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## MA Portfolio

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FINAL MA PORTFOLIO

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of  
Bowling Green State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Arts in the field of English

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Professor Piya Pal-Lapinski, First Reader  
Professor Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

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## Portfolio Narrative

Literature has a voice; one that can detail experiences, challenges, and help shape its reader. It can introduce you to a world you could never have encountered; revealing challenges and areas that you could impact with change. Literature helped me learn more about myself and create my voice; bridging the gap between my heritage and who I had always considered myself to be. Working with contemporary literature from around the world, I look to find a way to bring awareness through theory and the voice of those that appear to not have one. Studying theory, its approaches, and how personal identities affect a piece has been the primary focus for my research at Bowling Green State University. I have also learned the importance of identity to our own understanding of social and cultural contexts, an area I want to continue with my future research. Understanding literature, and the connections amongst its varying genres begins the discussion on what constitutes research and communication.

In all of my courses these past two years, there has been an emphasis on using either theoretical or historical knowledge to analyze a text. The theories that informed my work stemmed from a feminist perspective where I am interested in looking at how other-ed bodies are seen within texts. Language becomes a weapon and speech a means through which we judge who and what is different. I believe that with research we can begin to address where other-ed bodies are being mistreated. Our problems with other-ed bodies needs to be discussed amongst each other so that we can begin to learn about the talent and wants of others. Without this, we are still positioned as opposites to one another, instead of embracing everyone and their past experiences. Not emphasizing and embracing certain intersections means we are ignoring various modes of difference. There needs to be more of a discussion of other-ed bodies and the intersections within them so we gain more of an understanding of standpoints and how these play

into our experiences. This involves “coming to have a feminist consciousness” involving “the experience of coming to know the truth about oneself and one’s society” (Bartky 437). Having this “feminist consciousness” is something that I strive to do with all my pieces and worked to achieve within my MA. I wanted to make sure that with each of my portfolio papers a continuous theme of placing emphasis on the other-ed body is shown. Doing this allows for a deeper look and understanding into why these bodies are being reduced in our society. The pieces that I have chosen for my portfolio all reflect this analysis, where I look at how the Other, or in three of the pieces the female body specifically, is either being displaced or refrained from having a voice. My pieces range from the beginning of my career as a MA candidate to now, where my emphasis on identity and voice became more of a priority in my work and is seen as a running theme throughout my coursework.

My first piece, “The Women of *Brave New World*: Aldous Huxley and the Gendered Agenda of Eugenics” was written as a final project for ENG 6010—Introduction to Graduate Studies. The professor encouraged our class to find a text that we wanted to write on and compose a conference paper that we could then present. I chose to write on *Brave New World*, as this was a novel I had only read once before and remembered liking. In the paper itself, I explore the stifled voice and how an other-ed body can be seen as being displaced through a historical lens. Throughout the paper, I analyze the female characters of *Brave New World* and how the society they are a part of is trying to slowly etch them out. I focused on how these women reveal gender issues that are a part of eugenics and what this means for them and the other female characters of the novel.

The feedback and suggestions focused on clarity of the historical background I wanted to use for analysis, using less of a passive voice in my work to fix issues of grammar and syntax,

and finally providing more examples to back up the claims that I was making in my work. I worked to make my voice more active as a result of the feedback and tried to focus my historical background. For example, my paper revolves around eugenics, but there were points in the introduction where I was referencing Social Darwinism and then not relating this to eugenics or explaining how this fit into my argument. In feedback, I was told to either get rid of any discussion of Social Darwinism or to incorporate it more into my paper. I decided that to fit with my argument, it would be best to get rid of any points relating to Social Darwinism and to add more background and historical research on eugenics. I also worked to integrate more quotes from the novel and other scholars to emphasize my points and make my argument stronger.

My second piece comes from ENG 6070—Theory and Methods of Literary Criticism. This course is what helped influence me the most during my time as a MA student. The theories and methodologies discussed have shaped my writing and the overall goals that I have as a scholar. It is also what helped me realize that I want to continue to use theory in my future work in academia. For the course, our final project was to take a text, whether that be a novel, movie, or TV show, and integrate it with a theoretical context that we had discussed in class. I chose to write on the newly released film, *The Shape of Water*, and integrate it with Slavoj Žižek's discussion on violence in a capitalistic society. My final paper was entitled "*The Shape of Water*: Del Toro's critique on Violence and Consumerism in Society through a Žižekian lens" and looked at how the director of *The Shape of Water* utilized characters and symbols to critique violence and consumerism.

The revisions for this piece consisted of getting rid of my passive voice, explaining more about the theoretical concepts that I was using, and working on my grammar and syntax. The comments that were provided helped to narrow down my research and theoretical background

that I wanted to integrate into my work. They also helped to show areas that I am using a passive voice, which is leading to incorrect syntax and grammar mistakes. While this is an area that I am still working on, and was still an issue in my later papers, having the opportunity to start revision on these areas was beneficial to my current and future work.

The third work in my portfolio was written for ENG 6800—Victorian Femme Fatales: Fiction, Art and Film. The paper is entitled “The Cat That Therefore She Is: *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsenk*, Cats, and Derrida.” It revolves around the film *Lady Macbeth* and uses the trope of cats to compare the lack of language that femme fatale possess. This required that I use Jacques Derrida’s *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, as well as the short novella the film was based off of, *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsenk*, to analyze the cat and its role in the text.

The revisions for this piece revolved around, once again, getting rid of the passive voice that was present in my work and reworking the structure of the paper so that it flowed well and made more sense to the overall argument. One of the biggest revisions I did was the restructuring of the paper. I made sure to go through and put major themes and points together so that everything flowed in a coherent order. I was also told to make the thesis more evident and make sure that I was supporting it throughout the essay.

My final work is one that I am extremely proud of because it epitomizes everything that I have learned and gone through these past two years. Writing this paper taught me more about my writing and what I need to work on. The paper is entitled “Female Confinement Through Two Senses of *Hüzün*.” It revolves around Orhan Pamuk’s two texts *Istanbul: Memories and the City* and *The Museum of Innocence*. I use these two texts to discuss a different type of artifice the body is being placed into: being *hüzün*. My paper analyzes the two texts by Pamuk to show that *hüzün* is a metaphor for two different types of senses that encompass women. Through

discussion of the women within these texts, I comment on how *hüzün* constrains women from being able to fully be who they are. It destroys any sense of individuality that they possess.

Revising and reflecting has led me to many realizations about not just who I am but also my writing. Writing truly is a work-in-progress whose voice is always growing and changing just like mine. The perfect draft does not exist: it is always evolving. We, as scholars, have to be willing to review and revise what we have written to achieve the best draft we can and improve upon the scholarship we are releasing. Making sure the voice of the other-ed body is not something that comes with one try, it takes time and a great deal of analysis. I have learned this and many other aspects about writing these past two years and hope to continue to grow with each revision that I make.

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Jessica Eylem

The Women of *Brave New World*: Aldous Huxley and the Gendered Agenda of Eugenics

Between the World Wars, the concept of eugenics was continuously debated. Joanne Woiak states that, “as recent international comparative scholarship has illustrated, eugenics took on many different forms depending on what theories of heredity, “unfit” groups, and social reforms were emphasized in specific contexts. Even within any one country, several variants of eugenics usually co-existed or even competed” (Woiak 110). This has created a long history surrounding the eugenics movement, with it becoming increasingly discussed around the second world war as Hitler released *Mein Kampf* in 1924. The discussion of eugenics thus became popular. The ideas began circulating into novels with the world’s fate increasingly unknown with a second world war brewing. One of these such novels was *Brave New World*, written by Aldous Huxley. Huxley grew up with his brother leading one of the pro-eugenics movements in his home country of Britain. These ideas were then established into his novel, as the circle he was a part of was “drawn to eugenics” and believed in its ability to improve the human race (Woiak 110). While Huxley was a proponent of eugenics, with his three main female characters he inadvertently exposed the gender issues with eugenics.

