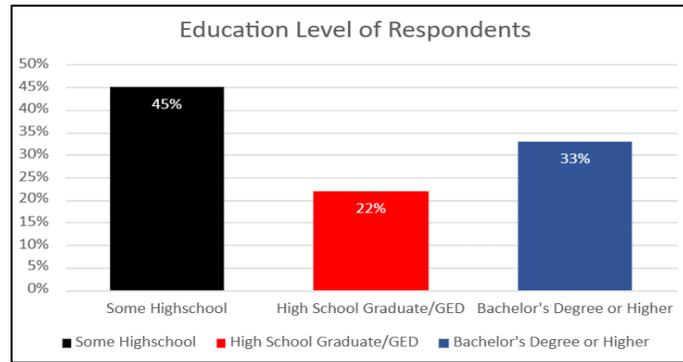


Figure 3. Education Level of Respondents. Source: Kingdom Boxing Volunteer Experience Survey.

Although Kingdom Boxing originated as a sports-centric organization, the survey responses regarding participation in competitive sports during high school were split. This finding implies that many volunteers are drawn to the organization for career and personal development opportunities, not just sports. The survey also shed light on the volunteers' personal goals. Half of the participants volunteered to socialize and forge new friendships, while one-third were motivated by the chance to work with youth.

Previous involvement with NPOs, especially those serving young people, was prevalent among respondents, with 66% having prior nonprofit experience, enriching the volunteer pool with their diverse backgrounds. Delving into other roles respondents have held in NPOs provides a clearer picture of their expertise and their expectations for how they may contribute to NPOs. Aspects of that picture are displayed in Figure 4.

All the data gathered provide an understanding of the caliber of Kingdom Boxing's volunteers and contribute to the formation of a Volunteer Acquisition and Retention Model for youth based NPOs to boost engagement in well-represented and under-represented demographics through various strategies.

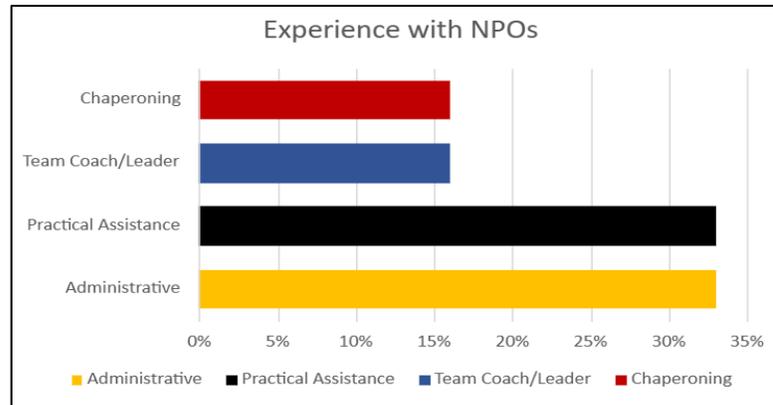


Figure 4. Past Experiences with NPOs. Source: Kingdom Boxing Volunteer Experience Survey.

Discussion

These insights have been instrumental in formulating a Post COVID-19 Pandemic Revised Volunteer Acquisition, Management, and Retention Model. The strategies involved are presented in Figure 5 and aim to serve as a comprehensive guide for bolstering volunteer participation in a post-pandemic era. The first strategy that can be employed to boost Volunteer Acquisition, Retention, and Volunteer-Based Enlistment in Youth NPOs is the utilization of social media to encourage communication regarding events, both group and individual volunteer efforts, volunteer opportunities, volunteer benefits, and community support events (such as can drives and backpack drives). In addition to boosting community awareness, social media allows NPOs to recognize volunteers’ impacts and efforts within their organization.

The second strategy is maximizing face-to-face interactions at NPO facilities, events, and career fairs, as well as on news broadcasting stations to perform many of the tasks that the smooth communication of social media facilitates. This appeals to volunteers for which a face-to-face interaction provides a personal touch that can be difficult to purvey via social media.

The third strategy involves including carefully considered training courses in both volunteer onboarding and transitioning volunteers from one role to another within an NPO. The most important role of the training is to inform individuals about an NPO and how important their role will be in it.

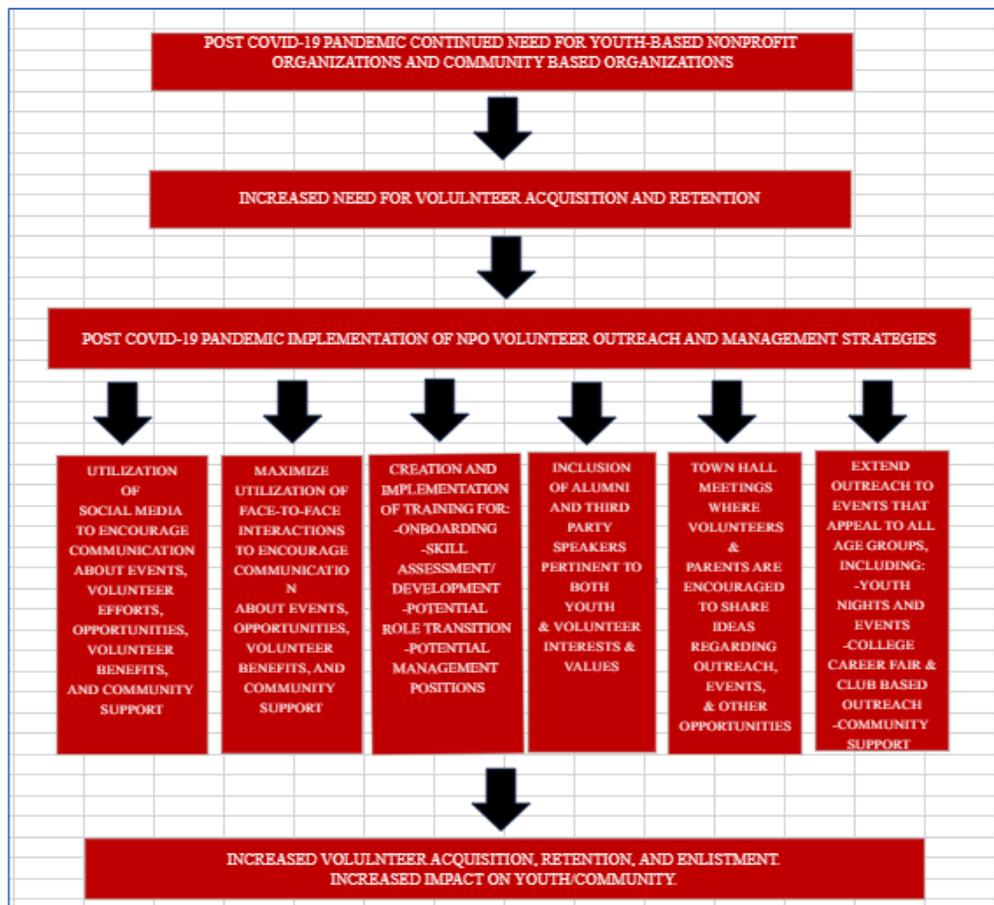


Figure 5. Post COVID-19 Pandemic Revised Volunteer Acquisition, Management, and Retention Model. Source: Furtney.

The fourth strategy involves having successful alumni volunteers and individuals that the NPO has assisted return to the NPO to inspire and advise current volunteers and individuals whom the NPO seeks to impact. A maintained alumni engagement strategy offers three primary benefits to an NPO: bringing tangible benefits to the organization, creating a network of individuals linked by one common cause, and helping individuals with life advice, career advice, and job prospects [9].

The fifth strategy of Town Hall Meetings is geared towards actively engaging with volunteers and providing P-O fit to Millennial and Generation Z individuals who make up a generous amount of the 19-34-year-old age demographics that youth-based NPOs like KBFF seek to reach for volunteer recruitment, acquisition, and engagement. The sixth strategy involves making efforts to engage with college students of this age group by offering internships and

appearing at college career fairs.

Conclusion

The Post COVID-19 Pandemic Revised Volunteer Acquisition, Management, and Retention Model depicted in Figure 5 underscores leveraging social media as a dynamic communication and recognition tool, tapping into the potential of digital platforms to reach a diverse volunteer base. It also acknowledges the power of face-to-face interactions in fostering meaningful relationships, nurturing trust, and facilitating candid dialogue—elements that remain irreplaceable even in an age dominated by technology. It also advocates for comprehensive volunteer training and collaboration amongst all tiers in an NPO. Whilst the proposed model suggests a holistic volunteer outreach approach, specific limitations circumscribe the current research findings. These involve the scope of the survey regarding the number of questions permitted by Survey Monkey, the survey’s distribution frequency, and the sample size and data breadth.

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Atheism: Embracing a Life without Religious Influence

Katie B. Seley

The external forces that influence a person today are astronomical. These influences are responsible for shaping a person's opinions and behaviors. One such example is religion, which can both positively and negatively influence an individual. Religion can provide an individual with a sense of belonging and can also contribute to the development of an individual's values and morals. Unfortunately, religion can also contribute to closed-mindedness and ostracization of individuals who have different values, morals, and beliefs. An individual's choice of religion is a decision they must make for themselves. This decision should come after examining one's current beliefs and exploring various forms of theism. While many find comfort in organized religion, there are those who have not confined themselves to one belief system. These individuals identify themselves as atheists. Atheism offers an individual the opportunity to develop their own moral autonomy, promotes open-mindedness, and allows an individual to focus on the present.

Defining Atheism and What Atheism Looks Like Today

"Atheism is not a belief system nor is it a religion" (American Atheists, 2023), but a lack of religion. The word atheism means "disbelief or lack of belief in the existence of God or gods" (Atheism, 2023). The word *atheism* originated from the Greek word *átheos* and when you break down the word *átheos*, *a* means without and *theos* means god (Atheism, 2023). Atheism can be traced back to the 18th century, during the Age of Enlightenment, "a time when reason came to be valued more than faith" (Petrarca, 2023). If a person sees themselves as a humanist, a freethinker, or has a lack of belief in a god, then they are considered to be an atheist (American Atheists, 2023).

Atheism can be seen throughout history with the most recent milestones being in 1948 and 1963. In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that religious education was unconstitutional in public schools and this was spearheaded by atheist Vashti McCollum (Bardi, 2020). Then, in 1963, atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair succeeded in getting prayer banned from public schools (Lancaster, 2007). That same year, O'Hair founded the American Atheists organization with the vision "to create an environment where atheism and atheists are accepted as members of our nation's communities and where causal bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and

unacceptable. To promote an understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community building and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America” (American Atheists, 2023). With the efforts of atheist organizations such as American Atheists, The American Humanist Organization, and the Freedom from Religion Foundation, atheists can be found in every state in the United States (American Atheists, 2023). The individuals that identify themselves as atheists have increased over the last several decades. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2018 and 2019, the individuals who identify themselves as atheist have increased from 17% in 2009 to 26% a decade later (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Moral Autonomy: You Decide What Is Right for You

Atheism provides an individual with the opportunity to create their own moral autonomy. The concept of moral autonomy is “the capacity to deliberate and give oneself the moral law, rather than merely heeding the injunctions of others” (Autonomy, n.d.). This means that an individual is responsible for determining what they believe is right, what is wrong, and making their own decisions without the influence of religion or the ideology of others.

For example, from a Christian’s viewpoint, the goal their God has set for his believers is to “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need” (Holy Bible, New Living Translation, 2015, Matthew 6:33). This God has given his believers a set of rules to live by known as the “Ten Commandments” (Holy Bible, New Living Translation, 2015, Exodus 20: 1-17). The Ten Commandments are a “set of biblical principles relating to ethics and worship that play a fundamental role in Christianity” (Ten Commandments, n.d.). However, these commandments may not line up with an individual’s personal values. Therefore, as an atheist, an individual can develop what they want their own moral code to look like. This will include the principles and values important to the individual instead of a set of rules imposed on them by any given deity.

The Power of Open-Mindedness

As an atheist, an individual is apt to be more open-minded. This mindset comes from atheists’ understanding that not everyone’s views and/or beliefs are the same. Open-mindedness is described as processing information without prejudice while also seeking and considering any evidence that opposes one’s own outlook (University of Pennsylvania, 2024). Since atheists have

experienced prejudice and discrimination themselves, they believe it is important when they receive new information to self-evaluate and reflect instead of automatically writing this said information off because it does not line up with their own views and/or beliefs (American Humanist Association, 2023). This mindset also promotes the concepts of tolerance and acceptance. Tolerance is defined as “a sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing or conflicting with one’s own” (Tolerance, n.d.), and acceptance is “the act of accepting something or someone; the fact of being accepted” (Acceptance, n.d.). Utilizing these concepts aids atheists to pursue their goal, which is equality.

To achieve full equality, atheists believe that equal treatment for all is crucial (American Humanist Association, 2023). The concept of achieving full equality is evident by some of the goals set forth by the American Atheist organization. These goals are to “stimulate and promote freedom of thought and inquiry concerning religious beliefs, creeds, dogmas, tenants, rituals, and practices; to collect, preserve, and disseminate information, data, and literature on all religions and promote a more thorough understanding of them, their origins, and their histories; and to encourage the development and public acceptance of humane ethical system stressing the mutual sympathy, understanding, and interdependence of all people and the corresponding responsibility of each individual in relation to society” (American Atheists, 2023). Therefore, it is important to understand that equality is achieved by tolerance and acceptance, and tolerance and acceptance are achieved by being open-minded.

Focusing on the Present and Living in the Moment

There is a collective understanding within atheism, that there is no continuation of life after death. This allows atheists to focus on the life they are currently living and not on what is to come. According to Sam Harris, philosopher and expert in the field of religion, atheism is one of the few belief systems to admit that death is real, as most religions believe in some form of the afterlife (Harris, 2017). With the knowledge that nothing happens after death, atheists have “a good reason to make the most of life” (Harris, 2017) and they “must prize their life on earth and always strive to improve it” (American Atheists, 2023). An atheist strives to live in the present. Living in the present is defined as “no longer worrying about what happened in the past and not fearing what will happen in the future. It means enjoying what is happening now and living for today” (Becker, 2023).

Conclusion

Atheism “is about what you believe and don’t believe, not about what you wish to be true or would find comforting” (American Atheists, 2023). The most important thing an individual must do when it comes to atheism is to make this decision by themselves for themselves. However, an individual must also remember that all atheists are different with the only commonality being that all atheists lack a belief in gods (American Atheists, 2023). With the information provided, an individual can see that it is possible to make their own decisions. The individual must make the best decisions for themselves, free of any outside influence and remembering these decisions are what the individual believes to be correct for themselves and no one else. As stated by Baran d’Holbach, “the atheist is a man who destroys the chimeras which afflict the human race, and so leads men back to nature, to experience, and to reason.”

