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Shannon Bushee

"Better Never Means Better for Everyone":
Victims of Utopia in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Never Let Me Go*

One of the primary focuses of utopian and dystopian literature is society: how society succeeds and fails, what society today risks becoming if a certain trait is not kept in check, or how society fails to protect those that need it most. Many works within these genres present a theoretically "perfect" society, where certain social ills have been completely removed in exchange for certain human rights and freedoms being taken away. In fact, the price for peace and order in many utopian and dystopian works is the rights of one group in particular, typically those who are believed to be the cause of the social ills in the first place. As such, when considering the worlds presented in these works, readers are forced to ask themselves what price they would be willing to pay, or which groups' happiness they would be willing to sacrifice, in order to achieve a "perfect" society.

However, while utopias tend to focus on what society gains for having organized itself this way, dystopian literature tends to come from the point of view of those who have been oppressed by this new system of organization. In the dystopic futures of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Never Let Me Go,* certain groups are subjected to restrictions of rights at best, and extreme violence at worst, which society justifies as the price necessary for maintaining order. Using the theories of Rene Girard and Sigmund Freud, I plan to examine how society chooses its scapegoats and the forms of violence it enacts against them. Applying these theories to *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Never Let Me Go,* I will illustrate how these fictional societies have chosen their scapegoats, how they create and enact systemized violence against them in order to oppress them, and whether or not, in the universe of the novel, this behavior is considered justifiable in order to maintain society.

Rene Girard and Sigmund Freud have both developed theories to explain the kinds of societal aggression that lead to the targeting of one specific group. Freud's book *Civilization and*

Its Discontents deals primarily with human happiness and how society constricts it. According to Freud, humanity's greatest aim is happiness (or avoiding suffering), but suffering naturally comes from three directions: from our own bodies, which age and feel pain; from the outside world, because of phenomena like natural disasters; and from "our relations to other men" (Freud 44). While there is only so much to be done about the first two, humanity tries to take control of the third point--suffering caused by other people--by regulating society. Each society has its own rules, manners and codes of conduct designed to make inter-personal reaction as pain-free as possible.

However, Freud notes that these regulations do not actually prevent human suffering. Though humanity insists that the set of regulations placed on our behavior is "a protection and benefit for every one of us," it is important to recognize that societal regulations on human behavior do not actually stop people from feeling these potentially harmful urges to pursue happiness at whatever cost (Freud 58). It only prevents humanity from acting on these instincts for the sake of society, creating a "cultural frustration" that "dominates the large field of social relationships between human beings. As we already know, it is the cause of hostility against which all civilizations have to struggle" (Freud 75). That is, it is the desire to defy society's restrictions in search of pleasure that often leads to inter-personal conflict.

A large percentage of the time, though, humans manage to cooperate in spite of this pent-up frustration. Where, then, does all of this internal conflict go? According to Freud, "cultural frustration" manifests itself in one of two ways. One of these ways is through guilt, which society cultivates to "inhibit the aggressiveness which opposes it, to make it harmless, to get rid of it" (Freud 114). When humans are made to feel guilty for considering taking action that opposes the rules of society, they are usually paralyzed into inaction or are willing to repent.

When guilt does not come into play, however, this aggression is directed at external targets. In lighter doses, this can take the form of what Freud calls "the narcissism of minor differences," or when two similar groups in close proximity constantly tease or get into spats with each other, like people in the United States making fun of Canada. This is a "convenient and

relatively harmless satisfaction of the inclination to aggression," as it allows the two populations to get out their frustration in small ways that do not cause much damage (Freud 99).

When taken to its extreme, however, this behavior goes beyond "the narcissism of minor differences" and into something much worse. This is when certain populations are made into scapegoats, and are constantly beaten down and persecuted in order to alleviate societal frustration. Freud highlights the historic treatment of Jewish people, who are frequently the victims of discrimination and horrific violence, as an example of this kind of behavior (Freud 99).

Similarly, Girard's scapegoat theory stems from his mimetic theory of human behavior. According to Girard, different people imitate each other in order to understand how to get resources and to get ahead in society, and eventually, they begin to compete for resources and status with the very people they started out imitating. This leads to conflicts because, according to Girard, "differences between the subject and the model are obliterated. The model becomes a monstrous double by whom the subject is as much repulsed as he was earlier attracted" (Reineke 142). The competition between the two groups leads to violent conflict, and the more the two groups compete, the more the violence escalates.

However, there is a way to stop the violence from getting too out-of-hand. The two groups must redirect their anger not at each other, but at an innocent third party:

> According to Girard, what ends the crisis is the converging of a group's anger on a random victim, a scapegoat. Designated by "mimeticism itself," the scapegoat is singled out, identified as the cause of disorder, and killed. United in hate against the scapegoat as they were previously divided in hate against each other, the group finds peace has been restored in the wake of sacrifice. (Reineke 142-143).

By taking out their frustration on a powerless third party, the two groups in power essentially get their anger out of their system, preventing the feud from escalating any further. In other words, the scapegoat is sacrificed in order to maintain balance in society.

However, Girard takes care to note that the scapegoat mechanism only works if the fighting parties in society do not realize that the victim of their violence is innocent. If the fighting parties cannot blame the scapegoat for their problem, then they will not be willing to sacrifice the scapegoat. With the scapegoat mechanism "desacralized," society has no outlet for its frustrations, and the violence between the mimetic parties will continue to escalate. According to Girard's later writings, this will have apocalyptic consequences for mankind (Reineke 143). Therefore, although the scapegoat mechanism inherently means that an innocent party must be punished for a conflict with which he or she is not involved, Girard seems to be saying that arguably, this is preferable to continued escalation between two powerful rival parties in society.