*Brave New World*, written by Huxley in 1931, is a futuristic dystopian novel where humans are bred through test tubes. Humans are genetically modified to keep those with valued characteristics at the top of society, while those below are manipulated into thinking they are doing their service for the overall running of the Fordian state. Huxley’s novel uses the idea of eugenics as a basis for what this new world lives by. On the surface, he is taking the definition of eugenics and the idea that it involves mostly science and technology fairly directly, but below this he uses the novel to also envision how eugenics could be expanded well beyond just race. In

this world, women are slowly bred out of society, as the qualities they possess are becoming less and less appreciated. Eugenics and the idea of what makes a person valuable becomes a theme of *Brave New World*, as women are consistently under-appreciated and stripped of what makes them an asset to our world. This is seen as the women of the novel struggle to find their place without disrupting the new roles they have been given, especially since they have been conditioned to fear going against anything asked of them. We can see this with the way Lenina acts around Bernard, on one of their dates, towards the beginning of the novel. Whenever he starts to say something against the Fordian state, she tries to tell him to “take *soma*” because she is “determined to preserve her incomprehension” (Huxley 91). Keeping this intact means she can never begin to have thoughts against the Fordian state and be phased out. She knows that taking soma keeps those in power happy with her. We see her so afraid of what Bernard is saying that she begins to utter “a nervous little laugh” and ask once again if they can change the subject and leave (Huxley 91). Huxley uses this a way of inadvertently exploring how gender could fit into the ideas surrounding eugenics. He destroys the female body and throughout the continuation of his novel, feminine characteristics are destroyed and perceived as unnecessary.

There has been discussion on how Huxley explores gender equality in *Brave New World*. However, feminist scholars have identified various areas in the novel which promote men as being vastly superior. For example, Deanna Madden concludes that in *Brave New World* there is a “subtle message that women are inherently inferior: less intelligent, less capable of seeing beyond their own immediate physical comforts, [and] less likely to make heroic gesture or defy status quo” (291). Adding on to this, Katherine de Gama states in her article “A Brave New World? Rights Discourse and the Politics of Reproductive Autonomy” that “the abstract determinism of Huxley’s anti-utopia denies the power and the creativity of women” (128).

Women are treated much worse than the men of the novel and are not given the chance to become anything more, as society has decided that they are inferior and keeps them as such through science. This is seen, by some, as Huxley using a satirical approach to eugenics to promote more gender equality in the world. I argue instead that Huxley uses this novel as a means of expressing a new view towards the gendered agenda that eugenics could possess. The novel affirms an idea that some of the dominant intellectual minds considered women as a group that could be possibly be phased out with eugenics or even used as a method of scaring women into a certain constraint. Along with this, *Brave New World* portrays a new vision of a world where eugenics has expanded beyond just the scientific use of improving the quality of life, but also to get rid of women. They have been scared into thinking that they must act in a certain way or their life is not of value. An example of this comes when the character Lenina tells another character that “when an individual feels, the community reels” (Huxley 92). She has been conditioned to feel this way, so much so that when she begins to feel any emotion, she immediately takes *soma* so the community will not get upset. We can see through an instance like this that women in the novel are conditioned to fear upsetting the community. Whenever they believe they are about to upset the Fordian state, they take *soma* to stop any feeling or undesirable action from happening. With this, we see that those in power are conditioning women to stop feeling any emotion and fear that if they start to act to feel anything, they must get rid of it as quickly as possible.

It is important to note that there has been debate on whether Huxley believed in more than just improving the health of our world, which has become increasingly so with the new information coming out on his own private writings. It has come out in one of his personal letters that he believed, “about 99.5% of the entire population of the planet [was] stupid and

philistine” (Woiak 105). His nonfiction writings and letters add to a view that he presumed that eugenics could be used as more than just a means to improve hereditary qualities. With this new information coming out, it can be concluded that in some ways, Huxley used *Brave New World* as a way to introduce a viewpoint that the female gender was “unfit” for society, especially the qualities that are normally associated with them. His novel is riddled with eugenic ideologies of improving certain qualities of life, but at the same time expands this to begin the process of removing the female body. It gives a look into how Huxley saw eugenics as a possibility to include not just race but also gender. By analyzing the female characters and the language used to discuss unwanted qualities of life, Huxley’s own viewpoint of what eugenics could entail becomes clear.

*Brave New World* begins with the Director leading a group of young men through what is considered the genetically modified process of human breeding through test tubes. The first chapter states that only men are learning this process, as women are not allowed to be in the part of society that controls the overall running of the Fordian state. Here is where some of the ideas of the society begin to be articulated: the most important being men are at the top. Throughout the novel, we never meet a woman who holds a position higher than working in the Fertilizing Room. They are not allowed to make any important decisions for the state; which is heightened by the fact that we only learn about this state through male characters. This continues throughout the next few chapters as the young men run into Mustapha Mond, who is the resident Controller for Western Europe. His conversation with the young men gives a sense of the discussion the novel is having specifically in relation to gender and eugenics. Mond starts the descriptions of what qualities are no longer advocated for in the Fordian state, giving clear indication that all of these are normally associated with women. He starts by saying that he

wants the young men to try and imagine what it was like to have a mother and a home. This is continued with him saying how these were “reeking with emotion. What suffocating intimacies, what dangerous, insane...Manically, the mother brooded over her children (*her* children) ...brooded over them like a cat over kittens” (Huxley 37). Mond is exposing the view that more stereotypically feminine qualities were “unfit” and unwanted in this new society. The Fordian state no longer wants families, mothers, monogamy, or even emotion. The state wants social stability which can only be achieved by getting rid of emotion and many qualities normally associated with women. Women are conditioned by fear to modify themselves in order to fit into society.

Now that ample information has been given surrounding the inter war period, Huxley himself, and how the novel positions itself within the first few chapters, we must view how this expands into the rest of the novel: more specifically with women. *Brave New World* is an extension of the way Huxley promoted eugenics but inadvertently showed gender issues. Where this becomes clear is with the only three women who are given any major speaking roles in the novel. These women are Fanny, Lenina, and Linda. Through them, we can see the different approaches women took to survive in the world they were living in. All of them are manipulated into believing that what they have been taught their entire lives is the only way to live. They are expected not to speak out of place or resist anything they are told to do because if they do they will be removed. Through this manipulation we can begin to see what depriving women of freedom and emotion can lead to. They will do anything they can to survive, even if this means adopting characteristics that are normally associated with men. Each female character also can be seen as corresponding with three more generic stereotypes of women during the interwar period. This begins a discussion on what these stereotypes reveal about the historical context of

the time and where eugenics could have been heading, especially in a more gendered agenda. Women were expected to survive by any means possible; epitomized through these three characters because there was always a fear that they would be the next to be deemed “unfit”.

To start off, Fanny is a prime example of one of these such women who realizes the place she needs to occupy in order to stay alive. She mirrors women during the interwar period who would stay home because they felt it was their duty to do so and were scared to do any different. While she stays home and does as the Fordian society expects her to, she understands the implications of what is going on and lack of freedom women have. Fanny understands that in order to survive, she must not question anything. As she seems to be aware of everything happening, she becomes the smartest of all the women since she knows that there is still worse to come if she does not comply. In the novel itself, she is presented as a close friend of Lenina, who plays a much larger role in the overall plot. Fanny questions many of Lenina’s actions, as they go against what the state has told them to follow. This starts at the beginning of the novel when Lenina is telling Fanny that she is planning on going on a date with a man she has been seeing for a few months. Monogamy is rejected in this society, leading to Fanny openly object saying, “I really do think you ought to be careful. It’s such a horribly bad form to go on and on like this with one man...And you know how strongly the D.H.C. objects to anything intense or long-drawn” (Huxley 41). She understands the rules that have been set forth for women and is trying to save Lenina from doing something that could result in her being sent away (or modified out of society). She intensifies this argument even more by adding on that “one’s got to make an effort...one’s got to play the game” (Huxley 43). Fanny understands what it means to adhere to societal norms. Huxley uses her as an example of how women should act if a more gendered approach to eugenics were to occur. Fanny does not want any of her friends to disrupt their

place in society because she knows what will happen if they do. She becomes a mirror for a number of women during the interwar period because she knows that by not going against the Fordian state, she is safe from being deemed “unfit” and sterilized. Women during the interwar period were worried this may happen to them, especially with feminine characteristics openly discouraged, as Hitler’s power began increasing more and more. Huxley positions Fanny into the novel as an example of women that would not be phased out with a more gendered approach to eugenics. If women did everything that was asked of them, they would be safe.