Personal Reflection

I chose this topic because I have always found other religions to be interesting. I also chose this topic because in the past my faith has faltered. This resulted from my personal experiences with the church and individuals who claimed to be followers of God. When I was 18, I walked away from church for over 10 years. I disassociated with anything affiliated with religion, and, therefore, I was no longer constantly surrounded by people with the mindset of doing what God asks of us and following the rules that he has provided for us to live by. This started my progression towards an outlook on life without the religious influences I had always known. Looking back, I know now that it was my faith in man that faltered, not my faith in God. During this time, I would feel a tug on my heart that reminded me that God was there watching me, and this eventually led me back to the church. Based on this experience, it is my opinion that a person’s core values and beliefs will fuel their actions, which will also be influenced by their physical surroundings and the people with whom they choose to affiliate.

I believe that it is a person’s prerogative to decide what is right and wrong and that words are open to interpretation. This mindset developed after reaffirming my belief in God and finding that some of my views and opinions do not always align with that is stated in the Bible. This includes my outlook on abortion, homosexuality, gay marriages, transgender identity, and the subjugation of women. God teaches us to love one another and not to judge others but to accept

them, even if their opinion differs from our own. John 13:34 tells us “To love one another, as I have loved you,” and Romans 14:1-4 states,

Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall.

Overall, this assignment proved difficult because the information that I was exposed to weighed heavily on my heart. I did find it to be a great self-reflection tool, and it gave me the opportunity to better understand a belief that challenged my own. As a social worker, I know I will encounter diverse individuals and it will be my responsibility to uphold the values and principles set forth by the NASW Code of Ethics. One of these principles is “social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person,” meaning to treat everyone with respect while being mindful of their values, beliefs, traditions, and customs. Therefore, it is paramount that I put forth a nonjudgmental attitude when assisting my clients. In doing this, I will be able to establish a healthy open and safe relationship with my clients; built on trust and understanding.

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**Charon and the Fairy King:
Liminal Figures on the Borders of the Underworld**
Kylie Ledbetter

The dark ditches of the underworld and the golden pillars of Fairyland rarely meet in modern conversation. However, in medieval times, fairies were seen as liminal figures that defied categorization, and were even associated with the realm of the dead. In the poem *Sir Orfeo*, a medieval retelling of the Greek tale Orpheus, the poet substitutes the underworld with Fairyland. The Fairy King, one of the story's main characters, takes Heurodis into the underworld, and takes on a role much like Charon, the figure in Greek mythology who ferries the dead into the underworld. Both characters inhabit liminal spaces, whether it be Charon's rivers or the Fairy King's "ympe" tree, and both enter the realm of the living to reap a reward. However, as fairies defy simple categories, the Fairy King differs from Charon in that his kingdom is majestic, not desolate, and he is always surrounded by companions, unlike his Greek counterpart.

Literature and folklore provide multiple perspectives on who the fairies are. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore*, "Folklorists generally use the term 'fairy' rather loosely, to cover a range of non-human yet material beings with magical powers" ("Fairies"). C.S. Lewis in *The Discarded Image* prefers to use the term "*Longævi*" to link fairies with classical creatures like satyrs and nymphs, rather than with the modern preconception of small, dainty creatures that flutter in gardens (122). Fairies, according to Lewis, inhabit a place of "otherness" and in-betweenness and are among the few creatures that do not belong in the rigid categories of the medieval cosmos (129). During the Middle Ages, they are neither the horrors they become in the Renaissance, nor the children's fables they become in the modern era. They are neither good nor bad, mortal nor immortal, large nor small; they tread on the edges of flesh and spirit, in the space accidentally left behind by definite categories.

Medieval people also had varying interpretations of the origin of fairies. One common tradition, as Lewis mentions, is "That they are the dead" (136). However, it is equally plausible to interpret the literary evidence in a slightly different way: that fairies are not necessarily the dead themselves, but beings who bring humans into a state that borders on death and life. Walter Map's medieval work, *De Nugis Curialium*, tells of a knight's wife who, although dead and buried, appears in the land of the living and bears children to her husband (85). In Map's second retelling,

the husband believes the fairies are responsible for his wife's mysterious state (187). Similarly, in the Brothers Grimm tale "Sleeping Beauty," the king and queen invite the fairies to dinner to bless their newborn child but only have enough plates for twelve out of the thirteen fairies. The uninvited fairy places a curse on the child, saying the princess will "prick herself with a distaff in her fifteenth year and shall fall down dead" (648). However, the twelfth fairy lessens the curse to a "deep sleep" rather than death. The two fairies are engaged in a dialogue about death, about whether a mortal, after encountering them, will be dead, or will enter a state between life and death in the same way the fairies float between categories. True to their character, they decide on the liminal option. In both *De Nugis Curialium* and "Sleeping Beauty," the fairies bring the humans into a quasi-dead state.

Medieval poems like *Sir Orfeo* are guided by the premise that fairies can bring mortals to the border of death and life. This poem is a retelling of the Greek tale of Orpheus. Virgil's rendition of the tale, in *Georgicon*, provides an ancient comparison to *Sir Orfeo*. In the medieval poem, Sir Orfeo's wife, Heurodis, falls asleep under an "ympe" tree. A mysterious king and his entourage take Heurodis away and give her a tour of his kingdom. He demands that the next day, she must return to this "ympe" tree so that he can take her to his kingdom forever. Although Sir Orfeo and a thousand knights guard her, she disappears. Mourning, Sir Orfeo forfeits his kingdom and lives in the wilderness, playing his harp. Similarly, in Virgil's rendition, Orpheus's wife, Eurydice, is bitten by a snake and is carried to the underworld. Orpheus brings his lyre with him to the realm of the dead to rescue her. Everyone falls under the spell of his music. Once he sees Eurydice, though, he stops playing his lyre, and the trance is broken. Eurydice flees from him across the river Styx, on the borders of the underworld, and they never meet again.

While Orpheus brings his music to the underworld, Sir Orfeo's music brings the underworld, or in this case, Fairyland, to him. He sees a large group of people on a hunt and finds his wife, Heurodis, with them. He follows them to a sparkling kingdom built with gold and gemstones that, paradoxically, houses many of the dead. They had been taken there by the fairies: "Each was thus in this world ynome / and thider with fairie ycome" (Tolkien, lines 403-4). Each of the dead still wears the evidence of their death. As Edward Eyre Hunt's translation describes,

And some full-armed on horses sat,
And some were strangled as at meat,
And some were drowned as in a vat,

And some were burned with fiery heat. (Hunt 21)

Even Heurodis is found “vnder the ympe-tre,” just as the fairies had taken her (Tolkien, line 456). The tradition of the dead appearing as they did at their death dates to Homer’s *The Odyssey*. In the underworld, Odysseus finds

Virgins, tender and with the sorrows of young hearts upon them,
and many fighting men killed in battle, stabbed with brazen
spears, still carrying their bloody armor upon them. (11.39-41)

Virgil’s Orpheus finds the dead in a similar condition: “the bodies of noble heroes / bereft of life, boys and unmarried girls” (*Georgicon* 4.475-6). So, Heurodis must follow the Fairy King to a realm that is both a splendid medieval kingdom and a despairing Greek underworld. The fairies insist upon having it both ways.

Using the same tactic as Orpheus, Sir Orfeo plays an enchanting melody on the harp in the king’s halls (*Sir Orfeo*, lines 527-9). The king promises him great rewards for his skillful playing, and after some easy negotiating, lets Sir Orfeo take Heurodis home. This scene depicts the Fairy King as wise and generous; when called upon to remain true to his word, he does so, with the glistening gold of his well-ordered kingdom winking back at him. However, just as the splendence of the kingdom can be interpreted as a sanctuary for the living or a majestic sepulchre for the dead, so also, the king has two sides to his character. Earlier in the poem, after he gives Heurodis a tour through his kingdom, he warns her:

See, lady that tomorrow morn
Thou art beneath this self-same tree;
Then thou shalt go with us and be
For aye with us in fairy land;
And if thou failest, woe to thee,
For thou shalt feel the fairies’ hand! (Hunt 9)

The outcome of Heurodis’s interactions with the Fairy King, similar to the “Sleeping Beauty” tale, depends upon her obedience to his commands. He describes the curse that would befall her should she disobey:

Where’er thou art thy limbs shall fail,
No man shalt thou find piteous;
Thou shalt be torn with tooth and nail,

And would thou hadst returned with us! (9–10)

Just like a death sentence, no one in Sir Orfeo's entourage "could proffer [him] words of good" (10). To meet with the Fairy King is like contracting a terminal illness: one must either consent to travel into the realm of death or suffer terribly while alive.

In Orpheus's story, the Fates of Greek mythology have a similar role to the fairies. Before fleeing from him, Eurydice tells Orpheus, "See, the cruel Fates recall me" (Virgil, *Georgicon* 4.496). According to the *World History Encyclopedia*, the three Fates are sisters who spin thread on a wheel to plan the lives of mortals (Miate). When the thread is cut, the mortal dies. The word *fairy* comes from the word *fay*, the origin of which is *fata*, the Latin word Virgil uses for the Fates in the line above. The fairies are linked to the Fates etymologically and can be found performing the same role of "weaving" the lives of mortals. However, there are notable differences between the fairies and the Fates: the latter are aloof, twirling and twining abstractions on the loom, unwilling themselves to be intertwined with the realm of mortals. However, the fairies would not appreciate the art of merely cutting thread. They would rather go to the mortals themselves and ferry them along into the next world. While the fairies, including the Fairy King, do resemble their etymological sisters, they have a closer resemblance to the character Eurydice visits after her mention of the Fates: Charon.

Charon is the one who ferries the dead over the rivers Acheron and Styx which act as the moat of the underworld in Greek mythology ("Charon"). Virgil mentions Charon in both *The Aeneid* and *Georgicon*. In *The Aeneid*, Charon is:

the ferryman,

A figure of fright...

foul and terrible, his beard

Grown wild and hoar

his staring eyes all flame,

His sordid cloak hung from a shoulder knot. (6.409–11)

He is human-like with his wild beard, but ghastly with his fiery eyes. Gustave Doré's illustration of Charon for Dante's *Divine Comedy* depicts him in turbulent waters between dark, precipitous cliffs (see Fig. 1). His eyes are wild with strangeness and fear, his body twisted in an unnatural, serpentine way. The dweller of the underworld's borderlands is a borderland himself, both human-like and uncanny, interacting with those who are quasi-dead, but not yet engulfed in the

underworld's jaws. While the Fates on their velvet couches decide when people will be taken to the underworld, it is Charon who in his splintered ferry takes them there, and who himself reflects the attributes of those who are quasi-dead.

It is important to note the liminality of the place Charon inhabits. He is described in *The Aeneid* as a “keeper of waters and streams” (4.408). Water is a symbol of both life and chaos; one cannot live without water, but one can also drown in it. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus used rivers to depict the inevitability of change: “Into the same river you could not step twice, for other... waters are flowing” (94). The observer's perceptions have no easy place to rest when observing a river. Further down, Virgil describes a silt-filled “whirlpool” near the river Acheron and the Styx as a “swamp” (*The Aeneid* 4.404-7, 37). This is another layer of liminality: when life-giving water makes its way to the underworld, it carries the soil that buries the dead. The liminality, stirring of perception, and embodiment of burial found in the rivers Acheron and Styx make them important in both *Georgicon* and *Sir Orfeo*.



Figure 1. Gustave Doré, “Charon,” 1861.

In both retellings of the tale of Orpheus, these rivers, or river-like places, embody the wife's quasi-dead state. In *Georgicon*, after Eurydice flees from Orpheus, “she floated in the Stygian boat,” Charon taking her away along the river Styx (4.506). After this, Orpheus returns home and weeps by a river (4.508). Rivers cut between two worlds, and therefore, for Orpheus, are as fitting a place to mourn as a tomb. The rivers of the land of the living and the rivers of the underworld

are the same to him. The river Strymon is the river Styx, and to be near it is to feel the underworld overlapping with the land of the living. Perhaps Orpheus stares at every oarsman and sees Charon's fiery eyes blinking in his direction.

This feeling of overlap between two realms is not represented by rivers in *Sir Orfeo*, but rather by the “ympe-tre” (Tolkien, line 407). It is translated by Hunt as “orchard-tree” (8). However, it can also be translated as a “grafted tree” (“Impe”). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a graft is “A shoot... inserted in a groove or slit made in another stock, so as to allow the sap of the latter to circulate through the former” (“Graft”). Just as the silt of the dead and the water of the living mix in the underworld, the sap of one plant blends with a quasi-dead shoot (as it was cut from another plant) in an “ympe-tre.” It is a plant that defies categorization: just as the living meet with the dead near a river, so do the fairies meet with the living at the “ympe-tre.” The place where Charon ferries away Eurydice in one story is like the place where the fairies take Heurodis in the other. Perhaps the “ympe tre” is the wood from Charon's oars being grafted into the land of the living, or the binding of Fairyland to the realm of mortals.

Just as Orpheus mourned the loss of his wife near a river, so is Sir Orfeo's grief symbolized by a tree. It is called a “holwe [hollow] tre,” and in it, he stores his harp, so that whenever fair weather greets him, he may snatch his harp and play it wherever his feet take him (Tolkien, lines 268-70). The hollowness of the tree represents Sir Orfeo's soul, empty, destitute, with only his music to fill it. Likewise, Orpheus mourns “by the waters of desolate [river] Strymon” as nature itself lends an ear to his dirge (Virgil, *Georgicon* 4.508). The rivers of the living are not teeming with mud as in the underworld. The trees, deprived of vitality, have no hope of being filled with the sap of the thriving. The worldly replicas of underworldly spaces bear the scars of emptiness where one should expect thriving and fullness.

Both accounts differ in what happens after the husbands' lonely spaces are established. Orpheus receives a tragic end to his narrative: “the ice-cold tongue ... cried out: ‘Eurydice, ah poor Eurydice!’ / ‘Eurydice’ the riverbanks echoed, all along the stream” (Virgil, *Georgicon* 4.525-7). The reader is left with this haunting echo. The liminal river is forever a reminder of the infinite gulf between lover and beloved. It repeatedly mimics the cries of Orpheus's grief. One would imagine, after reading this account, that Sir Orfeo would fare similarly: that the “holwe tre” would forever remain hollow, and it, too, would echo a despairing husband's cries. But the reader finds that the hollow opening of the tree is narratively shaped like a comma, and, one day, after

taking his harp from its arms, Sir Orfeo sees “Dame Heurodis” among the Fairy King’s hunting entourage (Tolkien, line 322). He follows them to Fairyland and finds the castle full of the dead mentioned above. He finds Heurodis “slepen vnder an ympe-tre” (line 407). Yet again, he finds himself near his wife, who is quasi-dead. Furthermore, she is beside a quasi-dead shoot that is not hollow, but rather flowing with sap.

Sir Orfeo has found himself again by the original landmark of the underworld, the “ympe” tree. One would expect to find a Charon-like figure to be its keeper, just as Orpheus finds Charon by the muddy rivers. At that moment, Sir Orfeo enters the “kings halle” and finds the Fairy King (line 410). Once Sir Orfeo begins to play his harp, the king seems like an anti-Charon. He generously lets Sir Orfeo return home with his wife, whereas Charon refuses to bring Orpheus a second time across the river Styx (Virgil, *Georgicon* 4.503-4). As mentioned earlier, though, the king also gives grim speeches throughout this poem when the harp is silenced. Another one is found here, as he asks Sir Orfeo:

What man art thou
That hither comes? And for what plea?
I did not send, nor none with me
Hath bid thee come to fairy lond.
My faith, I never yet did see
Since I was crowned, a man so fond
 As thou who durst us so defy,
 And comest lacking summons true. (Hunt 22-3)

The king is on his throne but acts like the keeper of the gates, deciding who is worthy to enter the heart of Fairyland.