Girard's and Freud's theories about scapegoats are similar in a few important ways. In both theories, societal violence is caused by a build-up of frustration, and this violence is either focused inwardly in destructive ways or taken out on an external party who frequently has nothing to do with the frustration. Both also involve a large-scale, systemized form of violence against the scapegoat. Both theories, ultimately, seem to argue that the scapegoat suffers so that nobody else gets hurt.

These ideas have been explored in the earliest forms of utopian literature. Thomas More's *Utopia,* the founding work of the genre, mostly consists of Raphael Hythloday narrating his experiences on an island he stumbled upon during one of his adventures. As far as Hythloday is concerned, Utopia is perfect. The trade-off for perfection, which is not mentioned until much later in the novel, is that society runs on slave labor. People convicted of crimes in Utopia are forced into slavery and "punished with bondage," where they are "[kept] not only in continual work and labour, but also in bands" (More 147).

If we examine this following the model that Freud and Girard outline, then this system makes sense. The criminals are blamed for all of the ills that plague Utopia, and the system of

violence against them in the form of chains and forced labor allows the rest of society a way to get out their frustration with all of Utopia's rules. In this mindset, it is the slaves' fault that things are wrong in Utopia, and so they deserve to be punished as long as it keeps everyone else safe.

Raphael Hythloday sees no problem whatsoever with this system of organization. For one, the slaves do work that is vital to Utopia's survival. Additionally, all of the slaves are people who have committed some kind of crime and put the stability of Utopia in jeopardy. Raphael Hythloday definitely seems to think that this is a worthwhile price to pay, although it is unclear whether More--both the character within the story and the author himself--feels the same way.

Following this tradition, authors of dystopian fiction such as *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Never Let Me Go* have latched onto this idea and played with it in much greater detail in their own works. Literary scholar Gregory Claeys states that the origins of dystopian literature are as a satire or reaction to utopian texts in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a "more traditionally identified 'turn' towards dystopia" is sparked by two societal developments: eugenics and socialism (Claeys 111). At this point, though there are some positive portrayals of these movements, the majority of the dystopian novels from the time explore societies where these movements get out of control and ask readers if the potential for these movements to get out of hand is worth the benefits (Claeys 111-112). This idea is now a bedrock of the dystopian genre; in modern dystopian novels, society has organized itself in a certain way to combat a certain problem, and readers are left to see how this organization actually creates more problems instead of solving the original one. *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Never Let Me Go* both involve a society where, similar to Utopia, there is a great threat to society's stability that the institution tries to solve. Though each society has different problems and has conjured up a different "solution," the "solution" in both works is roughly the same: it targets one group in particular by stripping that group of its rights, exposing them over time to extreme institutionalized violence in order to placate the rest of society.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale,* the primary emergency that needs solving is a fertility crisis. Before the events of the novel, the birth rate in pre-Gileadian society was

dropping at an alarming rate. Offred recalls that, during her time at the Center, she was shown a graph of "the birthrate per thousand, for years and years: a slippery slope, down past the zero line of replacement, and down and down" (Atwood 113). Much of the population of Gilead--implied to be a dystopian New England in the not-too-distant future--is sterile. Specifically, according to the Republic of Gilead, the birth decline is the fault of sterile women: "There is no such thing as a sterile man anymore, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that's the law" (Atwood 61). Even women who are fertile, however, risk giving birth to unhealthy babies. Offred states that there is a "one in four chance" of giving birth to an "Unbaby," or a child with a birth defect, according to what she was taught at the Center (Atwood 112). The cause of the high rates of infertility and babies born with birth defects is never stated outright, but is implied to have something to pollution (Atwood 112). Regardless of the cause, this crisis of fertility is why, at least theoretically, the Handmaid system was developed. With too few babies being born to sustain the population, the leaders of Gilead decided that fertile women who could deliver healthy babies were the most important resource and began to rely on them accordingly.

However, the Handmaid system does not simply encourage fertile women to have children. Instead, Gilead brainwashes these young women, and then places them into the homes of high-ranking government officials, where there are effectively kept in a form of sexual or reproductive slavery. The Handmaids act as proxies for the Wives, and once a month, the Handmaids take part in ritualistic sex with the Commanders, in the hopes that they will become pregnant (Atwood 93-95).

In spite of how horrifically the Handmaids are treated, and in spite of how they have had their basic rights taken away, most of Gilead agrees with and wishes to perpetuate the system. This is because, following Freud's and Girard's theories, the Handmaids are Gilead's scapegoats. This makes sense based on the way that Offred describes how she remembers pre-Gileadean society. On the one hand, Offred talks about the religious right, including those such as Serena Joy, a televangelist and a leader of the revolution. Serena Joy's particular religious ideology

stresses that women should only be mothers and not play roles outside of the house (Atwood 45). On the other hand, Offred's mother was a die-hard, anti-pornography feminist (Atwood 38-39). Pornography exploits women, according to women like Offred's mother, which is what leads to sexual crimes against women. Though the two groups have vastly different ideologies and are in competition with each other, both converged on young women--specifically their sexual freedom and how it is portrayed and executed--as the center point of society's ills. As scholar Lois Feuer notes, "the essentialism of Offred's mother and her 'woman's culture' unintentionally supports the essentialism of the fundamentalist right" (Feuer 89). The discussion of both groups leads to young women being singled out as the cause of society's problems (as opposed to the actual cause: the chemical and ecological conditions causing the widespread infertility in the first place.)

Therefore, as Gilead took over and tried to reform society, the leaders decided that one of the chief ways to eliminate suffering was to take away women's sexual freedom. Moreover, women who do not cooperate with the Handmaid system, either by running away, by conferring with resistance movements, or even by being infertile or failing to get pregnant within a certain time limit, are sent to the Colonies. There, political prisoners are forced to clean up toxic sludge--a mechanism similar to Utopia's enslavement of its own people (Atwood 248).