Lenina is the female character of the novel that many views as showing the gender equality that Huxley introduces, but this is merely on the surface level. She questions what the Fordian state requires of her, while still acknowledging how scared she is to go against what she has been manipulated into thinking. She understands what she needs to do to appear as someone who follows blindly. Lenina understands she must keep a certain image to maintain her place in. She knows that to appear normal, she must look the part and partake in the sexual prowess of the state. I argue that while she does this, her inner thoughts reveal her desire to revolt against what is wanted of her. She questions why she has to date multiple men and why she must hide her desires for the Savage (whom appears later in the novel). She does understand why she must repress her emotions, while at the same time fearing what will happen if she acts on anything. This is why she talks everything out with Fanny. Fanny becomes her conscience for understanding what she has to do in order to maintain in the Fordian state. Through her we can see what a gendered agenda of eugenics would do to women.

She is at a cross roads the entire novel to truly understand who she is. For example, she finds herself beginning to have feelings for the Savage after he is brought back to the Fordian state with her and Bernard. These desires go against what the society has taught her to believe,

as she finds herself wanting to be with just him and no one else. The Fordian state tells everyone that they should be sleeping with everyone and Lenina finds she cannot stop thinking about the Savage. She tells Fanny that he is “the one I want” and that she does not want other men, no matter how much she has tried to (Huxley 171). Lenina tries to continue doing what the state has asked her, by sleeping with other men, but cannot stop thinking about the Savage. Along with this, he is a part of a different social rank than her, meaning she is forbidden from pursuing anything with him. When she is talking to Fanny about the situation, Fanny tells her to not “stand any nonsense. Act...act—at once” because if she waits she will be going against what the Fordian state has asked of her (Huxley 172). Lenina’s thoughts of just wanting the Savage scare her, so she decides to seduce the Savage, with advice from Fanny, because she thinks that this is the only way she can give in to her true desires and thus get rid of them. She believes that becoming the sexual aggressor is the only way she can stop the thoughts she is having. Once she enters his room, she undresses the instant she knows that he wants her, exposing her true desires. In this way, she then puts herself into a more stereotypically male-gendered space of being lecherous and making her intentions towards the Savage well known. She is willing to do anything to stop the thoughts that she knows are wrong.

While the Fordian state does want women to be just as promiscuous as men (to seemingly promote gender equality), women are still supposed to adhere to what the men want and wait for them to make the first move. They are still required to appear as wholesome pillars of virtue. Lenina is supposed to wait for the Savage to make a move instead of herself, but she feels her desires and emotions are more important than what the state wants. This is reinforced when she decides to ask out Bernard, even though men normally do the asking out and Bernard is notoriously someone stays away from. She talks to him and gets to know him, even when

characters like Fanny tell her not to. Bernard says himself that Lenina is “Wretched, in a word, because she had behaved as any healthy and virtuous English girl ought to behave and not in some other, abnormal, extraordinary way” simply both by talking to him and at the same time using him as a way to date more than one person (Huxley 64). This establishes Lenina as a character in the novel who struggles with eugenic ideologies. Lenina does not know what to do and finds herself constantly questioning her actions. No one else seems to like Bernard, yet Lenina takes it upon herself to get to know him and sleep with him. After a while though, she begins to question why she is dating him because of how unique and different he is from everyone else; showing how she still judges people based on how she was conditioned too. Lenina thus mirrors women during the interwar period who would do everything they could to resist their desires to go against the roles placed upon them, knowing that if they were to revolt their lives would be put in danger. Lenina understands that she must play the game in order to save herself from being removed but at the same time wonders if it is what she truly wants.

Linda is the female character in *Brave New World* that represents the extent of what manipulation can do to a person’s psyche, especially a gendered one. When we first are introduced to her, we learn that she had once been a part of the Fordian state but got lost on vacation. Once this happened, she was taken in by the inhabitants of the land she was visiting. There, she gives birth to a child, whom we later learn is the Savage (which is the same character that Lenina eventually develops feelings for). All Linda had ever known was Fordian values, so she begins to hate herself once she has a child and realizes she does not epitomize what is wanted anymore. With her we can see how once you presented any of the qualities deemed “unfit” for society, you were immediately ostracized. She represents what society during the interwar period (and the novel) deemed “unfit”, which is referent from the descriptions given about her. Linda is

undesirable. Compared back with what is said towards the beginning of the novel, here is where we can begin to see more into Huxley's possible viewpoint, as it is stated multiple times that a motherly figure was not wanted. For example, at one point it is said "Linda...nobody had the smallest desire to see Linda. To say one was a mother—that was past a joke; it was an obscenity" (Huxley 153). Linda is the beginning to how a gendered agenda would be applied to eugenics. She is emotional, her physique does not fit beauty standards, and she behaves in a way that draws negative attention to herself. It is said directly in the novel that "the strongest reason for people's not wanting to see poor Linda—was her appearance. Fat; having lost youth; with bad teeth, and a blotched complexion, and that figure..." (Huxley 153). She does not fit into the Fordian state. Huxley uses her as an example of what the ideologies of eugenics would eliminate. Franz Boas states in the article, "Eugenics" that "the immediate application of eugenics is rather concerned with the elimination of strains that are a burden to the nation or to themselves" (476). The Fordian state considered Linda to be the epitome of all the characteristics they wanted eliminated. This is even more evident as the parallels between her and people deemed unfit during the interwar period are uncanny. She essentially acts as a mental patient, even for a brief while in the novel not being allowed to move from the hospital. As mental patients were some of the first to be sterilized, she becomes an indication of sorts of women that would be exterminated under a new gendered approach towards eugenics, which is furthered by the fact that out of the three major women of the novel, she is the only one who dies.

These three women show how underappreciated women and their feminine characteristics were during the interwar period. Through the style used to describe women and feminine characteristics we can begin to see the manipulation used to force these women into the

roles that they occupied. This was enforced through tactics of fear and conditioning that lead these women to believe that they were playing a part in the Fordian state just like everyone else. What can be concluded is the new extension of the concept of eugenics that Huxley begins to address and explore within the constraints of this novel. If gender were to be slowly engulfed into the concept of eugenics, women would have to learn a new way of adhering to what was asked of them. There would be severe constraints placed on women in this new state, forcing them to conform to survive. From the novel, we see Fanny conforming to survive, Lenina struggling with who she is, and Linda, the one who has no way of conforming, dying. Thus, with *Brave New World*, we can see how the two women that listened to what was required of them did not die, while the one who exemplified everything hated by the state did. Huxley illustrates the gender issues with eugenics. He is inadvertently showing gender issues. As Huxley was a front-runner of dystopian literature during the interwar period, his novel provides a glimpse into what a world with a more gendered approach to eugenics could have looked like; expanding the definition on what the concept means and ways it could have been used, especially through fear.

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Jessica Eylem

*The Shape of Water*: Del Toro's critique on Violence and Consumerism in Society through a Žižekian lens

“Would I tell you about her? A princess without a voice?” (00:02:30-00:02:31). How would we interpret this beginning to a film? *The Shape of Water*, directed by Guillermo Del Toro, starts out with this as one of its opening statements, setting the stage for what will be a film that is filled with fantasy and reality combined together. It allows viewers to immediately wonder what will happen during the duration of the film. After this opening sequence, the film takes a sudden turn, taking us out of a fantasy-like world and putting us in a reality, where the main character has a job and a life she pursues. As it is set during the height of the Cold War, government plays a crucial plot, as we see both the Soviets and Americans vying for a creature from an unknown land. Del Toro has directed other films, in which the government is being analyzed and critiqued; films like *Pan's Labyrinth*, which portrays the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. Viewing *The Shape of Water* as a critique of society and government, just as Del Toro's other films have been analyzed as, reveals what it does within its run time. We see a world that on the outside is beautiful but full of an inner ugliness. Through looking at *The Shape of Water* in its relation to Slavoj Žižek's ideologies on violence and his discussion of Lacanian psychoanalysis, we are able to analyze the film's views on consumerism and how it has affected our modern world.