While Charon does not speak in Virgil, he gains a voice in a medieval work, Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*. In this work, as Dante and Virgil travel into the vestibule of hell and must therefore cross the river Acheron, Charon greets them. He warns,

Woe to you depraved souls! Bury
 here and forever all hope of Paradise:
 I come to lead you to the other shore,
 into eternal dark...

And you who are living yet, I say begone
from those who are dead. (3.81-6)

The living do not belong in the underworld, as Sir Orfeo does not belong in Fairyland. Virgil must convince Charon to ferry Dante across the river, as Sir Orfeo persuades the king to allow him to remain in his halls.

The Fairy King is also, like Charon, depicted as transporting Heurodis into his realm and hunting in the land of the living. Before Heurodis is whisked to Fairyland permanently, the Fairy King gives her a horse and makes her ride with him to his kingdom (Hunt 8-9). This reminds the reader of Eurydice in Charon's boat near the end of Virgil's narrative, when he takes her across the river Styx and leaves Orpheus behind (Virgil, *Georgicon* 4.503-6). After Heurodis has been taken to Fairyland, her husband sees her in a hunting group with the Fairy King. It is an all-female entourage, and "Each had a falcon on her wrist" (Hunt 16). While Hunt's translation mentions that both hawks and falcons were used, Tolkien's middle English version only mentions "faucouns" (Tolkien, lines 312-13). This is significant because, according to the article in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, falcons "kill their quarry in the air, cleanly and at the end of a powerful dive or stoop," whereas a goshawk will cling to the prey, "piercing the vital organs with its massive talons" ("Falconry," see Fig. 2). When the Fairy King brings Heurodis to Fairyland, or when Charon brings Eurydice to the underworld, they are more like the falcons on the ladies' arms than hawks, sneakily snatching their "prey" away without injuring them. The Fairy King, like the falcons, brings his game and Heurodis to his kingdom as if from mid-air, and presumably mingles with the mortals for these rewards. Charon also has motivations for associating with the other side of the riverbank; he only transports those who have been buried (just as the rivers transport silt), likely because those who prepared the body for burial placed a coin in the dead body's mouth, from which Charon earns his living ("Charon"). So, he, too, deft as a falcon, hunts his game from outside the underworld, with money as his reward.



Figure 2. “Medieval Falconry,” *World History Encyclopedia*.

As mentioned above, both Charon and the fairies are liminal figures, somewhere between mortal and immortal. The Fairy King has an added layer of ambiguity in that he not only defies the same categories that Charon and the fairies defy, but he also is ambiguously between Charon and a fairy himself. Some of his speeches overflow with Charon’s bitterness, while others are honeyed with the sweetness of a medieval king. He lives in a castle with walls of “cristal,” pillars of “burnissed golde,” all radiating with the brightness of the “none sonne,” resembling the “proude court of Paradis” (Tolkien, lines 349-76). This luminous description adds a royal, medieval flair to Fairyland. It has the opposite atmosphere of Virgil’s underworld with souls like “insubstantial shadows,” filled with “dark fear” in a land brimming with “black mud” (Virgil, *Georgicon* 4.467-82). The Fairy King is never alone, whether he is with his hunting group or with his queen in his halls and the quasi-dead elsewhere in the castle (Tolkien, lines 390-414). It seems that Charon’s only companions are those who ride in his ferry. So, while the Fairy King has striking similarities with Charon, he, as a typical fairy, refuses to be Charon’s perfect medieval replica.

The dialogue between Charon and the Fairy King, between the quasi-dead and the fairies that ferry them, is subtly buried beneath numerous tales of fairies in the Middle Ages, like

Orpheus's echoes of Eurydice's name along the Strymon River. Perhaps this is because medieval folk recognized that the fairies are like them. Medieval folk, much like modern folk, were somewhere between Christianity and paganism, between Rome's forums and the wild wastes of the unknown, between life and death, between heaven and hell, almost always somewhere between inhale and exhale. The stars had their rigid stations in the sky; the crops had their well-tilled rows; Virgil's volumes had their wooden place on the scholar's shelf. But the ordinary folk found themselves in the wobbly streams between riverbanks and wanted creatures who could float along with them. And that is when, on a slumbering noon day, when the sun was smiling in the sky, someone winked at them from the other side of the river and offered to ferry them across. Once they returned home, the fire glowed with the warmth of their stories. The result is a collection of captivating tales that are still a refuge for modern people who, though they rarely admit it, have much in common with the fairies, too.

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The Dead Poet's Society:
The Classical Influences on Dante's *Inferno*
Christie Hilton

Dante Alighieri completed his *Divine Comedy* in 1321. In the roughly seven hundred years since its publication, his *Divine Comedy* has become a universally recognized classic of medieval literature. Its lasting effect on humanity is visible in art, music, film, and especially literature. The influence of the first third of his great work, titled *Inferno*, is perhaps the most lasting of the *Divine Comedy*. But what influenced Dante's masterpiece? This paper will answer that question by examining the classical texts that would have been readily accessible to the poet Dante as he penned the *Inferno*.

In the medieval tradition, Dante was a poet. The place of the poet in ancient and medieval society was vital. In ancient Greece and Rome, the poet preserved the cultural identity of the region and, if the story was written or orally passed throughout a region, spread the information and its attached morals. In addition, the poet was one of the main sources of information in ancient societies. Even early theater, which was popular in Greek culture and spread rapidly to Rome and other parallel societies, was performed in a poetic format. It is important to note here that the term poetic does not mean that these were poems in the modern sense. In the same way that free verse is not rhymed but follows a rhythm established by the author, poetic verse began as a story set to music or an easy-to-follow rhythm. This was for the ease of the poet, allowing him to memorize and recite the poem. Much of ancient culture relied on oral storytelling to pass down traditional stories and religious beliefs. When Dante writes his *Divine Comedy*, he is not setting it to music and memorizing it for future retellings, but he writes in the same form that the ancient storytellers did. In this way, Dante is often called a poet, rather than an author. He references a number of ancient poets in his work, such as Virgil and Homer. His connection and apparent allegiance to these ancient poets surfaces in a number of places.

Before diving into the analysis of influences on Dante's *Inferno*, it is important to first understand what it is and how it can be interpreted. The *Inferno* is the first of three epic poems comprising the *Divine Comedy*, which was in turn a part of a popular genre of literary fiction at the time that can be referred to as a dream journey. Dante begins this journey at the behest of his deceased lady love, named Beatrice. She does not appear often in the *Inferno* but joins the

protagonists during their journey in the second epic poem, *Purgatorio*. She is also present during the final epic poem, the *Paradiso*. Dante is asked by Beatrice to visit her in heaven but finds that he cannot enter heaven until he has journeyed through both hell and purgatory. As Dante begins his journey, he is joined by the ancient Roman poet Virgil, author of the *Aeneid*.¹ The text which this paper covers, the *Inferno*, is their journey through hell, which Dante tells his readers is nine concentric circles.² Each ring of hell corresponds to a sin with what is meant to be an appropriate punishment. Dante's text indicates a further demarcation of these circles, where the first six circles correspond to sins of incontinence, the seventh circle corresponds to sins of violence, and the final two circles correspond to sins of fraud or outright malice.

At its heart, Dante's *Divine Comedy* serves a human purpose. It is a story about a man coming to terms with his grief and exploring redemption within a single journey. Dante's text is, on the surface, an allegory for man's fall from Eden and its consequences. However, on a deeper level, it is closer to an exploration of the way humanity, in Dante's view, had failed to redeem itself. When Dante condemns religious and mythical figures, he is commenting on the world in which he lived and how they had failed to improve it during their lives. He makes a number of observations indicating that those figures made the world worse, rather than better. The moral of Dante's work can be summed up in five words: evil will always be punished.

Throughout the *Inferno*, Dante encounters these villains from various classical works, though none physically harm him. These figures form the basis of the classical influence on Dante's work. The first influence appears within the first circle of hell, which can be more accurately described as limbo. This circle is bordered by the river Acheron, which Dante and Virgil cross with the help of the demon Charon.³ Charon was a psychopomp who served as the ferryman of the dead in Greek mythology, as noted in tragedies written by Aeschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes, and others.⁴ Dante seems to have taken inspiration from Virgil's account of Charon,

1 Dante was a fan of Virgil, as he spends a section of the text reciting Virgil's personal achievements back to Virgil and declares him the "light of other poets...my master and my author" (Dante 1.82-85). Dante also informs him that Virgil is the inspiration for his artistic style. This pattern continues in various places throughout the text.

2 Circles are a recurring theme in the *Divine Comedy*. There are nine circles in hell, seven rings up the mountain of purgatory, and a number of spherical celestial bodies; Dante is told the angels are arrayed in circles spinning around God, and in the *Paradiso*, Dante describes God as "three circles, of three colors and one magnitude" (Dante, *Paradiso* 33.86).

³ In Greek mythology, the river Acheron was one of five rivers which ran through the Underworld. In addition to the Acheron, Dante also writes that the river Styx and the river Cocytus.

⁴ Charon is referenced in Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes*, Euripides's *Alcestis*, and Aristophanes's *The Frogs*.

describing him as a “demon, with eyes of glowing coal ... [who] smites with his oar whoever lingers” (3.109-111). In the *Aeneid*, Virgil writes that Charon is “grisly in his squalor” with “his eyes fixed in a fiery state” (6.341-343). Prior to the *Aeneid*, most references to Charon indicate he is a kind sailor. Dante’s interpretation of Charon as a demon is closer in theme to Virgil’s *Aeneid*.⁵

Further influences are seen when, after crossing the river Acheron, Dante and Virgil encounter Greek and Roman poets. These include Homer, Ovid, Horace, and Lucan.⁶ They reside in this limbo circle, where there is no distinct punishment, and the deceased simply stand around and wait for the Biblical judgement day.⁷ As they continue through this circle, the poets encounter a number of heroes from Greek and Roman epics. Among them are Hector, a Trojan hero of the Trojan War in the *Iliad*, and Aeneas, the hero of Virgil’s Trojan epic the *Aeneid*. Also in this circle are Orpheus, from the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, Hippocrates the Greek physician, and Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, three Greek philosophers.

The first circle of hell with an active punishment is judged by an infamous Greek villain. Minos is a character from Greek mythology best known for sending fourteen Athenian youths to die as a sacrifice in the labyrinth of the minotaur every nine years. According to Dante, “Minos sits horrific, and grins: / examines the crimes upon the entrance; / judges, and sends according as he girds himself” (5.4-6). Next, the intrepid poets encounter a number of recognizable historical and mythological figures being punished for their carnality. These include Helen of Troy, Achilles, and Paris, major characters from both the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*.⁸

The next character from classical texts that Dante and Virgil meet is in the third circle of hell. This is the guard dog of the Greek Underworld, Cerberus. According to Dante, “Cerberus, a monster fierce and strange, / with three throats, barks dog-like...his belly wide, and clawed his

⁵ Dante describes many of the Greek characters that change in the Roman tradition in the same manner as Virgil, further indicating that Dante was a follower of Virgil’s work.

⁶ Homer was a Greek poet and the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Ovid was the early Roman poet and author of the *Metamorphoses*. Horace, also Roman, was the author of the *Odes* and the *Epistles*, among other great works. Lucan was a Roman poet who authored a number of works that have since been lost. One of his surviving works is the *Pharsalia*, also sometimes called *De Bello Civili*.

⁷ Motion is a theme in the *Divine Comedy* as well. Hell is stagnant, there is no movement at all. Once there, the dead stay there. Purgatory is upward motion, symbolic of the literal process of moving toward divinity. Paradise, or heaven, is in constant motion. As mentioned, the angels spin in circles around God at all times, symbolic of this continual movement.

⁸ They also encounter the Carthaginian Queen Dido in this circle. She fell in love with Aeneas before he abandoned her, prompting her suicide. According to the *Aeneid*, this is also the catalyst for the long-standing feud between Rome and Carthage. Virgil writes that Dido commits suicide only after swearing “no love between our peoples, ever, no pacts of peace” (4.778).

hands; / he clutches the spirits, flays, and piecemeal rends them” (6.13-18). Dante also describes Cerberus as a demon, and later in the text indicates that pieces of the Greek hero Heracles’ flesh still cling to his maw.⁹

The next figure Dante and Virgil encounter is Plutus. However, Dante seems to confuse Plutus, a god of riches in the Greek tradition, with Pluto, the god of the Underworld in Roman tradition. This confusion was incredibly common in medieval tradition, and traces of the two characters being combined can be found even among classical sources. Dante describes Plutus as “the great enemy,” identifying him very clearly with a god of the Underworld, despite the misnomer (6.115).

Dante and Virgil move through the fifth circle with little excitement but are stopped outside the gate of the sixth circle, the first in the City of Dis, which comprises the rest of hell.¹⁰ The Furies from Greek mythology fly out from the city and threaten Dante and Virgil with Medusa, another monster from Greek mythology.¹¹ While Medusa does not appear, Virgil forces Dante to take the precaution of covering his eyes.¹²

Some time later, Dante and Virgil reach the eighth circle. Here, Dante encounters another Greek hero, Jason, from the *Argonautica*, who resides in this circle. His sin, according to Dante’s guide, Virgil, was the seduction and abandonment of his wives, the most famous of which was Medea, whose story can be found in the eponymous tragic play by Euripides.

In the eighth circle are the prophets. Here, Dante meets a Greek prophet who appears in the *Odyssey*, Tiresias. According to Homer, “Theban Tiresias, / with golden scepter in hand” gave Odysseus directions back to Ithaca (11.100-101). The punishment of these prophets is that their

⁹ “Cerberus, the Demon who thunders / on the spirits” (Dante 6.32-33).

“What profits it to butt against the Fates? / Your Cerberus, if ye remember, / still bears his [Heracles’] chin and his throat peeled for doing so” (Dante 9.98-99).

¹⁰ There is an interesting parallel in punishments from this point on in the circles. Outside the City of Dis, punishments are meant to be equal to the crimes they are punishing. Inside the City of Dis, however, the punishments seem to be disproportionate to the sins these souls have committed. In this way, the City of Dis seems to be a play on words.

¹¹ Dante calls them the Furies, though their original name was actually the Erinyes. The Furies are also referred to as the Eumenides with regard to their role in the *Oresteia*, in which the goddess Athena assigned them the role of law keepers, rather than pursuers of vengeance.

¹² Medusa was a young woman who copulated with Poseidon in a temple of Athena, either willingly or unwillingly. As punishment, Athena turned her hair to snakes and cursed her to turn anyone who looked at her into stone. Accounts of this story vary, but the broad points remain the same. Medusa is said to have been later beheaded by Perseus. Her visage is a symbol often found on the aegis, a shield used most commonly by Athena but also by Zeus in some accounts.

heads are twisted backwards. This does seem fitting, if a bit cruel and unusual, as they are being punished for looking ahead by being forced to look behind themselves eternally.