The Center's ideology is so strong that the Aunts even manage to brainwash their victims into buying into the system. Aunt Lydia, the main teacher at the Center, frightens the young women into agreeing with Gilead's rules by reminding them of the supposed consequences of having too much sexual freedom. She drills into her students' minds the constant threat of rape and violence that women were under pre-Gilead and "slut-shames" the women of the past:

> The spectacles women used to make of themselves. Oiling
> themselves like roast meat on a spit, and bare backs and shoulders,
> on the street, in public, and legs, not even stockings on them, no
> wonder those things used to happen. *Things,* the word she used
> when whatever it stood for was too distasteful or filthy or horrible

> to pass her lips. A successful life for her was one that avoided *things,* excluded *things.* Such *things* did not happen to nice women (Atwood 55).

All of Aunt Lydia's tirades and lectures use this kind of rhetoric that characterizes sexual young women as undesirable--not only as targets of violence, but as participating in criminal and sinful acts that threaten society. Additionally, during what is called "Testifying," the young women must recount acts of violence done to them in their past and then have the rest of the room shame them for their role in it. For example, after a young woman named Janine admits to being raped and having an abortion, the teacher, Aunt Helena, encourages the class to make fun of her and to tell her that it was her own fault and that God was teaching her a lesson (Atwood 72). Through mechanisms like this, the young women are made to feel complicit in acts of violence against them and to feel as though their sexuality is something shameful that needs to be controlled. All of this ensures that nobody, even the Handmaids themselves, will see the Handmaids as innocent victims of the system. Instead, they are the cause of the problem, and Gilead is justified in doing everything it can to keep them under control. Therefore, in Girard's words, the scapegoat mechanism remains sacred.

Within the text, Atwood raises the question of "what our present freedom costs us, weighed against the price the fundamentalist right exacts for the 'protection' of women in Gilead" (Feuer 89). Aunt Lydia, the mouthpiece of the state for the girls at the Center, "describes the prerevolutionary United States as a society dying of too much choice" and Gilead as "offering security and stability in place of that too-demanding freedom" (Feuer 86). Additionally, the regime, by virtue of the way they control fertility, has given women's reproduction respect and sanctity beyond what it has ever had before. There is practically no sexual violence in Gilead, and women are not constantly under threat of being raped--except, of course, for the ritualistic rape that the Handmaids must undergo and that is encouraged by the system. In the eyes of people like Aunt Lydia, the treatment of the Handmaids has improved everyone's lives--

even the lives of the Handmaids--and is therefore worth the restriction of rights and freedom that Gilead's system requires.

Others, like the Commander, recognize the suffering that Gilead puts the Handmaids through, but wholly believe (or at least pretend to believe) that it is justified for the good of Gilead. In their private and increasingly candid conversations, the Commander, a leader of the revolution, asks Offred what she thinks of Gilead's changes to society. Her reaction, though not explicitly negative, is telling enough for the Commander to feel like he has to defend the revolution to her:

> You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, is what he says. We thought we could do better.
> Better? I say, in a small voice. How can he think this is better?
> Better never means better for everyone, he says. It always means worse, for some. (Atwood 211).

These conversations reveal that ultimately, although the Commander is willing to acknowledge the ways in which Gilead hurts the Handmaids, he believes that their suffering is necessary so that the rest of society can be stable.

A similar system of exploitation--where a group of people's bodies are effectively seized by the state and re-purposed for other people's use--exists in the world of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go. Never Let Me Go* follows a young girl named Kathy and two of her friends, Ruth and Tommy, through their childhood at a boarding school in England called Hailsham. Their childhood is, for the most part, idyllic, and they spend most of their time at school making art and playing. The children live apart from the outside world, but the outside, too, is implied to be almost as peaceful as life in Hailsham. However, much like the Handmaids in *The Handmaid's Tale,* the children of Hailsham are the ones who pay for this peace. The problem in question in *Never Let Me Go* is disease, specifically organ transplants, and Kathy, Tommy, Ruth

and the others are the solution. The children are clones who are raised apart from society so that when they grow up, their healthy vital organs can be removed and given to people with diseases. The surgeries are called "donations," and by a clone's third or fourth "donation," they usually "complete," or die.

Once again following Freud's and Girard's theories, one can map out how the clones in Hailsham came to be the victims of this systematic societal violence. However, the scapegoat mechanisms do need to be adapted slightly. The strain in society is caused by illness, and while the clones do not necessarily get blamed for these illnesses, they are the ones who are expected to "solve" the problem through their donations. Moreover, the reason that subjecting these young adults to a series of painful surgeries and a gradual death is seen as justified is not because the clones are being "punished" for something, but more because society does not see them as human, and therefore as needing or deserving high-quality lives. More than anything, the clones present a readily available solution to the problem, so society is willing to use them no matter what the cost. As a teacher at the school, Miss Emily, later explains to Kathy and Tommy:

> How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back. However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. (Ishiguro 263).

The frustration between competing factions in the background of *Never Let Me Go*--mostly medical patients competing for a scarce number of organs--causes them to choose an unrelated

victim, the clones, to "solve" the problem. As such, society is willing to sacrifice the lives and the well-being of the clones in order to help everybody else live longer, higher-quality lives.

The clearest moment that establishes the clones as society's sacrifice in *Never Let Me Go* comes at the end of the novel, when Kathy and Tommy, now in a relationship, track down Madame and Miss Emily to see if they can get a deferment on their donations. An old myth among the students holds that young couples who can prove that they are genuinely in love with each other will get a deferment and get to live a few normal years together before their donations start. Moreover, Tommy has convinced himself that the art that they were all encouraged to do as kids was actually a way to see the students' souls, as a way to prove whether or not two students were in love (Ishiguro 175-176).