Through the political theorist Slavoj Žižek an analysis of violence will be done, as he has written on the ideologies surrounding how governments use violence in their terminology and relation of war. Žižek utilizes other theory to analyze these topics, most notably Lacanian psychoanalysis, Marxism, and German Idealism. His work has been described as,

“infamously idiosyncratic. It features striking dialectical reversals of received common sense; a ubiquitous sense of humor; a patented disrespect towards the modern distinction between high and low culture; and the examination of examples taken from the most diverse cultural and political fields ..He challenges many of the founding assumptions of today’s left-liberal academy, including the elevation of difference or otherness to ends in themselves, the reading of the Western Enlightenment as implicitly totalitarian, and the pervasive skepticism towards any context-transcendent notions of truth or the good” (Sharpe).

He has also written on films by Hitchcock and events like 9/11, utilizing his pervasive skepticism to address various elements of capitalism. As the setting of *The Shape of Water* is set during the beginning of the rise of a pervasive capitalist society in the United States, Žižek’s ideologies will work well as many times Žižek focuses his discussions on capitalist governments. I will be using his discussion on Lacan and the Real to develop the film’s depiction of violence resulting in a discussion on what this means for society.

Guillermo Del Toro has been known for his aesthetically pleasing, fairy-tale driven films. *The Shape of Water* is no different in this regard, as a synopsis of the film would be, “a Cold-War-era camp-horror classic about a strange beast, quasi-fish and sort-of-human, discovered in the rain forests of the Amazon” (Scott, par 2). We follow a mute-woman, named Elisa, as she meets a strange, fairy-tale like creature and begins to fall in love with him. To give a brief overview of the plot, Elisa, aided by the characters Giles, and Zelda “wind up conspiring...to liberate a...fish-man the government found in South America and is keeping at a secretive lab where the two women [Elisa and Zelda] do custodial work” (Smith, par 3). The film has been praised for how it looks on the screen, leading critics to focus its aesthetics, as this is also what

Del Toro is known for. They have said that the set of *The Shape of Water* is normally “governed by an aquatic color theme” and “swampy, silvery greens and blues” (Bowen, par 3). These same critics have said that other than the aesthetics, “the impudent, unruly streak that so often gives Del Toro’s films their pulse has been airbrushed away” (Bowen, par 4).

The characters of the film are portrayed in a very overly-stereotyped manner so viewers know exactly how Del Toro sees them. They are described as “a lonely, mute, orphaned cleaning lady named Elisa; her friend the frustrated gay artist [Giles]; and another cleaning lady, a racially victimized black woman [Zelda]” (Smith, par 3). Critics believed that there did not seem to be any deeper meaning to who the characters are. This leads critics to think that Del Toro’s approach was more about aesthetics and less about character development. They believe that the film “makes it points with a jackhammer, wielding symbols in blaring neon” (O’Malley, par 1). I would disagree with this, as Elisa is anything but tolerant, eventually stealing the creature away from a high-level security government facility. I also feel that in looking at these “neon” symbols, the film introduces a hidden theme throughout. These lead towards Del Toro’s overall message regarding politics and society. To get to this, I will provide an analysis of the various forms of violence portrayed in the film.

*The Shape of Water* is set in Baltimore in the 1960’s. The postwar years have been described “as a paradigmatic time of conservatism, conformity, and consensus” (Sterritt 20). During these years, the economy also flourished, which started a consumeristic boom fueled by a “superficial sense of power and invincibility among Americans” (Sterritt 20). Del Toro places us right in the middle of the decade to emphasize how American society has turned into a superficial culture. Cars and objects are used as a means of showing power; with characters, such as Strickland, wanting the newest car to drive around.

Del Toro also puts us into a time period where the Cold War is in full effect. The Soviets are mentioned many times, as the U.S. government wants to keep the creature to themselves to study it and make it into a war machine. Hoffstetler is also a Soviet spy, and throughout the film we see him interacting with Soviet forces who want to steal the creature from the United States. The biggest thing we hear discussion of an arms race to the Moon and who will get there first; leading into a larger theme of war. The idea of terror and wanting to stay one step ahead, in case of a possible war, become important to the over-all plot of the film. The creature gets utilized as a pawn by both governments instead of viewing him as an intellectual creature such as themselves. Elisa does not share the belief that just because the creature is different from her that it is inevitably evil. Here is where we see more of Del Toro's societal views forming. By setting *The Shape of Water* in the 60's, viewers are put into a consumer-driven society that was emphasizing conformity to relay happiness and the ways they would try to keep up this image; such as through violent measures.

Before starting to look at how *The Shape of Water* utilizes violence in Žižek's terms, we need to identify what violence is and the various forms that Žižek highlights. Providing a definition of violence in just Žižek's terms will give us a more concrete understanding with which to analyze the film. Utilizing just his theories will also give us a unitary theoretical background; making it so we can see exactly how his concepts are related to the overall plot. In this way, our analysis and understanding of the film will be more concrete. As well, Žižek's theories will be placed among examples, leading to a better grasp on what they are and mean.

In his book, *Violence*, Žižek begins to define violence and shows how we can distinguish between the various aspects of the concept. To begin with, he says that "At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international

conflict;” but that these are not the only signals that we can see in our everyday lives (*Violence* 1). Capitalist society plays a large part in Žižek’s analysis of violence. Our political systems determine how much violence we see and how we end up viewing various forms.

In one of his other academic works, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Žižek says that “it is surprising how little of the actual carnage we see—no dismembered bodies, no blood, no desperate faces of dying people” in First World countries “in contrast to reporting on Third World catastrophes, where the whole point is to produce a scoop of some gruesome detail” (13). First World countries report on what is happening in other areas much more often than what is happening in our own to make it seem like nothing is really happening in our own country. While this has begun to disappear with the rise of technology and social media, we still see First World countries being more willing to show pictures of gruesome acts that have happened in another part of the world instead of its own. Connecting this with *Violence*, we see that our world shields us from what is happening in our own country, making us think that subconsciously that gruesome acts of terror and civil unrest do not happen in the United States. Our view of violence can transcend even domestic acts of terrorism and we may formulate our own definitions of how we view violent elements in films. This is something that Del Toro highlights; the idea that we cannot trust our political system as it is hiding the truth from us. With the characters, such as the creature, we can place our definitions of violence onto various aspects being shown to us. Then we can determine how much of this violence is hidden from us as we watch the remainder of the film; seeing how the political system tries to hide what is happening and also push the definition of violence onto other characters.

When we are first introduced to the creature, he is perceived as having a “lack;” supposedly signifying a symbolic castration. It is believed that the creature physically does not

have a penis, meaning that there would be an actual lack. Žižek says that “lack is localized in a point of exception which guarantees the consistency of all the other elements, by the mere fact it is determined as ‘symbolic castration’ by the mere fact that the phallus is defined as the signifier” (*The Sublime Object* 173). If the creature were truly to have a physical lack of the phallus, this means that the symbolic castration would result in an attempt to gain back the power of the phallus in any way possible. Now, we learn later in the film, through Elisa, that the creature indeed does have a penis, meaning that this perceived lack is actually non-existent.

There are still other characters that perceive the creature as missing an important part of what many consider to be a signifier of manhood. This does not mean that the “lack” always has to be the phallus. It can be various objects, and in the film, it revolves mostly around control. Strickland is a prime example of a character that goes through a perceived “lack” and ends up getting symbolically castrated. We now will discuss how Strickland’s character illustrates Žižek’s thinking on violence; having the largest “lack” and embodying how this is then connected to violent acts.