In the eighth circle, Dante and Virgil encounter Sinon. According to the *Aeneid*, “Sinon, adept at deceit...that cunning liar Sinon, / we [the Trojans] believed his story” (2.152-253). In Dante’s *Inferno*, Sinon is condemned to burn eternally.¹³ Sinon’s crime, according to Dante, was tricking the Trojans into accepting the wooden horse containing the Greek army into the city of Troy.¹⁴

The final classical characters referenced in Dante’s *Inferno* are also found in the eighth circle: Diomedes and Odysseus, whom Dante calls Ulysses: “that godless Diomedes, / flanked by Ulysses...sailed away on the wind for home shores... and / back they’ll come to attack you all off guard” (2.209-233). Odysseus is the titular character of Homer’s *Odyssey* and was one of the leaders of the Greek army that won the Trojan War and led to the destruction of Troy.

Just as Dante’s *Inferno* was influenced by classical works, his epic poem also influences contemporary works. The influence of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* on the literary world cannot be overstated. His interpretation of hell permeates modern ideas of heaven and hell even today. Popular culture frequently takes concepts from Dante’s *Inferno* for world building and plot points. The Netflix show *The Sandman*, based on Neil Gaiman’s comic series of the same name, uses pieces of Dante’s hell in its own interpretation of hell. For example, Lucifer Morningstar’s character lives in the City of Dis. In *The Sandman*’s hell, there are malabolge and a proverbial suicide forest, as seen in Dante’s eighth and seventh circles, respectively. Thankfully, the same classical works that influenced Dante are still influencing the modern world, allowing for

¹³ Throughout the *Divine Comedy*, Dante places characters from the Trojan War conflict in heaven or hell based upon his personal opinion of them. A native Italian, Dante was enamored with the story of the *Aeneid* and sided with the Trojans who, according to Virgil, would later establish the city of Rome and the nation of Italy. Most of the Greek characters involved with the destruction of Troy, as well as a few Trojans who failed to protect the city, are subjected to torment in hell or purgatory. In contrast, many of the Trojan characters are elevated to heaven or given less severe punishments in hell or purgatory. Ironically, if the fall of Troy did in fact lead to the founding of Rome, then Dante’s true affection should be placed on the Greeks, as without their siege of Troy, Rome would not have existed, and by extension, neither would Italy. Additionally, some scholars posit that the *Aeneid* was written as patriotic slander of Augustus, who commissioned the work. This stems from the theory that Virgil disliked Augustus and wrote Aeneas as a farcical facsimile of Augustus. In fact, the *Aeneid* indicates that Aeneas is not the founder of Rome, but a predecessor of Romulus and Remus, the mythological founders of Rome.

¹⁴ Sinon convinces the Trojan army that the horse is a monument to Athena. The Trojans later consider this to be false, as it was a deceitful trick played by the Greeks to get the upper hand in the war. However, it actually is a monument to Athena, as her role in the Olympic pantheon was that of wisdom and war. She contrasts Ares’s concept of war as brute force and the chaos of battle with her own ideas about strategy and cleverness in war. So, while the horse was a trick, it was also a very clever strategy to end the war. In this way, the Trojan horse is truly a monument to Athena.

contemporary writers, artists, and scholars to take their own inspiration not only from Dante but also from these classical works.

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Alice Walker's Life and How It Impacted "Everyday Use"

Alexis Cato

Alice Walker's life has heavily influenced her work. From her writing of Dee, Maggie, and their mother to the setting of "Everyday Use," as a whole Alice Walker's own life shines through. The story is about a family of African American women in the rural South. One of the sisters comes home to the mother and sister she left behind, and conflicts arise among the three of them. "Everyday Use" includes significant parallels with Alice Walker's childhood, family, and life as an African American woman. Understanding Alice Walker's life is crucial to understanding her writing because her experiences in childhood and as an African American activist lead readers to have more empathy toward and a greater understanding of the characters. Walker understands the difference in how Dee and Maggie view their culture and lives as African American women because she has experienced both sides. Maggie's relationship with her culture is likely closer to her life as an activist, whereas Dee's relationship is probably reminiscent of her life as a young adult.

Alice Walker is an African American woman who grew up in times of great uncertainty. The turmoil she faced as a child and in her young adulthood clearly impacted her writing. "Everyday Use" is, at its core, a tale about a mother with two very differing daughters with the author reflected clearly in both characters. Alice Walker has a tumultuous history, between losing her eye and growing up as an African American woman, which is all seen clearly in "Everyday Use," specifically through the daughters, Dee and Maggie.

The daughters in the story are inspired by Walker's own life. Dee is a character who strives for more even if it means leaving her family behind. When Dee's mother, who narrates the story, describes how Dee read to her and Maggie, this impression is clear: "She used to read to us without pity; forcing words, lies, other folks' habits, whole lives upon us two, sitting trapped and ignorant underneath her voice. She washed us in a river of make-believe, burned us with a lot of knowledge we didn't necessarily need to know. Pressed us to her with the serious way she read, to shove us away at just the moment, like dimwits, we seemed about to understand" (Walker). Dee's mother seems to be resentful of Dee, believing that Dee looks down on the rest of her family.

Dee's character may be the one most inspired by Walker herself, and that's likely why Mama is so critical of Dee. In "Everyday Use," Dee is seen as a judgmental person. Her mother

assumes Dee's ideal version of her is nothing like her actual self. This notion is reflected when the mother describes her appearance in a recurring dream: "I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistens in the hot bright lights" (Walker). Dee's mother assumes that her daughter's idealized version of her mother is almost completely the opposite of how she is: skinnier, less visibly African American, and with prettier hair. Dee herself has said none of these things, but that does not mean her mother believes them any less.

Dee's mother seems resentful of her college-educated daughter who has left both her mother and sister behind. Critic Susan Farrell argues that how Dee's mother views her is opposed to how Dee actually is. Farrell writes, "Mama, in fact, displaces what seem to be her own fears onto Maggie when she speculates that Maggie will be cowed by Dee's arrival" (Farrell 180). Dee is a woman who faces a lot of scorn from Mama in the story because of how she presents herself. When the mother notes, "This house is in a pasture too, like the other one. No doubt when Dee sees it she will want to tear it down" (Walker), readers can visualize how she sees Dee. Mama views Dee as someone uptight who looks down on others. I believe this is because Dee is inspired by Alice Walker after she went to college. Dee is a woman who has distanced herself from her past, her heritage, and her family. She comes home with a new boyfriend or fiancé without talking to her mother about it first. She also changes her name, which has been passed down throughout the family, and scolds her mother when questioned about it: "I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me" (Walker). Dee's name change shows just how much she wishes to distance herself from her heritage. She refuses to acknowledge Mama when she reminds her that she is named after family members and continues to argue that she is named after her oppressors.

We also see Dee described by people outside the family. For example, when Maggie asks if Dee ever had friends, Mama mentally responds, "She had a few. Furtive boys in pink shirts hanging about on washday after school. Nervous girls who never laughed. Impressed with her they worshiped the well-turned phrase, the cute shape, the scalding humor that erupted like bubbles in lye. She read to them" (Walker). We can compare this description with Alice Walker's take on herself from "Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self." After explaining the newfound timidness and insecurity that she acquired after being disfigured by a BB gun accident at age 8, she recounts a transformation that occurred when she was 14:

Understanding my feelings of shame and ugliness [my uncle] and his wife take me to a local hospital, where the 'glob' is removed by a doctor named O. Henry. There is still a small bluish crater where the scar tissue was, but the ugly white stuff is gone. Almost immediately I become a different person from the girl who does not raise her head. . . . Now that I've raised my head classwork comes from my lips as faultlessly as Easter speeches did, and I leave high school as valedictorian, most popular student, and queen, hardly believing my luck.

We see that after Alice Walker had her surgery she became much more like Dee: more confident, more outspoken, and more popular.

Maggie, on the other hand, is inspired by Alice Walker in her childhood after she has been shot in the eye with a BB gun but before the surgery. Walker seems to be more fond of Maggie than of Dee, a preference shown through the narration of the mother, who relates to Maggie more easily. Critic Yvonne Johnson mentions that Walker was quiet and reserved after her accident: "When Walker was eight years old, a shot fired from her brother's BB gun permanently blinded her right eye. Convinced that the resulting scar tissue in her eye was disfiguring and ugly, she retreated into solitude" (Johnson 1). Maggie exemplifies Alice Walker's feelings of this time of life well. Maggie is a quiet and withdrawn character who has burn scars from an accident where their family home burned down. Understanding that Maggie is a reflection of Walker's childhood makes her a character much more empathetic to the reader, as when Mama predicts, "Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eyeing her sister with a mixture of envy and awe" (Walker). Maggie and her burn scars are an obvious parallel to Alice Walker after she lost her eye. Both are ashamed of physical disfigurements that occurred after terrible accidents (a BB shot for Alice Walker and the fire that took the family's home for Maggie). Understanding both parts of Alice Walker's life helps us understand why she wrote the sisters the way she did.

A more important aspect of Alice Walker's life that influenced her writing of "Everyday Use" is, of course, her being an African American woman during the Civil Rights Movement. This influence can be clearly seen through the sisters and their differing relationships to the quilts. In her essay "Remembering the Dream: Alice Walker, Meridian and the Civil Rights Movement," Roberta M. Hendrickson discusses Alice Walker's accomplishments during the Civil Rights Movement. Paraphrasing Walker's description of her work in her book *In Search of Our Mother's*

Gardens, Hendrickson writes, “The Movement . . . allowed Walker to claim her self—she has described herself as “called to life” by the movement—and to claim the lives of African American women of the rural South as the subject of her fiction” (Hendrickson 111). We can see this calling clearly in “Everyday Use.”

The setting of the story is very rural and effectively showcases the rural areas Walker wanted her stories to display, and the characters and their different perspectives have great significance. The rural setting allows us to understand what it was like for Walker to grow up in the South during the Civil Rights Movement. The mother is a woman whose past encounters with racism have hardened her. Maggie is a character who appreciates her culture, while Dee wants to distance herself from her culture and her heritage. We see how they feel about their heritage most clearly through the quilts in the story.

Maggie is shown as a character who appreciates her heritage in a quiet way. Mama refuses to give Dee her quilts that have been in their family for generations because all Dee wants to do is display them, whereas Maggie is planning to use them. Dee is irritated by this decision because she believes Maggie will ruin them, but she does not understand the value of the quilt her relatives lovingly stitched together with their hands. Dee believes the quilts are beautiful and should be displayed as a piece of art, not understanding the value in using something that has had blood, sweat, and tears poured into it.

Dee does not know how to quilt and thus cannot truly understand the value of stitching something together by hand the way those who came before her have done. In contrast, Maggie, who has dedicated time to learning the art of quilting, understands that the quilts must be used. Critic Jennifer Martin observes, “In the African American community, women have been involved with quilting since they were brought to America as slaves. The artistry of quilting for the women who participate is a means of creative self-expression through improvisation and the irregularity of the African American quilt designs that are unique to that community. The self-expression involved in quilting creates a trinity of strength for women including: sisterhood, empowerment and a bond with nature” (Martin 27). Maggie is a woman who comprehends the trinity quilting represents because she has learned from her ancestors, whereas Dee lacks such experience and understanding.

Walker emphasizes the “trinity of strength” through the daughters’ differing desires concerning the quilts. Dee wants them to hang and display, but that is not the purpose intended by

Grandma Dee, Aunt Dee, and Mama, who created them. The quilts are interwoven with Dee and Maggie's grandmother's dresses, their grandfather's shirts, and their great-grandfather's uniform from the Civil War. While the quilts are pieces of history, they are also pieces of love and heritage, a fact that Maggie understands.

"Everyday Use" is an homage to Walker's life. From the sisters inspired by herself at different times of her to the mother who is inspired by Walker's own father, we get a glimpse into her biography with this story. We can understand the story better and empathize with the characters much more when we tie it to Walker's own experiences. From its setting to its characters, "Everyday Use" showcases what Walker strove for in her writing.

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The Painstaking Art Process and New Camera Technology of Disney's *Pinocchio* (1940) *Sinjin Tompkins*

Art is something that can be cherished by anyone willing to accept it, and the Walt Disney Company has been making art for an exceptionally long time. In addition to that, it has been Disney's goal to tell stories through their art. Generations have been raised with an enormous number of classic Disney movies that taught them important lessons. What did Disney do to stand out against the competition? A fitting example is Walt Disney's *Pinocchio* (1940), directed by Norman Ferguson. On the outside, it is a silly and fun animated movie for kids to watch. But *Pinocchio* is a movie that is so much more than that. It is beautifully written, wonderfully animated, and comes with an amazing sound that matches the movie. *Pinocchio* (1940) uses animation to perform in a lifelike way that mimics the growing realism in live action Hollywood movies of the 1940s. It employed groundbreaking innovative technologies that have made the movie endure as a work of art.

Pinocchio (1940) painstakingly imitated live action. The story entails a toymaker named Geppetto who has wished upon a star to make his marionette a real boy. That marionette's name is Pinocchio, and the puppet continuously ends up in numerous silly and wacky situations. So, what elevated this story to be relevant to the present? The art and animation of this heartfelt story are what elevate it to a higher standard than other animations at that time. John Manos drafted an article about *Pinocchio*, and he stated, "Much of Pinocchio's enduring power comes from its effects animation—the animation of everything in each scene that is not the movement of a character" (Manos). What John Manos is saying is that the artists and animators went out of their way to create the effect that made things feel alive. For example, when any character was smoking in the movie, the resulting smoke looked like something someone could see in live action footage of someone smoking. As a result, the animators took similar care in making the patterns of the rain falling, animals moving, and machinery operating, all of which feel believable. The animations telling the story added to the playfulness, the seriousness, and the general atmosphere of the movie.

Walt Disney prepared his animators, writers, and artists for the changing times and for any obstacles that might hinder the work process while working under Disney Studios. He sent his employees to training and educational programs to help with their expertise. This was similar to

the modern practice of giving employees online learning modules that educate them about their tasks and any other educational content that might help them do their jobs. Hannah Lurie elaborates: “One of the best examples of [Disney’s] willingness to develop relationships is evidenced by his eagerness to help his employees learn more about animation: Disney offered the chance for his employees to attend art school at his expense” (Lurie). Workers nowadays would kill to have their bosses pay for college to educate them about their craft. Plus, there probably were not a lot of companies that were willing to make sure their employees were educated enough to successfully do their jobs. In this way, Walt Disney was ahead of the times when it came to fostering supportive work structures. However, this same article states that there was an artists’ strike in 1941. This made Walt Disney feel isolated: “He took a step back from his staff, and in fact, fired a good number of them. He could no longer be comfortable thinking that his staff could at any time turn against him” (Lurie). That is the downside to the strike that plagued Disney. He had to compensate for the increase in wages by getting rid of a lot of good employees. Not only that, but Walt Disney also took a step away from his own company after the strike. There are no words to truly describe how Walt Disney felt after the artists’ strike. The good news, though, was that, once *Bambi* was in production, he felt good about leading his company again.