Upon confronting Madame and Miss Emily, however, Kathy and Tommy learn the truth. In Girard's scapegoat mechanism, as stated previously, sacrificing the scapegoat only works to diffuse tension when nobody realizes that the scapegoat is innocent. Similarly, in *Never Let Me Go,* the clones are treated inhumanely because society refuses to see them as human. Seeing the clones as just incubators for spare organs is what allows people not to have to think about the slow and hellish death the clones are forced to go through.

To change the way the clones were treated, Madame and Miss Emily, as well as the other headmasters of some of the clone boarding schools, were part of a movement pushing for the more humane raising of clones. This required proving the humanity of the clones. As Miss Emily says: "We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all*" (Ishiguro 260).

However, the movement, in Girard's words, threatened the "sacredness" of the scapegoat mechanism. After an unethical experiment in gene modification was uncovered at one of the "humane" boarding schools, society had to take another look at the donation program, and it did not like what it saw:

> The world didn't want to be reminded how the donation
> programme really worked. They didn't want to think about you

> students, or about the conditions you were brought up in. In other words, my dears, they wanted you back in the shadows. Back in the shadows where you'd been before the likes of Marie-Claude and myself ever came along. […] You won't find anything like Hailsham anywhere in the country now. All you'll find, as ever, are those vast government "homes," and even if they're somewhat better than they once were, let me tell you, my dears, you'd not sleep for days if you saw what still goes on in some of those places. (Ishiguro 264-265).

In this sense, society in *Never Let Me Go* catches itself almost exposing the scapegoat mechanism for what it is. However, everyone then realizes that by recognizing the clones as innocent victims, not only will they have nobody to rely on for their massive supply of human organs, but they will also have to answer questions about their own behavior since the launch of the donation program. Instead, society once again turns on the clones, this time with more vigor than ever, determined to keep them in their place.

Moreover, much like the Handmaids in *The Handmaid's Tale,* the clones in *Never Let Me Go* are taught to believe as much as society does that the sacrifices they are forced to make are for the greater good. They have internalized that they are cloned from society's shunned populations, or as Ruth says, "*trash.* Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos" (Ishiguro 166). Kathy even looks for her "possible" in a pornographic magazine, embarrassed about the urges she feels during puberty and believing that she must have inherited them from a prostitute or a porn star (Ishiguro 181). With this awareness of their "birth," the clones have always been aware of how they are different from the rest of society and the role that they play, and it never crosses their mind to question the system. Even when they find out the truth, Kathy and Tommy do not run away. Instead, they return home, and Tommy gets called to go in for his fourth donation (Ishiguro 278).

However, though the clones accept their fate, they do become frustrated with it at times. The three main characters occasionally engage in "intimate cruelty," such as Kathy telling Tommy that she doesn't like his drawings, Tommy's fits of anger, and Ruth snapping at and manipulating both of them (Robbins 301). Seen in the light of scapegoat theory, these outbursts are revealed to be almost a more toxic form of Freud's "narcissism of minor differences." Because there is nowhere else for their anger to go, they take their frustration with the restrictions of their lives out on each other. As scholar Bruce Robbins notes:

> If Kathy's seemingly inexplicable cruelty toward Tommy is a sign of anger against the system, an anger that she cannot acknowledge but that she has every reason to feel, an anger like that of Miss Lucy and of Tommy himself, then the cruelty would of course no longer be inexplicable (301).

Though they are shown to engage with the scapegoat mechanism to ease their own frustration, Kathy and Tommy are unable to escape from their role as scapegoats in a larger context. They allow society to strip them of their rights and to slowly take away all of their organs, believing, as society does, that it is for the greater good.

Ultimately, the societies in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Never Let Me Go* are incredibly similar in terms of the ways that they seek to solve their problems. Both societies are faced with a specific issue (infertility in *The Handmaid's Tale* and a need for organ transplants in *Never Let Me Go*) that threatens the stability of society as a whole. Subsequently, both Gilead and Ishiguro's England identify one subsection of vulnerable people (the Handmaids and the clones, respectively) as being able to "solve" the issue, mostly through the use of their bodies. Though the lives of the clones and the Handmaids are miserable and rife with physical and existential torture because of the processes imposed on them, the rest of society either willfully ignores these consequences or argues that the suffering of these groups is necessary to improve the quality of life for everyone else. Gilead gets the babies it desperately needs, and nobody in

England has to die of cancer or while waiting to move up the organ transplant list--but only because a certain subsection of the population is forced to sacrifice itself to achieve this.

Moreover, these societal structures in both novels match up with the real-life scapegoating theories of both Sigmund Freud and Rene Girard. As in Freud's theory, both societies feature a "cultural frustration" caused by restrictions on human behavior, although this is more obvious in the more totalitarian world of Gilead. As a result, both societies air out this frustration through violence towards a vulnerable group, in the form of systemized rape and life-threatening medical procedures.

Following Girard's theory, as well, both novels feature a scapegoat being identified as the way to solve a conflict between parties fighting for resources (the resources being organs in *Never Let Me Go* and the population in *The Handmaid's Tale*), and subsequently sacrificing the scapegoat in order to solve the problem. Additionally, both societies maintain the "sanctity" of the sacrificial ritual by refusing to recognize their victims as innocent.

In the end, what the brutal treatment of the Handmaids and of the clones in their respective novels forces readers to do is to examine the price that society pays for happiness. The utopian genre initially evolved as a way for writers to theorize what a perfect world would look like. The dystopian genre, in turn, is a response to that question, forcing readers to decide what they would be willing to sacrifice in order to attain that perfect world. Both Atwood and Ishiguro seem to argue that if the stability of society rests on oppressing an entire group of people, then this supposed perfection is not worth the price.