Strickland is the antagonist of this film in every way. His character is a useful place to start when looking at the ideologies surrounding violence. We are shown a man who is violent without any remorse or restrictions. He becomes the transference of the restoration of patriarchy as he tries to place his concept of order back into what he perceives as an order-less society. We see this in his emphasis on having things done in a certain way when people are addressing him. He uses extreme discrimination in the workplace and believes in the “protocol” that accompanies position of power. At one point, he makes Dr. Hoffstetler (a doctor working with him on the creature) re-enter a room because he did not knock and address him. He makes sure that Dr.

Hoffstetler knows that he is in charge and that there is a correct way to treat a supervisor; resulting in him becoming a character that tries to consistently reinforce the patriarchal order.

Del Toro uses him in this specific way so that viewers can see the type of person we should be avoiding. The way he talks and his actions are easy to process, as we know immediately that he is the “bad-guy” and everything he does is a problem. This compares with one of Žižek’s conclusions that “the lesson of the intricate relationship between subjective and systematic violence is distributed between acts and their contexts, between activity and inactivity. The same act can count as violent or non-violent, depending on its context; sometimes a polite smile can be more violent than a brutal outburst” (*Violence* 213). With Strickland, everything we see is violent. His character is played so over-the-top in his innate evilness, that viewers see that everything he does is violent. When looking back at the scene where he makes Dr. Hoffstetler re-enter his office, the context is still seen as violent, even though it is played off as something that he is doing just to annoy Dr. Hoffstetler. As Žižek said, sometimes these seemingly “non-violent” contexts can be just as violent as something that our society has taught us to inherently believe is not. As the agency of power similarly plays a prominent role in this film, we see Strickland doing whatever he can to recapture his place in society.

Strickland projects his own aggressive nature onto the creature to explain its violent behavior. Therefore, he believes the creature is inherently violent in its attempt to control its surroundings. Strickland thus uses force on the creature in an attempt to control its violence through torture and making sure that the creature has no way of fighting back. Strickland assumes there is violence in the creature, because of the loss of freedom. He proves how powerful he is by publicly torturing the creature.

Based off Žižek's analysis, we see the concept of symbolic castration really fitting more with Strickland than the creature. As said before, the lack does not just signify an experience with the penis. Strickland loses everything over Elisa taking the creature; the symbol of his power—his imaginary phallus. He begins to unravel, as he first loses his car, then slowly his life. Once he is castrated (or in this sense the creature is stolen away), any action he takes is seen as both denial and his trying to win back his power. He reacts with subjective violence, slowly moving towards a combination of both that and objective violence. Žižek defines subjective violence as “violence inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the subtler forms of coercion that sustain relations of dominance and exploitation, including the threat of violence” (*Violence* 9). This can mean devices like mass murder, and discrimination; actions that we can immediately point to and says “that’s a type of violence”.

We see Strickland do this more and more as he begins to unravel. For example, he decides that to get the creature back he is going to figure out who took it and kill them; moving straight into aggression. These scenes become the exact moments we can point to and see him trying to sustain dominance of some kind. For example, we see this in a scene where Strickland finds Dr. Hoffstetler and ends up hooking his finger into an area where Hoffstetler was shot; in an attempt to create more pain. He continues to torture him, electrocuting him; all making sure to assert his dominance over Hoffstetler. This is more than just a threat of violence. Strickland wants to exploit Dr. Hoffstetler in a violent way. He does not just want Hoffstetler to know he ‘lost’, in a sense of the word, but know that he no longer has control over anything that is happening. Strickland wants Hoffstetler to feel the largest amount of pain possible in order to show him that it is all over; Strickland has re-gained the power. There are several moments like this that we see Strickland engaging in, but this scene was the most gruesome; portraying directly

a violence that we can point to and recognize. Other instances are the ways in which Strickland treats other characters, such as Zelda. These are less gruesome but show the transition from subjective to a dualism of this and objective violence that Strickland begins to possess.

When Strickland first has a conversation with Zelda, it is dripping in racial stereotypes, which correlates with what Žižek says can be a form of systematic violence. Strickland begins asking Zelda about her family and when she says she is an only child; he says to her “No siblings Zelda? That’s not common for your people is it?” (00:26:36-00:26:38). While this is not direct physical violence, it is still an area where Strickland is trying to emphasize his power and use a “subtle form of coercion” to discriminate against African Americans. Once again, almost everything that Strickland does correlates with violence in some way. He is right at the “intricate relationship between subjective and systematic violence...[the] distribution between acts and their contexts, between activity and nonactivity,” helping to analyze just how intertwined they are (*Violence* 213). Even in talking to those around him, there is always a sense of violence in the context of every situation.

The objective violence that is inherent in Strickland is a bit more difficult to recognize. It is also the violence that Žižek says is one of the more difficult to identify. Objective violence is where we can begin to see Lacan’s difference between reality and Real coming in. Reality and the Real are differentiated through an analysis of the Lacanian Real. Žižek describes this as, “an entity which, although it does not exist...has a series of properties” and can “produce a series of effects in the symbolic reality of subjects” (*The Sublime Object* 183). The Real can create a reality in its subjects, meaning that the Real puts objects into relations that force a fantasy of reality onto people. These objects exist through entities like violence, as these distort the structure of reality. It must be analyzed so that we can see the distortions in the symbolic

structure (*The Sublime Object* 182). In the film, we see this objective violence portrayed through Strickland's fingers, which symbolize his imaginary lack. The only thing that matters to Strickland is "the situation of capital," which he gets through the creature (*Violence* 13). At one point, the creature bits off two of Strickland's fingers, which cause Strickland direct pain. This is comparable to what Žižek identifies as the cut. The cut is a sense of putting oneself firmly back into reality through a self-inflicted wound.

When Žižek describes the cut in *Desert of the Real*, the concept is discussed around people who cut themselves, leading him to conclude that the cut "represents a desperate strategy to return to the Real of the body" and regain any sense of normality (10). While Strickland does not initially inflict pain onto himself (as the creature is the one who takes off his fingers), by ripping off his fingers, later in the film, he then engages in "a radical attempt to (re)gain reality, or (another aspect of the same phenomenon) to ground the ego firmly in bodily reality, against the unbearable anxiety of perceiving oneself as nonexistent" (*Desert of the Real* 10). He believes that he has lost all control and, in an attempt, to regain some of that, he rips off the part of his body that reminds him of the creature. As the creature is a reminder of the previous life of consumeristic joy he had once occupied, he is trying to ground himself back into a situation of capital. Ripping off his fingers was "a pathological attempt at regaining some kind of normality, at avoiding a total psychotic breakdown" (*Desert of the Real* 10). This is an underlying element that likely is not appreciated in a first viewing of the film. Strickland appears to act in a psychotic rage; instead doing this as an attempt to return back to reality.

Once Strickland begins to unravel (when the creature is taken), his fingers turn black; decaying more and more until he physically rips them off, castrating himself and exposing where his lack is. We see this most directly when his boss comes in and tells him that "Our universe

will have a whole in it with your outline” and basically that he will be no more as a result of his screw up in losing the creature (01:36:39-01:36:42). As objective violence is associated with the rise of capitalism, once Strickland learns that his fate is tied with the creature, he does not know what to do. He realizes that the joys that he had been partaking in would no longer be allowed to him if he did not find the creature. Reality starts coming to a standstill as Strickland begins to realize that he no longer has control over the situation, resulting in him acting so aggressively towards people like Dr. Hoffstetler.

Žižek says that in Lacan’s viewing of the experience of castration, “the more he reacts, the more he shows his power, the more his impotence is confirmed” (*The Sublime Object* 177). Strickland becomes increasingly violent as it gets closer and closer to the time he was supposed return the creature. He keeps trying to assert his dominance, at one-point yelling at Zelda’s husband to sit down and then ripping off his own fingers. With this, we can begin to see some of Del Toro’s political inclinations with the film. Strickland is reacting in a way that tries to show the power he has. This is something we should be wary of: someone who uses excessive force to assert a sort of dominance.