The multiplane camera helped Disney elevate the production team’s hard work into artwork. An article in *Tech Directions* states, “Disney’s multiplane camera added the illusion of depth to animated films. It was photographed through five stacked panes of glass. The first two were for the characters. The next two were for the background. And the fifth was fixed as the sky” (Karwatka 11). Due to the complex nature of the multiplane camera, it was difficult to operate, and animators needed special training to even handle it. This camera technology was also very fragile since the team was working with glass. It is common knowledge that people must be careful with glass. When glass is broken, it is rare for it to break into big pieces; most of the time, it explodes into tiny pieces that scatter everywhere. Then, the cleaning process must begin, and the hunt for glass also follows. However, even with the limitations placed on the artists and animators, they thrived with innovative technology. An article on the website *No Film School* states, “So, his team of camera techs and animators worked to create a panel that had many layers. They used the traditional animation process that moves hundreds of pieces of artwork past the camera at various speeds and at various distances from one another” (Hellerman). A create deal of editing came later, giving the action the appearance that it was moving with depth and a nice flow. Watching certain

scenes from *Pinocchio* (1940) be fascinating. There are certain scenes in which the audience can tell whether something is in the foreground or background. For example, when Pinocchio's conscience (Jiminy Cricket) is talking to him in the Pleasure Island pub, a careful viewer can tell that the pool ball is in the foreground because it is shaded differently and placed in such a way that it does not affect Jiminy's space. Much care and detail were invested in every part of the movie. In previous years leading up to Walt Disney's entrance onto the animation scene, there were a lot of choppy and inferior animations that were lost to time because those animations do not hold up to today's standard. In the case of *Pinocchio*, the multiplane camera made it into something that can hold up to repeated viewings and be remembered fondly.

Disney's *Pinocchio* has not faded into the background like other animations that were made at the same time. Was the art so significant that it carried the film? Is it because of the wonderful writing? Was it solely in the animations of *Pinocchio*? The answer is that it is a mix of these elements combined. There is not a single element that could have done well without the other. The animations were fantastic because of the time and effort put in by the artists. Similarly, the art was elevated by the carefully developed story. The art of *Pinocchio* is beautiful, colorful, and memorable. The story gives the audience something to laugh, cry, and smile at. Naturally, it is going to be a firm part of film history when it still resonates with so many people who are young or old. *Pinocchio* is a movie that people are going to find and recommend to anyone and everyone to whom they are close. Walt Disney's careful attention to animation will make this movie last for many years to come.

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Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs:
Launching the Disney Animated Feature Film
Saxon Tompkins

One of my earliest childhood memories is sitting with my mother and watching *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Back then, we still had a VCR player, so Mom popped the tape in, and then the magic began. These are fond memories that I will cherish forever and so will so many other children who grew up with the Disney Classics. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was Disney studio's first feature-length film. It won many awards and accolades, but most notably, it won an honorary Academy Award in 1939, custom-designed to fit all seven dwarfs. Also, the Disney princess empire started with Snow White, and it is still going strong today. Disney's films, TV shows, and merchandise have been enjoyed by adults and children everywhere. Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) catapulted Disney from a mildly successful animation studio to one of the greatest creative powerhouses of the 20th century, largely because of its replication of the techniques of contemporaneous films.

The historical significance of this film starts with the man with all the ideas, Walt Disney. Disney had been looking for a long time for something that would elevate his studio and make it a household name. The studio was slowly building up steam with cartoon shorts such as *Steamboat Willie* (1928) and *Flowers and Trees* (1932), the first color-animated short. But that was not good enough for Walt Disney. Disney was a big risk-taker and loved experimenting with innovative technologies and innovations for film/animation. He wanted to produce a full feature-length film that was purely animated. As J.B. Kaufman explains,

The original impulse to produce a feature with Disney animation came in 1933, from outside the studio. Mary Pickford was a founding member of the board of United Artists, the company that was then distributing Disney's films. She long had been a great admirer of Walt Disney, and his most loyal champion on the United Artists board. She had waged an unsuccessful campaign to bring him into the company. (Kaufman 158)

Now that Walt Disney had his mind made up, it was time to put a plan into action. But he could not do it alone; he needed his entire studio working on his idea. Disney had great admiration and respect for his team and called them family. However, his crew needed direction and assistance

from time to time. Disney made sure that his animators went to school for proper training and experience. That way, when Disney started to pivot away from shorts to feature-length films, he had the best crew imaginable.

In 1934, Disney was looking for material he thought his crew could animate, and he stumbled upon *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by the Brothers Grimm. He loved the story so much that he gathered his crew in a room and discussed his plans for making it into an animated musical. Becky Pitt writes, “One night, over approximately four hours, Walt told the story of Snow White from beginning to end, and in true Walt Disney fashion, he missed no details” (Pitt 1). Walt Disney risked everything he had to see his dream of a feature-length animated story come true. Newspapers and critics had been saying that this was never going to work, and that people would not have the attention span to watch this type of film. This is why Hollywood nicknamed his project “Disney’s Folly.” Disney was determined to prove them all wrong. For \$1.4 million, the film took three years, 750 artists, and almost two million individual paintings to create. But was it worth it? Walt Disney’s payoff was huge; the film made 14 million in its opening year and has made millions every time Disney has re-released it to theaters. The success of the film is what sparked the Disney princess empire and more. As the article “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) - Financial Information” explains, “Walt Disney's first full-length feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, took \$184,925,486 (then £37.4 million) at the US box office, equivalent to \$1,546,602,945 (£1.13 billion) as of November 2021” (Numbers 1). This film is cherished by millions all around the world; its being re-released to theaters also speaks volumes about Disney’s confidence in the movie. It is a colorful, wholesome, and innovative film that has made a historical impact on the movie industry.

Walt Disney’s version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* took some liberties when adapting it to animation. The filmmakers cut out key elements of the original story, such as the wicked stepmother trying to kill Snow White on multiple occasions and how Snow White went into a coma. Snow White never ate the apple in the fairy tale: it was just stuck in her throat, thus, putting her to sleep. In the process of moving her casket, the dwarfs drop her, and the fall somehow knocks the apple piece from her mouth. These changes Disney made were so popular that any remake or adaptation is compared to the 1937 film. Film historian and critic Lee Pfeiffer writes, “This version of the classic tale—which provided names for the dwarfs and introduced other key components to the story—has now virtually superseded all others in the popular imagination” (1).

Pfeiffer also notes that Dopey's name was almost thrown out because at the time it was thought to have been too modern of a word. Walt Disney convinced the team otherwise, stating that Shakespeare used the word in one of his plays. It is astounding that this film has made such an impact on the original fairy tale, and it is one of Disney's best films.

Even though it is a cartoon, Disney's film continued the kind of narrative structure and focus of a live-action feature film. The message of *Snow White* is that vanity will not take one anywhere, but kindness will. We see this in the film when the Queen repeatedly tries to take Snow White's life because of jealousy. Also, the Queen's ego is so fragile that she could not accept that someone else could be more beautiful than she. No matter how bad her situation has become, Snow White endured, and she was rewarded in the end. The Queen's jealousy resulted in her death, and Snow White lived happily ever after. It is these types of positive life lessons that make this film and all the other Disney princess films so iconic and timeless. Writer Bridget Whelan explains, "Disney continued to exert a monopoly over the princess narrative. And it was a monopoly that continued throughout the twentieth century and into the next" (23). These films are known worldwide for their positive messages, music, and high-quality animation. These elements of a Disney princess film only get better with time, because of how much money Disney is able to generate and contribute to the next princess film. It is Disney's use of dramatic structure that resembled live action films that would be a template for all other Disney princess films to follow.

Snow White's problems are similar to those of characters played by Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, and Greta Garbo in films of the late 1930s. She needs protection from the wicked queen and asks if she can stay with the dwarfs. Though she has nothing to give them monetarily, she offers her services to cook and clean for them. They all agree, and she does all that plus teaching them proper table manners and hygiene. Scholar M. Thomas Inge writes,

It accurately reflected the general public attitude toward the place of women in society and continued a long tradition in Western culture of portraying women as passive vessels of innocence and virtue, although Disney's *Snow White* shows a good deal more spunk than most fairy tale princesses. (Inge 141).

Inge should give more credit to *Snow White* than he does. She is being bullied by her wicked stepmother and has to face many difficult challenges throughout the film. *Snow White*'s resilience is very admirable, and children could learn from her example. She overcomes all these obstacles

and proves that good always triumphs over evil. Disney's *Snow White* is a perfect example of a princess: elegant, kind, and loving; this is the template for all other Disney princesses.

There was also something so innovative about *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* because of how it compares to live action love stories of the late 1930s. Prince Charming is only in the movie for a brief period of time, but he has the most crucial role in the film. The audience knows that she is in love with him after she sings "Someday my Prince will Come." Disney makes us believe that a cartoon character can have complex emotions such as being in love. These emotions are treated seriously, and the film develops these emotions with carefully crafted storytelling. Teri Martin Wright explains:

Disney's implementation of love at first sight in the film was entirely American, replacing the medieval European idea of coupling strangers. Political commentary is intrinsic to traditional folktales; Disney included political ideology that was circulating in his own particular society (Wright 1).

They barely know each other, and the film says nothing about them having a past together. The audience has to infer that they have a connection based on their interactions with each other. Even though there is little reasoning for them to have such a connection, the ambiguity makes for a more interesting love story. Prince Charming did not have to come to save the day, but he did. Prince Charming proved that he loved Snow White by being there for her in her time of need.

Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) catapulted Disney from a mildly successful animation studio to one of the greatest creative powerhouses of the 20th century and most definitely in the 21st century. Walt Disney set out to make history and prove everyone who doubted him wrong. Disney was successful in doing that, but he also did something most people could only dream about—he created an empire that still entertains the world to this day. Snow White is a positive influence on children because she never gives up and continues to persevere through many obstacles thrown at her. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* makes film history not only because it was Disney's first feature-length film, but because it has character. The animation, music, and voice acting hold up even to today's standards. This is the film that started the princess empire.

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Animal Brides and Bridegrooms: The Conflict of Female Autonomy

Teagen McSweeney

Animal brides and bridegrooms pose a significant risk to marriage and courtship when they appear in folktales. They can seduce naïve women with music, destroy marriages, or trap people in them, such as the selkies of Celtic folktales and Bearskin from Western European folktales. Within the Celtic and Western European cultures that produced “The Selkie Bride,” “The Selkie Suitor,” and “Bearskin,” there exists the expectation that unwed women be subservient to the male authorities in their lives, often their fathers or husbands. Shapeshifters can threaten the ability to fulfill that expectation. Nevertheless, to a contemporary audience, the expectation that women should be subservient to patriarchal power rings oppressive rather than virtuous. Seen through this contemporary lens, these tales reveal much about the anxieties women’s agency inspires in literary worlds where patriarchal power and female subservience are virtues. Specifically, “The Selkie Suitor,” “The Selkie Bride,” and “Bearskin” expose ways sexuality poses a risk in marriage and courtship, centering around the idea of female agency and the cultural anxieties that arise when women become autonomous in heterosexual marriage and courtship.

Folktales function primarily to entertain (Rosenberg xxiii). Even so, with motifs and archetypes that cross cultures and time, folktales often reveal their native culture’s moral and ethical expectations. The idea of patriarchal power and female subservience would have resonated with these tales’ original audience and acted as a guide for behaviors to emulate. Still, Rosenberg writes in her introduction for *Folklore, Myths, and Legends: A World Perspective*, “because [folktales] are so easy to tell...many exist in numerous versions, both within their own culture and within other cultures, where they developed new roots and produced new blossoms” (xxxiii). In the twenty-first century, the young woman of “The Selkie Suitor,” with her passivity, lacks autonomy until her shapeshifter suitor subverts cultural expectations in his seduction of her regardless of her father’s authority. Female autonomy in “The Selkie Bride” is represented as untamed and wild—something that a husband must learn to control. Yet, her escape could make her an aspirational figure for women trapped within their marriages. The final tale, “Bearskin,” exposes the cultural attitude around women selecting what man they will marry and the perceptions of that choice.

The selkie man in “The Selkie Suitor” reveals the dangers strange men and their sexuality inspire in young women, especially as potential marriage partners. Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy write, “Clearly, in many of these stories of animal husbands, the emphasis is on a young woman’s acceptance of male sexuality, which she may find initially frightening, and on her growing to love a husband she finds initially unattractive” (94). A man’s sexuality, then, presents as repulsive and animalistic to virginal young women—and in folktales, the unwed human women are virgins—conjuring imagery of bestiality and violence. However, in “The Selkie Suitor,” the selkie is not the young woman’s fiancé but rather a seductive stranger. Thus, the selkie’s sexuality is animalistic in that it is wild, dangerous, and perhaps even predatory. The young woman’s father recognizes this, and the onus is on him to protect his daughter’s virtue.

If the young woman in “The Selkie Suitor” had agency over her sexuality, perhaps the selkie’s sexuality would have been transformed into something less dangerous and animalistic as the perception of his sexuality becomes more human to the young woman through experience. As it is, the selkie’s animalistic sexuality is dangerous because he could woo the young woman and steal her from the patriarchal authority she belongs to, her father. The selkie must attempt to access her at night while her father, the old man, sleeps by singing to her from the sea. His selkie music is beguiling, and the young woman is enchanted by its “desolate” and “wild” notes (“The Selkie Suitor” 52). His song triggers within her feelings of “longing” and “loneliness” owing to the isolation she feels stowed away in her home and to her desire for connection (52). They bond through shared feelings of loneliness, yearning, and alienation. Yet, she remains passive, and the selkie’s beguilement alludes to a different perspective. Within this beguilement is the worry that strange men could persuade lonely women into feeling sympathy for them as strangers in a foreign land. They could play into her desire for companionship there, creating a connection within their shared feelings. Having gained her sympathy, the stranger could take advantage of her sexually and ruin her marriage prospects and, ultimately, her future.

Thus, “The Selkie Suitor” reflects the cultural idea that women are naïve and guileless about sexuality and their bodies. This socially enforced ignorance prevents women from making autonomous decisions about their sexuality. Thus, their sexual naivety could be easily manipulated by men to their detriment. The young woman’s sexuality is passive, and men must protect her from other men, as symbolized in a thrice-barred door throughout the folktale (“Selkie Suitor” 52-53). While the young woman’s father sleeps, the selkie forces himself into the home, where he can

speak to her unsupervised. He presents his disinterest in adhering to social customs as ignorance of them, playing with the idea that he's a simple foreigner while forcing the young woman into a position where she must be courteous against her better judgment. Because "hospitality [is] the law in that remote place," the woman must invite him in, though she is "frightened" by him and his animalistic and predatory sexuality (52). Virginal, she is unaware of the sedative magic that he exudes and her body's response to his body. When she "[feels] her eyelids grow heavy with sleep and a warm blush [creeps] along her skin beneath her clothes," she does not realize she's experiencing sexual attraction (52). Her bodily reaction and ignorance about why it is happening to her symbolize the expectation that women are supposed to have maidenly innocence.