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Rae Peckham

Spanish Immersion: Teaching Racism and a Little Bit of Spanish

When I walked through the hallways of my elementary school I saw many colors. When I walked into my classroom I saw the color white and only the color white. I was in the Spanish Immersion, a "special" program in which half the students' instruction was completely in Spanish and the other half in English. The expectation was that by having teachers speak to us in Spanish during our math, science, history and other subjects that we would pick up the language naturally. These are not "Spanish classes" in the traditional sense of learning verb conjugations and vocabulary, not Spanish classes but classes in Spanish. At my elementary school, located in suburban Maryland, about a third of the students spoke Spanish at home. However, these students were not in the program with me; they were in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. This lead to a stark racial division in the classrooms. At my elementary school, to be in the Spanish immersion meant to be "gifted"; to be in ESOL was to be seen as inferior. In Gloria Anzaldúa's essay "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" she explores linguistic terrorism in the U.S, and how Spanish, especially Chicano Spanish, is given this label of inferiority. My elementary school educational system perpetuated linguistic terrorism by essentially segregating its students and fostering a long American tradition of racism (and occasionally teaching us Spanish).

Anzaldúa never explicitly defines linguistic terrorism. Instead she uses it as a subheading for part of her essay. However, from what she decides to write about under the subheading: her experiences with her language being attacked, and how intertwined her pride and her language are I think it is very clear what linguistic terrorism is. She states, "Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself,"(525). Linguistic terrorism is when speakers of one language do not allow for another language to be spoken in their country. This can be done in many ways from direct laws to belittling the language until the speakers of the language-under- attack are shamed out of speaking it. "Terrorism" may be a strong word to use when describing an elementary school setting but I think it is important to highlight just how long-term and far reaching the effects of discriminating against a language are. According to a Pew study done in 2013, "Hispanic college students are less likely than their white counterparts to enroll in a four- year college (56% versus 72%), they are less likely to attend a selective college, less likely to be enrolled in college full time, and less likely to complete a bachelor's degree" (Fry). Now there are probably many factors contributing to this statistic, but I think one big underlying factor is linguistic terrorism in America. Spanish speaking students and their families are often marginalized in public schools and not given the education and attention they need because of prevailing negative social attitudes.

At the beginning of her essay, Anzaldúa recounts how, "At Pan American University, I and all Chicano students were required to take two speech classes.

Their purpose: to get rid of our accents" (522). How beautifully ironic it is then, that one of my most vivid memories of elementary school was being congratulated for my "authentic" accent. What had been criticized and stripped from a people was now being praised in little white girls. I learned Spanish from a place of privilege. No one would look at the color of my skin and chastise me for speaking Spanish on the playground. I would never, like Anzaldúa,be given "three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler" at recess for speaking Spanish (521). Instead for me and other white students to speak Spanish was seen as cute, smart, and "above average" by the adults around me. I could switch between the languages when I felt like it and I didn't have to worry about any consequences. This is how everyone who speaks two languages should be able to live their life, but instead they are told, like Anzaldúa, "If you want to be American, speak 'American.' If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong" (521).

"How to Tame a Wild Tongue" was written in 1987, well before I began elementary school. Hence Anzaldúa prophetically states that, "By the end of this century, Spanish speakers will comprise the biggest minority group in the United States, a country where students in high schools and colleges are encouraged to take French classes because French is considered more 'cultured'" (524). In 2014, Spanish speakers do comprise the biggest minority group in the United States (US Census). I assume that the adults who put the Spanish Immersion program together were trying to get ready for this new world. They were trying to be progressive and create a country with less of a language barrier. Other

students and I were told that we were learning Spanish because it would be useful as the second most spoken language in the U.S. However, by excluding children who already spoke Spanish at home the creators of the immersion program were creating a new language barrier. This exclusion not only hurt the Spanish-speaking students at the school but also hurt immersion students who would have benefitted from having fluent students to learn from. After all, we were all learning the same things just under different labels.

The clear division of students created a social hierarchy in the school. In an article published in a small-town Utah newspaper, a parent talking about her own child's Spanish immersion program, observes how, "A lot of times the kids in Spanish immersion have a superiority complex and think they are somehow more elite than the non-immersion students" (Rimington). This elitism held by students was present throughout my education and it started with elementary school. I watched as immersion students called ESOL students dumb or "illegal" not even understanding what that meant. Even kids who weren't in ESOL but just not in the Spanish immersion were looked down upon by the immersion students. To tell a student they are "gifted" is to tell them that they are inherently better than others. By high school the things said about ESOL students hadn't changed much. And in my high school Spanish class I was still being congratulated on my accent.

In 1971, when Anzaldúa taught high school English to Chicano students she tried to supplement the text with works by Chicanos only "to be reprimanded and

forbidden to do so by the principal. He claimed that I [she] was supposed to teach 'American' and English
literature" (525). This is still the case all over the United States. Spanish is still made out to be "unAmerican" and a problem that needs to be solved. Kids are forced into ESOL classes in order to correct this problem. Nowhere does it say that English is the "official" language of the U.S. yet America tries so hard to make sure that English dominates the education, social and political landscapes. Thankfully there are teachers like Anzaldúa who sneak in "Chicano short stories, poems and plays" (525). This helps to teach both languages while establishing pride and ultimately confidence in ESOL students.