We see this again at the end of the film where Strickland finds the creature and shoots him. He uses what he considers to be a technological advancement that the creature would not be able to protect himself against. This idea is destroyed when the creature gets up after appearing to be dead and whips off the gun-shot wounds. The message goes to the power structure embodied through Strickland, and the idea that “you are so powerful, *but for all that, you are impotent. You cannot really hurt me!* In this way, the power structure is caught in the same trap” (*The Sublime Object* 177).

Even though the United States perceived itself as an invisible force that had complete control over all countries around it, Del Toro is utilizing the creature to say that this was not the case. Instead of believing in this ideology, we need to be aware of its consequences. Having the biggest guns and the newest technology does not mean that you have all the power. Our society has a fundamental impotence, which we see with Strickland. The belief is that having the technology and newest things will lead to power, when in fact it is just another way that society is trying to assert a dominance in order to maintain patriarchal order. The creature produces a paradox of the Real, acting as both this and the Imaginary in accordance to the reality of the setting Del Toro has created. What we are seeing is a,

“relation between imaginary and symbolic identification—between the ideal ego [*Idealich*] and the ego-ideal [*Ich-Ideal*] ...between...identification with the image in which we appear likable to ourselves, with the image representing ‘what we would like to be’, and symbolic identification...the very place *from where* we are being observed, *from where* we look at ourselves so that we appear likeable” (*The Sublime Object* 116).

In the film, Del Toro is using the creature as a way to expose this paradox of the Real; showing that the United States is hiding violence. The creature is what creates a divide in the consumeristic fantasy that has previously been abundant in society. He disrupts the Real and reality.

Strickland’s fingers have multiple points of observation when it comes to their relation to the Real, which is what makes their emphasis in the film so fascinating. The fingers can also be seen as the “object in the subject”, which means the traumatic kernel that splits the subject and returns it to the Other (*The Sublime Object* 180). Žižek describes this as the idea that “there is no subject without guilt, the subject exists only in so far as he is ashamed because of the object in

himself...This is the meaning of Lacan's thesis that the subject is originally split, divided: he is divided as to the object himself, as to the Thing, which at the same time attracts and repels him" (*The Sublime Object* 180). Strickland's fingers function as the 'death drive' in his fascination with the Thing, or the creature. As he becomes more and more concerned with finding out where the creature is, his fingers begin to decay at a more rapid pace. They keep returning him to the creature as they are a reminder of when it bit off his fingers. Having this physical reminder on his hand divides him, as he becomes obsessed with finding the creature and returning him to his boss. He feels that this is the only way he can return back to his old life, which Del Toro utilizes to place a critique on the society of the time. We once again see the critique that we cannot trust this way of life because of its inherent violence and lack of communication with those living within it. The society is hiding important aspects of society and leading its people to believe that aggressive violence does not happen, when in fact it does.

Moving back into Strickland, we also see multiple instances of the object, in Lacanian terms, and how they fit in with the film. Žižek says that the object both attracts and repels us, as well as causes us desire and shame. Returning back to Strickland, we can consider his treatment of Elisa. Strickland treats everyone as an object that is for his satisfaction, like the commodifiable object his car is. We see Strickland treating his material goods better than the people around him. When looking at his how he treats Elisa versus his car, we see that both are utilized to bring him pleasure. He knows he cannot completely control Elisa (because she is deaf) but that does not stop him from wanting to be able to control her in some way. She repels him for this exact reason, because she is not perfect but he finds himself still wanting her. This is why he sexually harasses her and treats her the way he does; he cannot communicate with her in the way he wants too, so he tries to find some other way to show his power. In a similar way,

he treats his car as a thing that shows his power in society. The car that he buys is the newest on the lot and we see his demeanor immediately change once he goes out with it. He enjoys the look people give him when he rides around in it.

All Strickland wants is control over the objects in his life. But both Elisa and the car also repel him and bring shame in his life because he does not want to feel like he needs either of them. During the 1960's consumerism was a dominant force. An object creates division within the subject, which is what Elisa causes in Strickland. He begins to desire her, which at the same time repels him, for he does not know why he is attracted to the idea of her being mute. We see this desire for objects become a problem for Strickland, as he wants to control everything around him. This is why he has such a problem with the creature, because he cannot have complete power over its every movement. The creature consumes Strickland's life from the moment it enters into the film; occupying a large part of every character's life once Elisa decides to form a relationship with it.

Most of *The Shape of Water* revolves around this identifiable fish-man, who appears as something out of our own reality. We see a clear distinction between the Lacanian difference of reality, the Real, and the Imaginary. Once again, Žižek defines these in terms of, “the *Real*—a brute, pre-symbolic reality which always returns to its place—then the *symbolic* order which structures our perception of reality, and finally the *Imaginary*, the level of illusory entities whose consistency is the effect of a kind of mirror-play—that is, they have no real existence but are mere structural effect” (*The Sublime Object* 182). Our reality is determined by those that define our social values and the world around us. The Real then becomes anything that appears outside of our social reality; things like a fish-man who is worshipped like a God in the Amazon.

The creature is part of “the paradox of the Lacanian Real...which, although it does not exist (in the sense of ‘really existing’, taking place in reality), has a series of properties—it exercises a certain structural causality, it can produce a series of effects in the symbolic reality of subjects” (*The Sublime Object* 183). Even though the creature is not something that is perceived of our reality, it still symbolically has an effect on every character in the film. The creature is used as “it is hard core resisting to symbolization, but the point is that it does not matter if it has had a place, if it has ‘really occurred’ in so-called reality; the point is simply that it produces a series of structural effects” (*The Sublime Object* 182). While we are never really sure if the creature truly existed, we see the effects that it has on each character that lives on after it leaves. We see this with both the characters and the structure of the society. As previously stated, this film was set during the Cold War era. This then extended to the creature in the film. It becomes a symbolic reality that if you have control over the creature, you have the upper-hand in the struggle over power. It is not treated as a human, even though it walks, can communicate, and has emotions.

By the end of the film, we are still unsure exactly what the creature is. The ambiguity of the creature’s nature helps explain the inevitability of the earlier international conflict fundamental to the film. The two countries are fighting to try and understand how the creature came to be so they can weaponize that knowledge. Since the creature is different, it is considered an enemy and treated as a prisoner of war. This correlates with what Žižek says helps us identify the “enemy.” We fear what we do not know ourselves; “an enemy is someone whose story you have not heard” (*Violence* 46). Everything about this phrase is highlighted within the character of the fish-man. The other characters, at first, fear him as he is placed outside their realm of social reality. The creature is between the Real and reality. He is someone whose story

is understood in no terms, putting him in the middle of a situation that he has no control over.

What we see is the idea of an enemy coming to the forefront and Žižek's ideologies surrounding this becoming clearer.

We could compare the idea of the Other to that of Žižek's discussion of Antigone. Antigone is the daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta (his mother) who risks her life to bury one of her brothers, who she believes did not get a proper burial unlike her other brother. King Creon ordered that no one bury her brother and she defies him. It was believed that her brother was an enemy of the state because he attacked his other brother for control of Thebes; then making Antigone into an enemy for burying him against Creon's orders. Just as her, the creature is "assuming an uninhabitable position, a position for which there is no place in the public space" (*Desert of the Real* 99). Through both, we see that just because someone occupies a role that seemingly has no place in society does not mean they are the enemy. With the creature, Del Toro is saying that "the very democratic public space is a mask concealing the fact that, ultimately, we are all *Homo sacer*" (*Desert of the Real* 100). Our society is dividing us based on what it allows us to perceive. Noticing these types of violence that are happening, like those in Del Toro's film, allows us to perceive how our society is doing this and understand areas to look out for.