Her father further violates her agency. Since patriarchal power possesses a woman's body rather than herself, her father takes it upon himself to rid the selkie using clippings from his daughter's body. The young woman has no control over the clippings her father takes from her, and it is never considered whether the selkie's seduction is nonconsensual or a mutual attraction (53). Nor does she have the option of consent from the selkie. The men, the representation of Celtic culture, decide for her. Further, the selkie's pursuit of her and her father's rescue reveal anxieties within the Celtic culture about the desirability of women's sexual purity as well as the idea that a woman cannot be trusted to maintain it herself, nor can men be trusted not to prey on her for being pure.

"The Selkie Bride" continues the conversation about female autonomy and the anxieties about courtship. It inverts "The Selkie Suitor" with a woman selkie representing the untamed and autonomous women. Because the selkie woman in "The Selkie Bride" is a figure of female autonomy, she represents the fantasies and anxieties Celtic cultures may have had about marriage and women's sexuality. When the farmer first sees the selkie, her "otherworldly" singing and her naked beauty strike him ("Selkie Bride" 53). Driven by desire, he kidnaps her by stealing her seal skin, preventing her from transforming back into a seal (54). He steals her agency and her selkie powers when he hides her skin. The story is a patriarchal fantasy that a simple farmer could snare a bride as talented and beautiful as the selkie woman. Garry and El-Shamy write that animal brides also "reflect men's fantasies of captured and domesticated power; and they may also reflect male anxiety about desertion or abandonment by women" (94-95). The selkie woman's shapeshifting abilities represent her autonomy, which makes her monstrous to the men who wish to capture her for marriage. To prevent his wife from leaving, the farmer "[keeps] changing [the sealskin's]

hiding place” (“Selkie Bride” 54). When he hides her sealskin, it symbolizes his anxieties that his wife might leave him. However, the fact that he captured her in the first place may also reveal a cultural acceptance of men taking women as brides against their will.

Women would need to resist this patriarchal smothering of their agency. The selkie woman’s desire for escape illuminates that desire for agency within women. As men desire to destroy a woman’s autonomy through marriage and motherhood, Garry and El-Shamy write, female shapeshifters in the form of animal brides in folktales “may embody women’s desires for autonomy and equality in marriage,” which the escape of the selkie woman illustrates (95). Lönngren, applying bell hooks’s idea of sites of resistance, says that female shapeshifters are “a literary site of resistance, a space shared with other female characters where they can resist oppression, expectations, and demands based on gender” (88). The Lönngren’s application of women shapeshifters to bell hooks’ literary site of resistance is evident in the selkie’s ceaseless search for her skin in “The Selkie Bride.” She never stops looking for her escape, even after she is domesticated into the trappings of marriage by her husband and kidnapper. Though she becomes a mother and wife, her search for freedom never ends, and once she finds her sealskin, “the weight of years of longing [is] lifted from her as she [runs]” (“Selkie Bride” 54). “The Selkie Bride” allows the fantasy of escape from domesticity and motherhood to become reality. The selkie does not think of her children or her responsibility when she leaves; she thinks only of her freedom from the marriage she was trapped into at the start of the folktale. She becomes a figure of autonomy and inspiration to women trapped as she was in marriage and motherhood.

Where the young woman of “The Selkie Suitor” was at the mercy of her father’s control and the dominating sexuality of the selkie, the two older sisters in “Bearskin” are outspoken about their distaste towards Bearskin’s bestial appearance. His appearance owes to his deal with the devil in exchange for infinite wealth on the condition he doesn’t remove the bearskin he wears. The bearskin cloaks his generous nature and despite his freely gifting money, his bearlike appearance terrifies the people who encounter him (“Bearskin”). The father of the three sisters is one of the recipients of Bearskin’s generosity, and he promises Bearskin one of his daughter’s hand in marriage to repay him (“Bearskin”). “Bearskin” illuminates the behavior that is expected of women in the Western European culture from which the tale is derived.

Women who have agency over their sexuality are villainized in “Bearskin.” The eldest sister is so horrified by Bearskin’s appearance that “she scream[s] and [runs] away” from him

("Bearskin"). The second eldest refuses him, "look[ing] at him from head to foot," then says derisively, "How can I accept a husband who no longer has a human form?...If he were only ugly I might get used to that" ("Bearskin"). The problem is not that he is appallingly ugly but that he is monstrous, thus potentially dangerous. The two women notice the danger of his sexuality immediately. Brian Attebery posits, in the case of the animal bridegroom archetype, "he is not only furred, but hairy in ways that emphasize his maleness" (325). What is left unspoken in his transformation is that the devil has intensified his masculinity and his sexuality by changing Bearskin's appearance with the bear pelt; Bearskin exudes an "erotic charge of the dominant male figure" (326). Doubly, with his bearlike appearance, his image recalls the dangers of bears. By his appearance, Bearskin is a predator. Then, the exaggerated maleness of Bearskin and the predatory animalism of his appearance are glaring signs that he is dangerous—or seems dangerous. Reasonably, the two elder sisters are outspoken about their distaste for their predatory suitor. They speak out against Bearskin's proposal to protect themselves regardless of their father's pending destitution and Bearskin's limitless wealth.

In contrast, their youngest sister represents the chastity that is upheld in Christian society. Moreover, she represents how a daughter should be subservient to her father's will. Hence, their youngest sister seemingly embraces Bearskin regardless of his predatory appearance. Yet, when she accepts his proposal, she does so to appease her father. She tells her father, "'Dear father, that must be a good man to have helped you out of your trouble, so if you have promised him a bride for doing it, your promise must be kept'" ("Bearskin"). While Bearskin is kind, her mind is not on Bearskin but on the Christian principle of keeping a promise. She accepts Bearskin's proposal for the sole purpose of maintaining her father's integrity and honor—Bearskin is irrelevant; her opinion on Bearskin's appearance is irrelevant. Women aren't supposed to see and understand the sexuality of men. The fact that Bearskin's sexuality is exaggerated by his bestial appearance makes the cultural and moral expectation of women obvious. It doesn't matter what the youngest sister thinks about Bearskin's appearance, a woman is not supposed to see the sexuality in Bearskin's appearance. Thus, as a representative of a virtuous woman, the youngest sister must not see Bearskin's appearance for what it is—monstrous and predatory. As a result, the youngest sister appears all the more chaste and Christian for her innocence. What is deemed important is her duty to her father. She protects his honor by accepting Bearskin and secures future wealth for her family through their betrothal.

However, for a contemporary, twenty-first century audience, there is an interesting double meaning in the black clothing the youngest sister wears once Bearskin leaves. Though “Bearskin” focuses on the virtues and expectations of women, underlying the tale is the real sadness and anxieties of the women who accept the hand of predatory men. As mentioned, the expectation is that she should not see Bearskin’s appearance, but she does; however, as her sisters rejected Bearskin, she had no option but to accept it for her father’s sake. After Bearskin leaves, “the poor betrothed bride dressed herself entirely in black, and when she thought of her future bridegroom, tears came into her eyes” (“Bearskin”). The cultural expectation is that she is mourning the loss of her fiancé; however, given his outward appearance and the lack of information the youngest sister has about Bearskin, perhaps she’s mourning her engagement. She martyrs herself for her family and is weeping in fear at the thought of her monstrous fiancé and what will become of her once they marry.

The two sisters are punished for being unwilling to give a man, whose appearance is dominantly male and predatory, a second chance to discover on the off chance that he could be generous and virtuous is propped up as antagonistic. They mock the youngest for being engaged to Bearskin. However, their taunts emphasize precisely why he could be potentially dangerous. They tell her, “Take care...if you give him your hand, he will strike his claws into it...Bears like sweet things, and if he takes a fancy to you, he will eat you up...You must always do as he likes...or else he will growl” (“Bearskin”). Once again, underneath these taunts are very real fears for women within marriages, and in which the folktale “A Selkie Bride” illuminates. There is a genuine potential for men to be aggressive like a bear, a real danger that a male predator will use up and diminish his wife with the force of his sexual appetite. Thus, the older sisters are not antagonistic but lend the youngest a word of caution that the male-oriented text paints as ungenerous and demeaning to its male hero.

Thus, the sisters are rewarded and punished for how well they meet cultural expectations and whether they accept their monstrous bridegroom. The idea is mixed in with Christian ideology. The older sisters are damned for not accepting Bearskin when he was monstrous. They are punished for their ability to exercise caution with the men they choose to marry despite seemingly trapping their father in a promise to exchange money for a bride. For being ungrateful per the ideology of “Bearskin,” they both commit suicide, awarding the devil “two souls in the place of [Bearskin’s] one” (“Bearskin”). The suggestion is that women who choose their safety over their

duties are without virtue, and for having this abundance of self-preserving caution, they deserve eternal spiritual torment for not seeing Bearskin's virtues underneath his predatory presentation. Female autonomy is once again vilified and punished, and female passivity and martyrdom are rewarded.

Shapeshifters in "The Selkie Bride," "The Selkie Suitor," and "Bearskin" expose the anxieties between men and women in courtship and marriage and how a twenty-first century audience might perceive that lack of agency within the depictions of women. "The Selkie Suitor" reveals how the patriarchy perceives potential dangers in women's desires and how men govern women's bodies. "The Selkie Bride" illuminates men's anxieties about autonomous women they may marry and provides a figure of women's resistance in the selkie woman's escape. Finally, "Bearskin," depicts how women are punished and vilified for choosing their safety over familial duty. All, however, illustrate ways women are at risk in marriage and courtship when they lack autonomy.

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Shakespeare's Daughters in His Life and Plays: A Study on Patriarchal Roles

Laura Finn

In 16th and 17th century England, society's complicated structure of authority from the government and the church naturally transposed itself in familial environments by placing fathers and husbands in authority positions over their daughters and wives, reflecting society's patriarchal structure that even found its way into entertainment like William Shakespeare's plays. Further analysis of these dynamics reveals that daughters, in particular, played an instrumental role despite their lack of authority because the decisions that they did make concerning marriage and their futures greatly impacted how familial wealth and influence would be passed down through the generations. This power dynamic then made it necessary for fathers, including Shakespeare himself, to maintain patriarchal control over daughters through enforcing societal expectations of arranged marriages and chastity. Shakespeare's own familial relationships suggest that his characters Hero, Jessica, and Cordelia in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *King Lear* are representations of his own daughters and reflect his beliefs in 16th and 17th century England's expectations of women.

Even though Shakespeare's portrayals of daughters in his plays range from conformity to rebellion against societal standards, his expectations of his own daughters adamantly reflect his conformity. As soon as scandal reaches Shakespeare's household with his daughter Judith's marriage to Thomas Quiney, Shakespeare's beliefs become extremely apparent. Concerning the events that surrounded Judith's marriage, Davies states, "Thomas, desperate at [his former partner] Margaret Wheeler's pregnancy, thought marriage to the daughter of a wealthy father was the best way out of his situation, and Judith grabbed the opportunity" (Davies 160). Shakespeare's response to this scandal causes him to write his will in which his other daughter, "Susanna and John Hall, [Susanna's husband], were the sole executors," even though Susanna's marriage was also not without scandal as she was tried and found innocent of adultery (Davies 159-160). Therefore, Shakespeare's disinheritance of Judith because of a scandal, in which she was not the perpetrator, reveals a more conforming side of Shakespeare.

Judith and Susanna provide a starting place to begin evaluating Shakespeare's expressions of daughters in his plays, including those that fulfilled "the chaste and obedient Renaissance ideal" like Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Dreher 84). At the beginning of the work, Hero fulfills the

“Renaissance ideal” when she is described as the daughter of Leonato, the Governor of Messina, relaying to the audience that she is from a wealthy estate (84). Her identity as a daughter from a wealthy family also increases significantly the societal expectations demanded of her concerning maintaining her chastity and listening to her father’s marital advice because she must marry a man who is responsible enough to manage the estate that she will inherit. In the face of these intense pressures, Hero’s example of chastity and mild behavior is displayed when her lover, Claudio, describes her as a “modest young lady” immediately after the first time he sees her (Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* 1.1.161). Thereafter, her appearance and her character are made obvious to the audience, as she subsequently obeys her father and other authority figures. This behavior would be expected and admired by a Shakespearean audience, and it makes Hero then serve as a model example of a daughter in English society. Hero’s behavior perhaps even reflects Shakespeare’s own admiration of his daughter Susanna, who also fulfilled marital expectations.

Shakespeare’s portrayal of Hero’s obedience then implies that he deeply values societal expectations, making it significant that Hero’s subsequent trials mirror those of Susanna’s own life. Hero’s trials begin when she faces accusations of infidelity from her fiancé, Claudio, on their wedding day, and similarly, Susanna was accused of adultery during her marriage. Literary critic Diane Dreher emphasizes the impact of these accusations by stating that they portray “the insidious nature of slander, an attack for which woman has no defense...Women cannot earn or acquire more honor; all they can do is behave according to patriarchal expectations” (Dreher 87). With this knowledge in mind, Hero’s intense despair after her father believes the false accusations against her reveals her sorrow to be justified because she loses her only defense when her father believes she has no longer fulfilled “patriarchal expectations” (87). Leonato’s admonition of Hero when she is revived after fainting from the shock of her accusations exemplifies a father’s expected yet severe response to slander, when he states, “O Fate, take not away thy heavy hand! / Death is the fairest cover for her shame / That may be wished for” (Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* 4.1.121-123). These words are out of character for the kind, fatherly Leonato that the audience has been presented with, but they also display his belief in his own failure as a father. To express his shortcomings, Leonato also states, “Hath no man’s dagger here a point for me?” revealing death to be a better fate than shame for both himself and his daughter (4.1.114). While this reaction is heavy-handed, it reflects a society where Hero’s chastity is not only important for her future but

also necessary for the continuation of her family's legacy, which is reliant on both avoiding scandal and adhering to the laws of the church.

Similarly, Susanna's own accusations of adultery against her created a legacy-threatening scandal, but she, like Hero, is innocent of the charges, revealing another layer of English society where false accusations were often used against women to attack their whole family (Davies 159). In Susanna's case, the accusations were intended to attack her husband's societal standing, and in Hero's case the accusations were made to antagonize Don Pedro, her fiancé's friend (159). The only way out of their undeserved trials is to cling to societal expectation, which remains to be obedience to their fathers. In Susanna's case, she must obediently stand trial where she is shamed until she is found innocent, and in Hero's case, she must obey her father who is guided by the authority of the church through a friar. The friar instructs Hero to temporarily stage her own death by stating, "Come, lady, die to live. This wedding day / Perhaps is but prolonged / Have patience and endure" (Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* 4.1.266-268). This exchange shows the influence of the church, revealing that even patriarchal fathers were under ecclesiastical authority. This notion is reinforced when Leonato's belief that death is better than societal shame is revealed to be founded in organized religion when the friar states, "The supposition of the lady's death / Will quench the wonder of her infamy" (4.1.249-250). Hero then obeys the church and follows the societal expectations of "patience and [endurance]" that it sets out for her in the same way that she would obey her father (4.1.268). Ultimately, Hero and Susanna's prioritization of obedience to the church and their fathers, even in the face of immense trials, implies that Susanna may be Shakespeare's source for implementing good examples of daughters in his plays.