The creators of my Spanish immersion program were likely worried that if students who already spoke Spanish were to be in the immersion they would never learn English. However, research shows that when students' home languages are encouraged in school the students learn English more quickly (Kovaleski Byrnes). In an article in LaOpinión on ESOL education, Jessica Price, a ACLU lawyer, specializing in ESOL education cases, that students in ESOL,"no están aprendiendo ni el abecedario" (Almada). My translation with added context: the students aren't being taught anything more than the ABCs. The separation of students into ESOL often means that they are getting subpar education: a separate and unequal education. The article describes how in one ESOL class students are pulled out for two hours a day to learn English grammar rules without being given any context or way of integrating them into speech

(Almada). One possible solution, is to allow ESOL students the choice to opt out of the program in favor of regular English speaking classrooms to pick up the language naturally; that is after all the underlying reasoning for the existence of immersion programs. On the other hand, in places where the intensive immersion programs (half Spanish, half English) exist, it only makes sense to allow native Spanish-speakers to enroll as well. These solutions would help over come language barriers but would not address the larger stigma and linguistic terrorism in the country.

The quote that stands out more than any other to me in Anzaldúa's essay is, "I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. A veces no soy nada ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy." (527). I dropped out of the Spanish immersion when I was in third grade. After third grade, I was to a degree in a borderland between immersion and non-immersion kids at my school. Because of this I believe I was more able than some of peers to see the elitism and discrimination of the Spanish immersion program. It helped me to see the problem from varying perspectives. I don't know if there is a solution to the achievement gap between English as a second language students and English as a first language students but I don't think essentially segregating students is helping. All it is doing is creating a generation elitist and unharmonious student body. This separation of students is helping no one and having long lasting effects on people's lives.

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Rachel Cantor  - *Editorial Award Winner*

Gothic Blood and The Mikado*: The Significance of Violence, Ancestry, and Allusion in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find"*

In Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find", the characters of the grandmother and the Misfit share many similarities, despite their seemingly disparate backgrounds and aspirations. Through a close reading of the text, the grandmother and the Misfit's roles can be viewed in"cat vs. dog" juxtaposition; at odds, yet inextricably linked. The grandmother is represented by her pet cat, Pitty Sing. This name gives allusive context to the violent cat vs. dog struggle of the grandmother and the Misfit, and ties the story as a whole to the 1880s Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *The Mikado*.

As evidenced most prominently in the climax of "A Good Man Is Hard To Find", the Misfit's blood violence plays a key role in the plot. Towards the end of the story, he reminisces that "My daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my brothers and sisters" (O'Connor 233). This reference to "breed" can be seen as similar to the grandmother's beliefs in the primacy of ancestry in determining human characteristics, values, and worth: the Misfit is born different due to different blood. The reference to "dog" is also pivotal here; it belies the centrality of ferocity and violence to the Misfit and to the text as a whole. The Misfit is a "dog"; the grandmother is a cat. She is constantly accompanied and represented her cat, Pitty Sing; named after the character of Pitti Sing from *The Mikado*. In *The Mikado*, a character named Ko-Ko has been appointed Lord High Executioner for the small Japanese town of Titipu. Ko-Ko's backstory bears

striking similarities to the Misfit's, as summarized in the song "Our Great Mikado, virtuous man" at the start of Act 1:

> "And so we straight let out on bail
> A convict from the county jail,
> Whose head was next
> On some pretext
> Condemned to be mown off,
> And made him Headsman…".

Through a series of mishaps, Ko-Ko must convince the ruling Mikado that he has executed a man who is actually still alive. Pitti Sing is a young woman who conspires with Ko-Ko as a false witness to the man's supposed execution. When the lie—punishable by their own executions—is discovered, both Ko-Ko and Pitti Sing must plead for mercy on their lives to the ruling Mikado. The allusion to this operetta's story within "A Good Man is Hard to Find" can be seen as casting the Misfit as Ko-Ko the executioner, and the grandmother as Pitti Sing. In "A Good Man Is Hard To Find", too, the Misfit and grandmother must beg for a merciful act of grace from their Lord to save their souls in the aftermath of violent execution. That the Misfit and grandmother are respectively a cat and a dog is also significant to this point: "As he picks the cat up he revises his own earlier animalistic near-'snarl' that there is '[n]o pleasure but meanness' to remark that there is 'no real pleasure in life'" (Link 136-137). The act of grace and mercy through God has occurred—the grandmother touches the Misfit as one of her own—also resolving the story's violence, which is so inherent in the dog vs. cat symbolism, and in the comedic yet violent plot of *The Mikado*.

The very definitions of the character of the Misfit as a "Misfit" and the character of the "grandmother" as a grandmother are reliant upon the meanings of blood in "A Good Man is Hard to Find". As previously stated, the "Misfit" is classified by his father as "different" from birth; a "different breed" (O'Connor 233). However, he also self-identifies as an outcast:

> "'Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime to the punishment and see do they match and in the end you'll have something to prove you ain't been treated right. I call myself The Misfit,' he said, 'because I can't make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment'" (O'Connor 235).

Here, it is clear that the Misfit's self-identification has as much to do with a hereditary definition of blood-traits as it has to do with a violent definition of blood-punishment. This quote relates directly to *The Mikado* as well; the ruling Mikado has an entire solo number devoted to his governing ideology and efforts:

> "My object all sublime
> I shall achieve in time —
> To let the punishment fit the crime —
> The punishment fit the crime" ("A more humane Mikado", Act II).

The key irony of the Mikado's song is that none of the punishments he describes actually fit the crimes at all—there is a mis-fit.