For example, the setting of the film immediately places language as "the first and greatest divider" (*Violence* 66). Both Eliza and the creature do not speak. Their only forms of communication are through sign-language and motions. In language "instead of exerting direct violence on each other, we are meant to debate, to exchange words" and make the other feel minimal through this (*Violence* 60). Strickland cannot do this to Elisa, as he cannot communicate with her through language, especially since Zelda speaks for her whenever he is

around. We see this in the film when Strickland asks Elisa and Zelda to come to his office, as he is interviewing everyone to see if they know who took the creature. At this point, viewers know that both Elisa and Zelda are helping the creature, making the communication of this scene one where language cannot place Elisa as an insubordinate to Strickland, as she knows something he does not. He also cannot debate with her, as he does not know sign-language and she can't talk. Knowing that she took the creature, she has a sense of power that in the end puts herself in control of the scene.

When Strickland becomes frustrated that he is getting nowhere, he tries to assert his dominance one more time saying "What am I doing interviewing the fucking help?" (01:15:26). Elisa utilizes this to jump on a chance to throw her own power at him, as she knows that he does not know sign-language. This means she can exert a type of direct violence on him. Leaving, she signs out "F-U-C-K Y-O-U", immediately setting Strickland off into a rage (01:15:47-01:15:58). He cannot control her through a means of language, which upsets him. The way in which characters speak to each other shows how much language divides in this film. Žižek says that according to Lacan, "human communication in its most basic, constitutive dimension does not involve a space of egalitarian intersubjectivity. It is not "balanced." It does not put the participants in symmetric mutually responsible positions where they all have to follow the same rules and justify their claims with reasons" (*Violence* 62). What we see is how the use of language can denote who is superior in the patriarchal system. Violence can be seen in as little as our tone addressing others. Thus, it is inherent in our society because it can deal with one of the most basic levels of communication: language.

In his discussion on violence, Žižek also asks the question "What if, however, humans exceed animals in their capacity for violence precisely because they speak?" (*Violence* 61). The

creature that we see in this film is only violent on the most primitive level. We only see him engaging in violence when he eats Giles cat or is attempting to use violence as a means of survival. The characters that are able to speak through language in every way possible, like Strickland, are portrayed as the most violent. Strickland “simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature...[dismembering] the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous” (*Violence* 61). The creature is just that: a creature. One that is unknown and put into a category of “other.”

Language is also what divides the characters and what is perceived as normal. While Giles and Zelda also have the full capabilities of language, their voices are still other-ed through speech. Through them, we see “what we lack in our culture, where brutal self-confessions are countered by the politically correct fear of harassment which keeps the Other at bay” comes from the distinctions seen in speech (*Violence* 58). This can come from even just a word or phrase, which we see with Giles when he tries to hit on a waiter, thinking the waiter was also gay, and immediately is placed in the position of the Other. Just by saying “I’d like to get to know you better,” he is told to leave and not come back (00:50:12). He is perceived suddenly as someone from a different culture. This is relevant as “nowhere is this disintegration of the protective walls of civility more palable than in the clashes of different culture” (*Violence* 58). Being a part of something that is not portrayed as the “normal” aspects of society puts you into a category of the Other. Strickland becomes the “normal” of language, while we see other characters, like Giles, pushed away as their language places them into a different culture; one that the patriarchal society does not want.

In analyzing these various aspects of the film, it leads us to one of Žižek’s ultimate conclusions that he forms on violence. He says that “it is deeply symptomatic that our Western

societies, which display such sensitivity to different forms of harassment, are at the same time able to mobilise a multitude of mechanism destined to render us insensitive to the most brutal forms of violence...in the very form of humanitarian sympathy with victims” (*Violence* 207).

Del Toro wants us to witness the violence that is happening in a way where we cannot be insensitive. We learn that what we believe to be “normal” is precisely who we should fear. Strickland was the quintessential man of the 60’s; “normal” in every regard, yet he is the one who uses violence in both systematic and objective ways. Žižek says that “the late-capitalist consumerist...paradise is, in its very hyperreality, in a way *unreal*, substanceless, deprived of material inertia” (*Desert of the Real* 13). Del Toro is agreeing with this, having viewer’s questioning why Strickland is hurting the creature when we can see it is just scared and confused. We ask why the man who everyone would have wanted to be in the 60’s is nothing like how we would imagine his actions to be. The world rears its ugly head in the film, highlighting how First World nations treat those they consider to either be Other or enemy.

Žižek says that violence has rendered us insensitive; meaning we are blind to what is going on because of our capitalist society, which is exactly how Del Toro is using his film to question our world. In reviewing *Violence* others have come to a similar conclusion saying that, “Žižek’s analysis helps reveal the ways in which world governments may act in the interests of trade networks and capital gains despite the objectively violent consequences that may implicate various populations around the world” (Weiss, par 3). Our society has given into consumeristic views approaches. Del Toro is saying we need to pay more attention and worry about who someone is rather than what they have. In this way, we see an intolerance to patriarchal society and American prejudice; another area that Del Toro focuses on in the film. We have already analyzed how this is done with violence, but it occurs in more areas than just this. Del Toro uses

various symbols in his film to critique the society of the time; thus, adding another level on his analysis of our world today.

An example of where Del Toro pushes against current societal norms, is in the way that sexuality is portrayed. Sexuality is something that is addressed and utilized as something that is beautiful in the film. It is not controlled or censored in the way that society normally attempts to. Based on our capitalistic society, sexuality is not something that we would normally see as something that is beautiful. Instead, we are told what aspects of sexuality can be deemed this through advertisements and media. Through just these, women and people alike are told exactly what can and cannot make sexuality beautiful. We learn that exploring our sexuality is not something we should discuss through these advertisements. By controlling our conception of sexuality, patriarchal society places censorship on what is deemed beautiful. For sexuality, doing what Elisa does it not considered amongst that concept. Instead, it must be kept behind closed doors, as to not disturb other people.

In the film, we see Del Toro take aspects, such as this, and use them to ask why we should not be open with our sexuality. He begins to critique our views towards sexuality almost immediately in the film. In one of the first scenes we started seeing Elisa's daily routine, learning that she masturbates in the tub as part of this. We are left there for a moment that almost makes the scene uncomfortable, pushing the boundaries of what our society has deemed "inappropriate" for sexuality in our world. He leaves us on this scene because he does not think that we should be keeping our exploration of sexuality behind closed doors. Even though Elisa is doing this in her home, we are given a voyeuristic stance, where we are watching her and having to take in exactly what is going on. Del Toro does not make this into a sexually scene, instead making it sensual and beautiful. This part of Elisa's routine and we should not be seeing

it as something disgusting. Del Toro is begging us to question what makes sexuality beautiful in only certain terms, especially when it is a part of who we are.

Embracing in your sexuality is not something that you should be ashamed of. We see the conflict “between...form and content” highlighted with this (*Violence* 31). We are reduced to the observers in this scene with Elisa, just as those were in the crowds during the masturbate-a-thon. Viewers watching Elisa are forced to observe what she is doing. Žižek says that something like this, where the other is reduced to a viewer is “what makes it one of the clearest indications of where we stand today, of an ideology which sustains our most intimate self-experience” (*Violence* 31). The script flips, as someone like Elisa, who would normally be seen as the Other, now puts the viewer in this spot since Del Toro makes what she does appear so natural.

There are certain norms of life that are considered more ideologically “normal” and “natural” than others. Through these points of contention, we can see where objective violence can begin to take form. In *The Shape of Water*, Del Toro wants to highlight what we see as normal and push it against an extreme of “evil” to expose what in our world needs to change. This extreme of evil comes when Strickland is having sex with his wife. In this scene, everything seems very uncomfortable and forceful. His wife’s view is hardly there at all, with almost the only thing we see the entirety of the scene is him and his face, with him even telling her at one point to stay silent (00:31:47-00:32:04). We see no beauty in what he is doing. His scene of sexuality is one that people should be connecting with intolerance, not someone masturbating.

We are controlled by what we are told is normal in a patriarchal society. Having Elisa explicitly masturbating in the tub, and showing her sexuality in a free-way, puts viewers in a

position where we have to view something that to her is a normal way of life. It is a part of what makes up her daily routine, not something that should be marked as different or place her in the position of the Other. Sexuality is allowed to be explored and addressed without any form of violence placed upon it. This is why Del Toro uses it to address an area that we can change in how it is viewed in society. The patriarchal society receives sexuality in a negative way; which is something that Del Toro feels needs to change.