Alternately, Shakespeare also presents examples in his works of daughters who do not fulfill societal expectations, including Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*. Jessica, like Shakespeare's daughter Judith, is disinherited by her father after she marries a man against her father's wishes. Therefore, Jessica as a character implies Shakespeare's beliefs in the destruction that follows a family whose daughter does not fulfill societal expectations, but it also suggests the importance of a father's responsibility to guide a daughter with patriarchal care. Jessica's initial betrayal of the societal expectations of a daughter occurs through her decision to run away from home, steal her father's wealth, and marry Lorenzo, a Christian her Jewish father would not have approved of for his daughter. The societal implications of this theft in a patriarchal society are further examined through acknowledging that "Shylock was the possessor of money, jewels, [and]

a daughter... [Jessica's] elopement robs him of a these... things that belonged to him and are rightfully his" (Moulton 1412). This theft then subverts Jessica's expected obedience to her father; moreover, her theft of his wealth, besides a sinful action, also represents her father's lost succession, diminishing his financial estate or the ability to pass his legacy forward.

However, it must be acknowledged that Shylock's cruelty towards Jessica throughout the play also reveals that he has failed in his role as a caring and guiding father, breaking the patriarchal structure of their family. Jessica goes as far as to declare that her "house is hell" with "some taste of tediousness," revealing the home her father has built to be filled with disorder (Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* 2.3.2-3). This broken structure emphasizes that when a father removes his care and replaces it with neglect, a daughter realizes that her father who should protect her can no longer do so, often resulting in a daughter's disobedience towards her father. After Jessica disobeys her father, his neglect is made clear in his reaction to her betrayal, when he states, "I would my daughter were dead at my foot and the jewels in her ear; would she were hearsed at my foot and the ducats in her coffin" (Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* 3.1.87-90). This statement immediately reveals the root of Shylock's family disfunction because he values his estate more than his daughter and has forgotten that his daughter's future determines his estate's future, causing him to lose his daughter and his estate simultaneously. Shakespeare's intent behind creating a father and daughter figure that both break societal expectations is interesting in light of his role in his broken relationship with his daughter Judith.

Unfortunately, Shakespeare's relationship with Judith also displays a dysfunctional father-daughter dynamic when, after Judith's death, "there was no room left for Judith [in the family tomb], whose tomb out in the churchyard is now lost," while room was made for Susanna whose tomb was also marked (Davies 162). Though occurring posthumously and some six decades after the publication of *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare's overwhelming abandonment of Judith in death tellingly aligns him with the cold fatherly role of Shylock, so distinct from the warm fatherly role of Leonato (162). Therefore, it becomes all the more significant that the conclusion of *The Merchant of Venice* displays Jessica as a sympathetic character, suggesting Shakespeare's possible guilt over his abandonment of authority and care over Judith, which contributed to her inability to fulfill societal expectations. Jessica's final lines of the play then reveal her fate, when in conversation with Lorenzo, she replies:

In such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith
And ne'er a true one. (Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* 5.1.22-25)

The seriousness of this accusation suggests that she truly doubts Lorenzo's vows of love to her, making it evident that even in a comedy, her decisions have led her to an unhappy ending. While this scene exudes sympathy towards Jessica, Shakespeare nevertheless reinforces societal expectations of daughters by showing his audience that disobedience against one's father results in an inevitably unhappy ending. Shakespeare's audiences are then seemingly assured that societal expectations result in happiness, but Cordelia in *King Lear* presents a new dynamic where a daughter's obedience does not result in a father's care.

Cordelia opens *King Lear* as a respectful Susanna-like daughter who fulfills her responsibilities of obedience to her father, King Lear, but he in turn does not honor her obedience. Instead, he demands all of each of his daughter's love to be solely vowed to himself to determine their inheritances by asking, "Which of you shall we say doth love us most, / That we our largest bounty may extend" (Shakespeare, *King Lear* 1.1.56-57). This request also breaks society's patriarchal structure because a daughter's love is supposed to be first to her husband and second to her father, revealing that Lear has warped societal expectations to fulfill his own desires. Literary critics Bilal Hamamra and Michael Uebel expound upon this scene, stating, "[t]he irony of Lear's demand of familial kindness is that he swaps from the pronouns 'me', 'my', appropriate to a father speaking to his daughters, to the formal pronoun 'we'" (Hamamra and Uebel 218). Therefore, Lear's formality replaces his personal fatherly care, making his daughters solely extensions of his property rather than a part of his family. While Cordelia may be a part of his property in a patriarchal society, a daughter's value extends much further because a father, especially a king, relies on his daughters to extend his legacy through marriage, making Lear's demand to be loved more than Cordelia's future husband defy Cordelia's duty to both her husband and her father.

Cordelia's awareness of her role in society despite her father's selfishness then solidifies her place in Shakespeare's plays as an ideal example of a dutiful daughter, especially considering that all of Shakespeare's other daughter figures in *King Lear* are not able to overcome the poor leadership of their fathers. Literary critic Van Laan describes Cordelia's awareness of her role by

stating that she recognizes “that social and familial roles must be faithfully adhered to because it is through them that both society and the individual find their only possibility of order” (qtd. in Lagretta 93). These 16th and 17th century societal expectations are then revealed to be principles that Cordelia discovers on her own because Lear abandons them for his own gain, creating disorder in both Lear’s family and kingdom. This juxtaposes a father’s role in a patriarchy and identifies Cordelia as a different kind of traditional daughter who must find strength in her own femininity. Her strength is clearly displayed when she explains why she must refuse her father’s demand for all her love:

You have begot me, bred me, loved me.

I return those duties back as right fit:

Obeys you, loves you, and most honors you.

Why have my sisters husbands if they say

They love you all? (Shakespeare, *King Lear* 1.1.106-110)

In these lines, she defines a traditional daughter’s duty by defying her untraditional father, submitting to society’s expectations of her as both a daughter and a future wife. Shakespeare here defines that the dutiful daughter is also strong enough to stand against an untraditional father, and perhaps he has learned this lesson from his dutiful yet capable daughter Susanna.

Cordelia, like Susanna, faces trials in her own life with strength while still fulfilling her duties as a daughter. For example, Cordelia is forced to stand trial at the end of *King Lear* because of her unsuccessful attempt to aid her father and protect her family’s reign despite her father’s abandonment of her. Similarly, Susanna was forced to stand trial for adultery because she was being treated for infertility with medications that were also commonly used to treat sexually transmitted diseases, creating false accusations when she was only trying to accomplish furthering her family legacy (Davies 159). Interestingly, Susanna’s strength in the face of adversity was rewarded with the excommunication of her accuser from the church, while Cordelia’s strength is punished with her defeat and subsequent execution (159). This juxtaposition opens an analysis of Shakespeare’s intent behind Cordelia’s fate, and ultimately, both cases are determined by the presence or absence of a traditional father. Shakespeare guided Susanna to a marriage that fulfilled societal expectations, while Lear discourages Cordelia from divulging her love to anyone but himself. When Lear realizes his mistake, Cordelia has already been executed, and in his grief, he states, “Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman” (Shakespeare,

King Lear 5.3.328-329). This acknowledgment at the play's conclusion of Cordelia's example as an ideal traditional daughter and Lear's subsequent death reveal Shakespeare's intent behind Cordelia's character to be a warning. If a daughter adheres to societal expectations, she can only succeed, like Shakespeare's daughter Susanna, with her father's support, making Shakespeare's views identify patriarchy as an imperative structure to promote societal and familial order in his period.

A collective approach to Shakespeare's views on daughters as both a father and a playwright reveals him to be a continual supporter of the traditional roles of obedient daughters and patriarchal fathers. Surprisingly, father and daughter relationships occur almost as often as father and son relationships in his works; literary critic Linda Boose notes that father and daughter relationships occur in "twenty-one dramas and one narrative poem," while father and son relationships occur in "twenty-three plays" (qtd. in Hamamra and Uebel 218). In the context of 16th and 17th century patriarchal England, these numbers are noteworthy and suggest that Shakespeare's own experiences with his daughters influenced his literary career. Indeed, the traditional Hero, the untraditional Jessica, and the strong yet obedient Cordelia all share a role in perpetuating the idea that daughters of this period only succeed when their feminine strength is met with strong fatherly leadership. This notion does not diminish daughters but reflects that the structures of patriarchy can serve to protect them. However, Shakespeare does not ignore the fact that untraditional fathers like Shylock and King Lear make a successful patriarchy difficult to achieve, which also implies his own guilt in raising his non-conforming daughter Judith. Ultimately, Shakespeare provides his audiences with his view that the traditional roles of daughters protect and advance a family, while still acknowledging that daughters are not successful without a good father's leadership. The creation of these personal characters indicates how deeply his own familial conflicts impacted his home, his plays, and the legacy both left behind.

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Turning the Page: Examining the Relationship between Library Engagement and Acceptance

Ethan Drott

Introduction

In 2023, the American Library Association (ALA) and thousands of libraries around the United States celebrated Banned Books Week from October 1 to October 7. For over 40 years, the American Library Association has documented titles subject to challenges in schools and public libraries to warn Americans about the adverse effects of censorship (ALA, 2023). The theme for the 2023 Banned Book Week was "Let Freedom Read," yet across the nation, from January 1, 2023, to August 31, 2023, 1,915 unique titles were subject to book challenges (ALA, 2023). In 2022, the ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom documented 2,571 unique titles targeted for censorship (ALA, 2023). Book banning and censorship are familiar to the United States, particularly when marginalized communities are involved. According to the ALA, "The vast majority of challenges were books written by or about a person of color or a member of the LGBTQIA+ community" (ALA, 2023).

Despite the dramatic increase in book challenges from 2022-2023, library participation has never been higher. Galbi (2007) examined public library circulation in U.S. libraries from 1939 to 1983. In 1939, United States libraries saw 415,924 materials circulated. By 1983, that number was up to 1,070,000, a 157.26% increase in circulation over 44 years (2007). The American Library Association's report in 2010 described 1.4 billion public library visits nationwide, citing a "slight increase from fiscal 2006 but still a continuation of a larger, longer upward trend. Per capita visitation increased from 4.2 to 4.9 from fiscal 1998 to fiscal 2007, an overall increase of 17 percent" (ALA, 2010). In pre-pandemic 2020, a Gallup poll showed that "the average 10.5. U.S. adults' trips to the library in 2019 exceeded their participation in eight other common leisure activities," including going to the movies, a sporting event, a concert, a museum, or a national park (McCarthy, 2020). Overall, libraries in the United States have made their institutions not only relevant but also prevalent. This literature review aims to uncover insights into the possible influence acceptance has on library use.

Furthermore, could it be that feelings of acceptance inadvertently promote library use? Public libraries, as defined by the Institute for Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS), are

supported by funds, whether partially or entirely by the public (ALA, n.d.). These institutions must provide, at the very least, an organized collection, established service hours, and facilities necessary to fulfill the community's needs (ALA, n.d.). Public libraries serve their communities in various ways, including providing access to information and resources, promoting literacy and education, and providing a space for community members to gather and learn. Contrary to their significant role, the impact of public library usage on individuals' attitudes towards LGBTQ+ persons remains unexplored. Thus, an exploration to understand the relationship between participation and engagement in library services and feelings of acceptance towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ+) individuals is crucial as public libraries play a pivotal role in shaping societal perspectives, fostering inclusivity, and providing safe spaces for all stakeholders. Failure to grasp this dynamic relationship could lead to poor resource allocation, missed opportunities for inclusivity, and a lack of safe spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals. Moreover, understanding this relationship is paramount to ensuring public libraries serve as safe havens for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender.

Library Services and Acceptance

Researchers, including psychologists and librarians, have danced around the link between feelings of acceptance towards LGBTQ+ people and participation in library services; however, none of these have directly researched the influence of library access on LGBTQ+ acceptance. They have studied the stigmatization of LGBTQ+ individuals as well as barriers to access for the community and attitudes toward same-sex marriage, addressing the stigma and general societal attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community. However, even a general regard for public libraries in this sense remains to reveal itself.

For example, Betts-Green (2020) touches on the lack of clarity regarding whether libraries effectively provide relevant resources and services to the LGBTQ+ community. The research suggests the need to further explore motivations and best practices and acknowledges the strong connection between the LGBTQ+ community and public libraries. Nevertheless, research concerning favoring attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ community and public library use does not yet exist. Furthermore, the *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Sciences* highlights the lack of a "holistic" understanding of LGBTQ+ informational and resource barriers. The journal

provides further support for understanding the relationship between public library use and views on LGBTQ+ individuals (Pierson, 2017).

Stigma and Non-acceptance for LGBTQ+ Identities

Researchers have explored experiences related to sexual identity stigma among adults in the southern United States. Frey and colleagues conducted interviews with 16 participants whose responses were analyzed based on six categories (i.e., navigating an LGB+ identity, social acceptability, expectation of stigma, interpersonal discrimination and harassment, structural stigma, and relation to the LGBTQ+ community) (Frey et al., 2021). They found that the participants face mountains of unfair treatment because of their sexual identity. The study also identified the emergence of intra-community stigma within the sample. For instance, Hammock (2022) notes that a thematic analysis revealed that body size, race/ethnicity, and gender expression, among others, are prevalent among the sample of 32 interviews he conducted. The researchers emphasize the extent of marginalization of LGBTQ+ people in the South, thus providing a broader picture of the harmful effects of homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia and establishing the need to provide quality access to all users of the library.

Shifting Attitudes

Additionally, Kaufman et al. (2021) draw on a sample of 330 college students in the southeastern United States to indicate a shift toward more inclusive forms of marriage, including same-sex marriage. They assessed participants' attitudes towards same-sex marriage among college students in the Southeastern United States. They identified a shift from conventional marriage ideals toward more inclusive and accepting attitudes toward LGBTQ+ persons (2021). Kaufman and their team shed light on this paper's research focus by providing a population of attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community in the studied locality (2021). Weise and Strunk (2021) examine the reporting of incidents of bias at southeastern colleges and universities among LGBTQ+ students. Their research used a survey design with 143 LGBTQ+ college students to find that students' reporting on bias incidents is influenced by perception, reporting options, and the associated risks. The study posits that students often downplay incidents even if the incidents align with institutional standards. This further embeds the nature of attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals; however, like

both Frey et al. (2021) and Kaufman et al. (2021), Weise and their team also neglect library services in their research.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

The literature review conducted falls short on how perceptions of LGBTQ+ persons may be connected to public library usage, albeit providing detailed analyses illuminating LGBTQ+ issues. Overall, previous studies highlight the lack of research specific to libraries and the work yet to be done to assess feelings of acceptance in relation to public library engagement. As previously noted, Kaufman et al. (2021) found an indication of a shift toward more inclusive forms of marriage. These prior findings lead me to predict a positive relationship between public library use and accepting attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals. Failing to study the relationship between the attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals and public library use could lead to poor resource allocation, the perpetuation of discriminatory behavior toward LGBTQ+ individuals, and a missed opportunity for libraries to support all its constituents. Present and future researchers should continue to explore the relationship between LGBTQ+ individuals and libraries in order not to repeat the history of apathy and discrimination towards marginalized communities so prevalent in the fields of psychology and library science. Moreover, researchers should investigate the idea that feelings of acceptance accompany library use.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future researchers must examine the relationship between library engagement and feelings of acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in Georgia. The literature review conducted indicates that access to or engagement in library services may be directly related to feelings of acceptance. Moreover, researchers should identify aspects of library services most strongly associated with positive feelings towards diverse groups. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and statistics with qualitative interviews by members of the LGBTQ+ community, allies, and opponents, is strongly suggested to provide a comprehensive examination of the complex relationship between acceptance and library use. Researchers should employ a stratified sampling method to ensure representation across Georgia with a sample size based on power analysis. Measures should include survey items that elicit responses on library engagement (i.e., measures

of the prevalence and frequency) and a validated scale that gives insight into feelings of acceptance among the sampled population.