While the Misfit's sense of self derives primarily from the violence he experienced and subsequently inflicts upon others, the grandmother's identification rides heavily on her own ideas about "good blood" and ancestry. Like the Misfit, her real name is never revealed. She is simply "the

grandmother": literally defined by her relation to those around her, to her family. Her blood—her family—is taken away from her through the Misfit's blood violence. By her time of death, she has lost her son and grandchildren, and with it the original meaning behind her definition as a "grandmother" or even as a mother. As literary theorist and critic Stephen Bandy notes, "much criticism of the story appears to take a sentimental view of the Grandmother largely because she is a grandmother" (109). But the pivotal moment of "grace" which likely fuels this sentimentality occurs after "the grandmother's" family has been executed and she is not technically a "grandmother" any longer. At this point, she is as the "Misfit" characterizes her: "'She would of been a good woman,' The Misfit said, 'if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life'" (O'Connor 236). In this regard, the former grandmother is again essentially Pitty Sing from *The Mikado*: seeking mercy on her life and soul only at the threat of violence.

> She stops at nothing to have her way. Against Bailey's orders, she has smuggled her cat (Pitty Sing by name, an allusion to *The Mikado* that may reflect the Grandmother's less apparent cultural aspirations) aboard the car as they begin their trip" (Bandy 113).

While Bandy postulates that the allusion to *The Mikado* deals with "the Grandmother's less apparent cultural aspirations", the previously stated evidence would seem to suggest that this allusion is much more sophisticated and developed, and runs much deeper throughout the text of "A Good Man Is Hard To Find". Additionally, Pitti Sing's status as a false witness perhaps also ties into the grandmother's false piety (as a "witness" of Christianity), at least

prior to her climactic act of grace towards the Misfit. It is through this climactic act that both the grandmother's and the Misfit's souls can be seen as seeking the mercy of God, just as Ko-Ko the executioner and Pitti Sing beg to be granted the mercy of their emperor and ruler, the Mikado.

While a late nineteenth century British satirical operetta might seem to have little to do with the literary genre of the Southern Gothic, The Mikado's Pitti Sing and Ko-Ko the executioner can be seen as allusive references for the grandmother and the Misfit throughout Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man Is Hard To Find". O'Connor casts the two as a dueling cat and dog pair whose violence is eventually resolved in their ironic, final act of grace, just before the executioner Misfit shoots the grandmother dead.

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Cassandra Clarke

The Role of Felt Sense: Collaborative Learning in Revision

On the second day of Teaching College Composition class, I wanted to leave. That day we were supposed to discuss the use of "descriptive outlines" in revision, and apply this technique to a sample student essay in pairs (Bruffe 80). Instead, we judged it. *"I see what the writer meant, but she should just do this,"* a fellow student said, speaking as if we were the owners and authority of the text, and the student only thought they were. Our conversation revolved around the belief that the role of a teacher is to judge the student's product as a "performative" text instead of examining its "working" ideas (Harris 19). As we spoke of what the student should do, we only echoed back to our professor the ways in which we had been taught to value writing as a product-based, and performance-based task.

We had no sense of "boundary negotiation" between teacher to student, never mind how we'd negotiate boundaries between student to student in class (Harris 100). What led me to stay in the class was what the professor said next we were all going to learn Bruffe's Short Course form of writing through modeling assignments as students. We could voice all the complaints we had throughout the process, but we

had to root our complaints in comparison to our pre-existing processes of writing. Through this collective experience, I found peer reviews to be the most helpful in informing my beliefs on revision as a teacher and writer. Peer reviews show that having an audience in revision, beyond our "felt sense," give texts a sense of purpose.

If writing is a "recursive process" led by the writer, then peer reviews ask the writer to do something unnatural stop writing, and show its pieces to an audience. When I started this class, I believed that writing was an individualized recursive process where one "continually returns to a text though substrands and subroutines" to gain clarity (Perl 364). This belief made the idea of handing over a draft to someone feel like handing over a bike without its wheels. If ideas are half-formed, how can showing the draft be useful? How can my peer reviewer know what I was going to fix? "Writers have to know what they are doing right...just as much as they have to know what to change in order to improve their work," and being resistant to discussing what isn't working is only barring self-improvement, or potential to receive new insights (Bruffe 184).

For writing assignment #1, we were asked to write in short course form (nestorian order), and I struggled with the concision of the form. For WA#1 I wanted to write a narrative essay comparing my teaching in inner-city schools in Boston to class-restrictive learning in Shanghai in the 1950's. I had too many competing ideas for a five hundred word essay. When Peer Reviewer #1 said, "Your idea is interesting but your narrative doesn't connect enough back to the text," I wanted to say: I knew that! But, I listened. I was intrigued with how she supported her statements with

substantive feedback, and descriptive proof to explain her opinions: *Your third sentence suggests that your classes hindered your classmates' learning, but you don't actually explain why. What language did they use that was different from yours (was it Standard English v. slang, for example, or your ability/interest in functioning within the created school system vs. their inability/disinterest), and HOW was their learning impacted? Give us an example. I'm not quite sure I buy the leap from your own middle/high school experiences to the broader experience of capitalism as a whole. What I'm understanding is...* In having to respond to her, I had to respond to my own text's limitations: *I agree. Citing examples of what types of "English" being used in the classroom could link back better to Zhan-Lu's discussion of Shanghai dialect and required Mandarin languages as the use of one or another does indicate a certain access to knowledge that could be introduced within the text to better connect how restrictive class creates restrictive language which creates restrictive access to knowledge bases...* Instead of comparing my writing to what could be, I was forced to examine what was on the page and devise a plan to fix how its structure could show my meaning. It gave me direction.