I suggest a myriad of scales to gain a comprehensive picture of acceptance among the sample including The Homophobia Scale (Wright, 1999) and the Heterosexual Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Scale (Larsen, 1980), and updated scales could be included to provide a measure on feelings of acceptance regarding the LGBTQ+ community. Pratto's Social Dominance Orientation scale could also be used to assess participants' preferences for inequality among diverse social or ethnic groups (Pratto, 1994). With these scales, researchers can measure feelings of acceptance confidently to gain insights into how the general population feels towards LGBTQ+ individuals and how Georgians believe diverse social groups should be treated. In future studies, these surveys could be distributed virtually online and in libraries across the United States. Face-to-face or virtual interviews could be semi-structured to collect rich qualitative data while remaining adaptable to lead to more insights. Data analysis could include correlation and regression models and thematic analysis for the qualitative measures.

Conclusion

As of March 2024, there is an astounding lack of research in this area. The present research contributes to a small but growing body of literature related to libraries and LGBTQ+ individuals. Considering recent targeted book challenges towards people of color and LGBTQ+ folk, the relationship between public library engagement and feelings of acceptance among the LGBTQ+ population must be explored. According to (ALA, 2023), 47% of titles targeted for censorship represent the stories and experiences of LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC individuals. This recent trend in censorship demonstrates the importance of continued research to combat misconceptions about books and LGBTQ+ individuals. Further research is needed to provide clarity on this complex relationship to serve as a guide for public librarians' service towards the LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities and for researchers to identify key principles in the relationship between broad acceptance and library utilization. By addressing this gap, researchers can illuminate the unexplored connection between the growing trend of feelings of acceptance and library use, and librarians can foster welcoming and inclusive environments for all patrons.

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Understanding Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS): Prevalence, Demographics, and the Role of Social Workers in Advocacy and Support

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Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, is one of the most devastating chronic and terminal healthcare conditions. Understanding the prevalence, demographics, and underlying disease process of ALS is crucial in addressing the needs of those affected. This paper looks into ALS statistics, disease progression, affected populations, and the critical role that social workers play in providing support, advocating for systemic changes, and upholding ethical standards. Additionally, it explores the ways social workers can collaborate with various support systems and settings to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with ALS by outlining strategies for addressing cultural diversity and ethical dilemmas that may arise when working with ALS patients and their families. Finally, it highlights the connection between micro and macro practice, emphasizing how social workers can bridge individual needs with broader policy changes to eliminate systematic barriers and improve the lives of those at risk of or diagnosed with ALS. The pivotal role of social workers in the lives of ALS patients extends beyond individual support, including advocacy, cultural competency, and systemic change to address the multifaceted needs of affected individuals and their families, enhancing quality of life and combating systemic barriers.

Background

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a devastating neurodegenerative disease that primarily affects motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord, leading to muscle weakness and impairing functions like talking, swallowing, and walking (CDC, 2019). It disproportionately impacts Caucasian males, with stable rates observed between 2010 and 2015 (Mehta et al., 2023). ALS occurs in sporadic and genetic forms, with the sporadic type being more common and the genetic form inherited within families (The ALS Association, 2023). Patients face a challenging prognosis, typically surviving two to five years after symptom onset, while those with familial ALS have a bleaker outlook, living only one to two years post-symptoms.

Men under 60 are slightly more susceptible to ALS, with the average diagnosis age around 55, though the disease can affect individuals in their twenties and thirties (The ALS Association,

2023). Environmental factors, such as exposure to toxins like lead or pesticides, tobacco or alcohol use, and extreme physical exertion, may contribute to ALS development (CDC, 2019). Veterans, due to their exposure to environmental hazards during service, are at increased risk (Veterans Risk-The ALS Association, 2023). Due to its multifaceted nature, this debilitating disease requires comprehensive research and support.

Social Worker Role

The role of a social worker for individuals at risk for ALS involves a proactive approach aimed at education, support, and the reduction of potential risk factors (The ALS Association, 2023). This multifaceted approach involves several key interventions including education and awareness, genetic counseling, lifestyle modifications, psychological support, advocacy and resources, follow-up and monitoring, documentation and planning, and community outreach.

First, there is a strong emphasis on education and awareness. Social workers provide information about ALS risk factors, genetics, and potential environmental exposures. Working to raise awareness of the disease, social workers focus particularly among those with a family history of ALS. This process helps assess their genetic risk and aids individuals and families in making informed decisions about optional genetic testing and its potential implications. Individuals who are interested in genetic tests can have them ordered by their neurologist (The ALS Association, 2023).

Next, lifestyle modification is addressed through collaboration. Social workers work closely with individuals to identify and modify potential environmental risk factors. They can offer guidance on adopting a healthy lifestyle, including advice on nutrition, with the aim of potentially reducing the risk or delaying the onset of ALS. Continuing with adopting a healthy lifestyle, it is important that social workers offer counseling and emotional support to individuals dealing with anxiety and distress related to being at risk with ALS (The ALS Association, 2023). Social workers can facilitate support groups for both individuals at risk and their families, creating a platform for sharing experiences and coping strategies. Social workers advocate for policies and regulations that promote research into ALS causes and prevention (The ALS Association, 2023). By connecting individuals with ALS associations and research institutions, social workers facilitate participation in studies and clinical trials. Providing continuous support, social workers coordinate

medical appointments with specialists and assist in scheduling screenings to detect early signs and symptoms of ALS.

Social workers help individuals prepare advance care directives and make decisions regarding their healthcare preferences (Allen & Spitzer, 2016). They assist in developing a contingency plan that outlines steps to take if ALS symptoms appear. Raising awareness about ALS requires community outreach. Social workers organize community awareness campaigns and educational events to increase knowledge about ALS, ensuring a broader understanding within the community (Cox et al., 2021). When an individual is faced with the diagnosis of ALS, the involvement of a social worker becomes vital. From providing emotional support to providing practical assistance, they guide the individual and their family through the multitude of challenges caused by this illness. Within this framework, a social worker assumes various critical roles and employs a range of interventions. Through counseling, social workers equip not only the individual but their family as well with the skills to navigate the profound emotional impact of ALS.

In tandem with the clinicians, social workers take on the task of coordinating care. This involves collaborating with neurologists, various therapists, dieticians, and palliative care teams to ensure that the individual receives holistic care. Social workers aid the individual and their family in understanding the variety of treatment options and making well-informed decisions. According to The ALS Association (2023), social workers serve as a crucial bridge to resources, linking the individual and their family with local ALS associations and support groups. This connection opens doors to information, peer support, and resources, enabling the acquiring of assistive devices, mobility aids, and home modifications that enhance quality of life (The ALS Association, 2023).

The journey with ALS includes discussions regarding advance care directives, end-of-life preferences, and treatment goals. The social worker facilitates these conversations and assists with the documentation. Along with financial planning, insurance coverage, and disability benefits, social workers provide assistance with access to social service programs (NASW, 2019). Legal concerns, such as setting up power of attorney and addressing estate planning, are not overlooked. Furthermore, the support extends to the caregivers within the family. Having recognized the physical and emotional challenges of caregiving, social workers offer resources and support, such as respite care, to avoid burnout.

Social workers stand as a voice, ensuring that the best possible care is received. They raise awareness of ALS-related issues, pushing for policy changes and increased research funding. The

management of symptoms, a critical aspect of ALS care, is a collaborative effort with healthcare clinicians and social workers. Together, they develop and implement strategies to minimize symptoms, prioritizing the individual's comfort and quality of life.

Inevitably, grief and loss will hover over the ALS journey. The social worker extends a hand, offering support for both the individual and their family. Bereavement counseling and resources become a lifeline. A social worker also emphasizes the importance of community engagement. Social workers encourage the patient to remain active in their community, nurturing social connections (Cox et al., 2021). In diverse settings ranging from hospitals to home-based care and specialized clinics, social workers lend their expertise. They are pillars of support, instrumental in navigating the challenges associated with this terminal disease.

Diversity and Ethics

Addressing ALS patients with cultural humility involves recognizing and navigating various ethical dilemmas, including autonomy and resource allocation, while also overcoming barriers like language and cultural differences (Russell, 1998). This approach seeks to ensure compassionate, respectful, and client-centered social work practice within diverse cultural contexts.

A potential ethical dilemma arises from the balance between respecting the individual's autonomy and ensuring that their decisions are informed and free from undue influence. This can be especially complex when the individual's cultural background values family decision-making. Quality of life discussions, particularly regarding life-sustaining interventions, may clash with cultural or religious beliefs about life, death, and suffering. Maintaining confidentiality while navigating family and community structures that may require sharing information is another ethical challenge. Social workers must respect the client's cultural perspective on health, disability, and end-of-life care while avoiding imposing their own beliefs and values (NASW, 2019).

Several barriers and limitations must be navigated in providing effective care. Language and communication barriers can be addressed by utilizing professional medical interpreters or communication technology to ensure accurate and respectful dialogue (Al Shamsi et al., 2020). Understanding and respecting varied cultural perspectives on health, disease, disability, and end-of-life decisions is vital. This involves continuously educating oneself about the client's cultural framework, engaging in reflective practices, and incorporating the client's cultural beliefs into the care plan as much as possible (NASW, 2019). Limited access to necessary resources, such as

healthcare services, support groups, and assistive devices, can hinder effective service provision. To overcome this, community resources should be leveraged, alliances with ALS organizations built, and advocacy efforts made to help clients access essential services and supports.

Family dynamics play a significant role in decision-making in some cultures. This can potentially limit the patient's autonomy or cause challenges in reaching an agreement about care approaches. Social workers facilitating family meetings, considering the perspectives of all stakeholders, and guiding discussions can support collaborative decision-making while still respecting the client's rights and wishes (NASW, 2019). Addressing unconscious bias or stereotypes about the client's culture, socioeconomic status, or ALS condition is vital. Engaging in continuous self-reflection, seeking supervision, and participating in training can help social workers recognize and mitigate potential biases (NASW, 2019). Additionally, being informed about applicable legal and policy frameworks is important, as laws or policies may restrict options available to the client. Advocating at systemic levels for policy adaptations that support the diverse needs of individuals with ALS is an essential aspect of social workers providing comprehensive care.

Connecting Micro and Macro Practice

ALS is a terminal neurodegenerative disease characterized by the progressive loss of motor neurons, ultimately leading to paralysis and, in most cases, respiratory failure. Regrettably, as of now, there is no known cure for this terminal condition. In light of this grim reality, social workers serve as pivotal figures in the support system for individuals and families living with ALS. A social worker's role includes providing emotional support to the people they serve. They also advocate for policy changes that could improve their quality of life. This multifaceted approach encompasses both micro and macro levels of practice (Knight & Gitterman, 2018). The social worker must navigate the individual needs while simultaneously advocating for broader policy reforms in healthcare and social services (Miller et al., 2017).

The available options for an individual at risk of or diagnosed with ALS is intertwined with existing policies. The policies governing healthcare access and funding have a profound influence on ALS patients' choices. Social workers guide individuals through the complex healthcare system, ensuring equal access to medical care, assistive technologies, and essential therapies (Miller et al., 2017). Secondly, social workers' expertise is also needed in the area of disability

benefits and social security. They guide ALS patients through the application process, securing the financial support and resources required to offset the costs associated with medical expenses, home modifications, and daily living assistance.

Specialized ALS care, medications, and assistive devices are significantly affected by insurance coverage policies. The social worker serves as an advocate for ALS patients, clarifying insurance options and fighting for the coverage necessary to meet their unique needs. Equally vital are policies relating to accessible housing and modifications, as they have a direct impact on the quality of life experienced by individuals with ALS. Social workers provide guidance in navigating housing policies and programs (NASW, 2019). In addition, social workers empower ALS patients about their employment rights. This includes providing options for reasonable accommodations, family medical leave, and protections against disability discrimination (Reasonable Accommodations, 2019). Through this, social workers help to ensure that individuals with ALS can either sustain employment or transition with dignity and efficacy (The ALS Association, 2023).

Social workers use a variety of strategies to help people at risk of or diagnosed with ALS overcome barriers. At the forefront is their advocacy and policy influence; they tirelessly advocate for changes at the local, state, and national levels. These changes are aimed at improving access to quality healthcare, disability benefits, and essential supportive services for ALS patients (Miller et al., 2017). Social workers act as educators and sources of support, providing crucial information about available resources, facilitating access to support groups, and teaching coping mechanisms (NASW, 2019). This empowerment equips individuals and their families with the tools needed to navigate the challenges of the healthcare system and defend their rights (Andermann, 2019). A social worker's toolkit also includes collaboration and networking. Together with healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, and support organizations, social workers create a harmonized approach to ALS care and target systemic hurdles patients face. Individualized care plans are another component of social workers' interventions. These plans are designed to meet the individual needs and preferences of each ALS patient, ensuring they receive comprehensive medical, social, and emotional care (van Eenennaam et al., 2020). Finally, community engagement and awareness-raising initiatives form an integral part of the social worker's role. Through active involvement in the community, they strive to destigmatize ALS, foster understanding, and nurture an environment of support for those living with this relentless disease.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the terminal condition amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) exhibits distinct prevalence patterns, with higher rates among Caucasian, male individuals and those under 60 years of age (The ALS Association, 2023). Further research over subsequent years will be crucial to discern any potential trends. There is a higher incidence of ALS in areas with a greater proportion of Caucasian residents, which aligns with demographic trends (Mehta et al., 2023). In order to effectively target interventions and allocate resources, a thorough understanding of ALS demographics and prevalence rates is necessary. Additionally, social workers play a vital role in supporting individuals at risk or diagnosed with ALS, addressing both the individual needs and advocating for systemic changes. By providing education, emotional support, and advocacy, social workers contribute significantly to improving the quality of life for individuals and families affected by this devastating condition. Recognizing and navigating cultural and ethical considerations further ensures a client-centered and respectful approach, regardless of cultural background. Connecting micro and macro practice enables social workers to address immediate needs while advocating for broader policy changes to eliminate systemic barriers. The collaborative efforts of social workers, alongside healthcare professionals and community organizations, are vital in the comprehensive care and support of individuals impacted by ALS.

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