On a teacher-level, I found it troubling that us graduate students were uncomfortable sharing work; it showed me that we lacked negotiating boundaries peer-to-peer. It reinforced my main question for the class, and myself: *If we were uncomfortable discussing the evolving process of writing among ourselves, how can we teach it without instilling our own self-conscious behavior into young writers?* When I reviewed PR#1, I described her proposition as being too general and she exclaimed, "I knew it." So, we both knew it. In later classes we would learn to classify our feelings as mistaking our performance-level errors as competency-level errors (Bartholomae 255). Ultimately, I realized, that this discomfort in translation is essential for students to

experience as it is their own experience to translate. "The problem of the writer is to rematerialize the disembodied voices of inner speech in order to locate the writer within the social network these voices compose and negotiate the conflicting claims these voices make in the writer's inner speech," or to locate how their specific opinion on an issue is based on all they've learned socially, and therefore it is their job to create a text voicing their position to an outside audience (Trimbur 219). If I believed in this, then I too would practice a hands-off approach in-class time as our teacher did as it would force students to work through their initial discomfort and practice constructive conversation.

As we further discussed our errors in peer review, we realized it was difficult to articulate our opinions as we discovered we lacked a descriptive language. In PR#1's response to my text she said she didn't "buy it," but what does "buy it" mean? How could I tell a student I didn't "buy it"? In later classes, I would learn to reframe an opinion like "buying it." If my message intended was a fact in a paper needs supporting evidence so that the reader doesn't question its validity in text, I might say: "Is there a way to *authorize* this information? (Bruffe 166)." If I hadn't done this peer review work, however, I wouldn't have located my own struggle to form descriptive feedback. In order for me as teacher, and them as students to learn how to speak on behalf of their working ideas, without dismissing what is ultimately their bicycles missing their wheels, we all must use a universal language as it gives us equal access to specific strategies to try and evaluate.

In order to navigate these new feelings of focusing on content-level feedback with a developing language, our professor graded us on the quality of our peer reviews. The knowledge of us being graded on our peer reviews gave us a chance to be monitored as teachers, and students. We weren't just being graded on writing-as-peers but also on what would be our writing-as-teacher feedback. The grade-incentive worked as it helped me see how my language of revision was being adapted in assignments, while providing avenues for me to see areas where my evaluations could be strengthened with a sharper focus on rhetorical moves. In practicing this exercise with students, I would keep the current grading policy as it would give them a way to gauge their ability to apply key terms and strategies to their peer's work, while also receiving the same benefits.

In looking at the conversation between PR#1 and myself, one could say our felt senses agreed. Although Perl described the felt sense as being an intuitive internal feeling that a writer has in relation to their own work, a more precise way to think of this feeling is a reaction to any text's confliction with intent and meaning (Perl 366). The "felt" sense we shared was rooted in a shared concern of an underutilized purpose. When we *knew* something was wrong it was because we saw similar uses conflicting in the text. I want students to be comfortable starting off peer reviews with "I feel ___ because..." as it forces them to start at a place of opinion and then find evidence in text to support their claims. However, when more than one peer reviewer contributed their opinion to one writing assignment (as later writing assignments

required) the topic of evaluating feedback became trickier to receive, and even trickier to think how to teach students to receive.

Within my third peer review, a second reviewer responded to my text in a way that overwhelmed me with possibility: *I guess what I'm getting at is that right now these two reasons—"Black English prizes clarity of voice" and Black English is noun-centered opposed to verb-centered—seem to, like Dean said, "describe the distinctions highlighted in the second clause of the proposition "If English is split into Black English and Standard English in American classrooms, then we must recognize those distinctions if we seek to understand how they affect access to learning" However, they could function more like "evidence" as to why it's important to "must work to include the languages of our students," which could be backed up or elucidated by more personal experience.* In this review I could see the reviewer grappling with combing their feedback, connecting it to prior feedback, and extending the argument further, but it lost its main objective: *describe what are the reasons doing*. The "could be" and "could function" doesn't really describe what the text is doing currently, and thereby disregards the work being done. In hindsight I can see what's wrong. My problem was a vague proposition. Who was *we*? Was I arguing for teachers to recognize language distinctions in classrooms as barriers to learning between student and teacher? Why "must" we recognize these distinctions? During this review, I relied more on looking at the teacher's response to the peer feedback as a way to navigate the opinions being stated, and overall was grateful for the objective stance, but this also led me to question: How can we teach students whose feedback to hear? Ultimately, I'd like students to gain enough descriptive training to be able to reason out what comments unveil what's not working in a text.

Per design of the peer-review assignment, the only other thing I would change is to add writing logs and a commentary on writing feedback. As this language is new for students, I'd like them to reflect on each process in journal entries to give them room to respond to feedback. For the final assignment, I'd also ask students to create a commentary on the process of peer reviewing by using their peer-reviews as evidence to see how their language of revision has grown, and been applied throughout the course. Further, I'd ask them to locate the most frequent revision point noted in their reviews and see if that is a similar struggle or success for their own work.

At the start of the course I worried if I had struggled with feedback as a writer, I wouldn't be a good candidate to teach writing. What I neglected to realize was that all writers face the same struggles of translation in text. Peer reviews gave us a place to address ourselves as writers.

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Contributor Notes

Shannon Bushee - I am a senior at Emerson, where I am majoring in Writing, Literature and Publishing. I am originally from the suburbs of Boston. My interests as a reader and a writer include children's and young adult fiction of all genres, as well as science fiction and fantasy.

Rae Peckham - I'm a freshman VMA major who really loves to write. When I'm not writing angsty poetry I'm usually writing about education and various injustices around the world.

Rachel Cantor - Rachel Cantor is a freshman Writing, Literature and Publishing major at Emerson College. She is also a member of the Honors Program. Rachel writes for Gauge Magazine, and is on the editorial staff of Generic Magazine. She is an aspiring novelist.

Cassandra Clarke - Cassandra Clarke is an MFA student at Emerson College, studying Fiction. She currently writes comic reviews for Multiversity Comics and seeks to become that crazy high-school English teacher you cannot forget.

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