Consumption and consumerism become huge themes throughout *The Shape of Water*. Symbols and critiques of these concepts are placed throughout the film, as we have already seen. Another example of where consumerism is critiqued is with the colors of the film. Del Toro utilizes green as a way of showing the problems that is happening in the society. The creature is hues of green and blue; emphasizing how the government and Strickland feel about him. For them, he is the epitome of money because he will provide them some sort of advancement that will help them in the future. They do not care about who he is or where he is from; all they want is to use him for some sort of gain. This type of obsession for money is where Del Toro begins to critique another aspect of the consumeristic nature, of the capitalistic society, in *The Shape of Water*.

Green is always the color that brings about problems and promotes money. As money plays a huge role in consumerism, we see the issues that come with having a society rely so heavily on it. This becomes even more evident as Strickland is the one character that buys completely into everything that his capitalist, consumeristic society is telling him. He is also the only character that does not have a happy ending in any way. He loses everything at the end because he was not willing to look past his own personal lacks and see that not everything revolves around money. In this way, consumerism became a big critique in this film, as Del

Toro made sure that every opportunity involving it was either destroyed or unapologetically ironic in every way.

Green appears in other parts of the film that show the issues with consumerism. For example, Giles creates advertisements for companies and in the film is trying to sell one to Jell-O. They tell him that he needs to make the Jell-O green in the advertisement (00:22:56-00:23:03). Once again, green becomes the symbol of money. They even tell Giles when he is leaving that, “That’s the future now. Green” (00:23:04-00:23:07). What these sums up to is that even though they end up not accepting his advertisement after he does change it and tell him they have gone another way, it is still the aspect of green that Del Toro is highlighting. Society runs on this color; this color that represents money. Money is what creates problems and the violence that our society then tries to hide.

This goes along with the world that capitalism is trying to hide from us; leading back to Žižek. Žižek discusses how “the ultimate American paranoiac fantasy is that of an individual living in a small idyllic Californian city, a consumeristic paradise” (*Desert of the Real* 12). This is the fantasy that characters, like Strickland, experience in this film. They are being told of the world they want to live in; not being shown the horrors that can come this exact same society. Strickland wants the newest things so that he can continue to live this fantasy and find his own consumeristic paradise. Giles even experiences this same thing; wanting to make money and live in this same type of fantasy. Žižek explains how this want for a false life creates an “endless pain without having” escape because of the want to be in a world that is not real (*Desert of the Real* 12). They are living in a “Virtual Reality”, one that “open[s] up new ‘enhanced’ possibilities of torture, new and unheard-of-horizons of extending our ability to endure pain” (*Desert of the Real* 12). Patriarchal capitalistic society is one that creates an endless pain by

creating a fantasy for its society that in all essence cannot be attained. Del Toro exposes this fantasy and pushes back against it by detailing its violence and areas that need to change.

The society that Del Toro portrays is very similar to the one that we see in our current society. Our current society still portrays a “Virtual Reality” of a capitalistic paradise that we are all supposed to strive for. This is not something we can all attain; creating this endless pain that we can never get rid of. These come from advertisements and social media; our world moving more and more into this fantasy. Žižek details how these are done in order to hide the violence that is going on in our world, in an attempt to create “the distance which separates Us from Them” so that our belief is “the real horror happens *there*, not *here*” (Desert of the Real 13). From Del Toro’s film we are seeing a direct exposure that these types of horrors do happen here; we are just being blinded by a fantasy that consumeristic society has created.

We still see these forms of violence that Žižek identifies in capitalism. Our society does not see the forms of violence that we are using in regards to others; which is something that Del Toro is able to show in *The Shape of Water*. While the film is set in the 60’s, we see that not much has changed today. Our society still uses language to divide; which is now heightened by media and the news. We have become enslaved to what the media tells us, which we could see acting in a similar sense to Strickland. The media will go to many lengths to get stories and tries to have control over the stories that it is describing. Learning from *The Shape of Water*, we see that our society needs to grow and learn to accept everyone. Using things like systematic violence does not allow us to grow as a society; which Del Toro highlights by having the characters that would normally be considered the Other, be the ones that are portrayed as the sane and relatable.

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Jessica Eylem

The Cat That Therefore She Is: *Lady Macbeth*, Cats, and Derrida

Victorian societal and political anxieties are important to analyze. They provide a look into the community itself. There was a fear of the other and the breakdown of traditions that they may bring with them. The other is referred to as “one like me which begets...ethical responsibility” as well as evoking “the first truth...this truth in the experience of the ethical call that eventuates prior to and is constitutive of reason, metaphysics, and discourse” (Sarukkai 1407). The term becomes one that details another living creature and its gaze. We can look to the other and their apparent lack of ethical responsibility to learn more about a culture and its values. As a result, when we want to examine this in literature, we start with characters such as femme fatales. This is because these characters are able to expose issues with the society they are living in. Specifically, this can be done through their gaze. They are able to provide a gaze similar to the animal that Jacques Derrida refers to in his book, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. He says that an animal “offers to my sight the abyssal limit of human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say, the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself” (Derrida 12). Femme fatales are able to produce a similar gaze, as their body is other-ed in a similar way to an animal, being one that has no language and provides a truth in the experience of ethics.

Femme fatales are progressive to their time, showing the ways in which Victorian society both isolated the female and other-ed bodies. These characters are just the beginning of a look into how femme fatales are perceived in a society. Another way to look at society is through the areas a body can move about, meaning space. Space determines the freedom a body can have, or lack-thereof. When looking at space, we see the ways in which the body is treated like live-

stock, or an animal. Here is where we begin to see the ways female bodies and animals are other-ed. Studying texts revolving around the Victorian period provides light to this space, as we can analyze what the body is capable of. This is not always the only body in the room though. As Derrida's "animals" and femme fatales occupy a similar vantage point for analysis, I believe that we need to increase our examination into space beyond just the characters themselves and move towards the other living beings occupying the same area. Domesticated pets become an area worth exploring, as they occupy a similar space to femme fatales and have been used to describe their personalities. Looking at a text that addresses both the space of a femme fatale and their similarities to a domesticated animal can determine the importance of viewing how the animal gives a new look into the character. In this paper, I would like to explore the ways the film *Lady Macbeth* uses space and how the cat functions in both the film and the novella to reveal more about societal standards.

The text that will be analyzed is the 2017 film *Lady Macbeth*, directed by William Oldroyd. The short novella it is based on will also be looked at to provide further analysis. The film utilizes open space and camera angles to capture both the emptiness and suffocation the femme fatale feels in regards to her surroundings. These will be one of the areas of focus in this paper. They will provide meta-meaning as analysis can be used to see what spaces are occupied and by whom.

The film revolves around the story of Katherine, "a gothic heroine (or villain) who, far from crumbling under the weight of 19<sup>th</sup> century patriarchy, takes horrifying measure to escape its stifling grasp" (Weston 34). It depicts her slow descend from complacent housewife to cold-blooded killer. Many critics noted that "part of what's so fascinating about "Lady Macbeth" ...is the way in which it manages to maintain [Katherine's] character's status as a strangely

sympathetic figure, even as she commits increasingly horrific acts” (Lemire, par 3). In the plot of the story, we follow Katherine; learning how everything she does makes an impact on those around her. This plays an important role in how viewers decide what they think her true intentions are and if she is a psychotic killer. Critics were impressed with the “use of sepulchral quiet, mesmerizingly steady framing and unnerving order, in which nothing is ever out of place, especially nothing human” and commented on this frequently in their reviews (Dargis, par 3). They praised the way in which the film was set up and how Katherine’s portrayal shows viewers a “take on the world dominated by men to whom women are purely servile, whatever their class” (Noh, par 2).

While critics have focused on characters, and the aesthetics of the film, the ways in which animals were utilized was not. The cat and its placement throughout add a new layer to the overall message of the issues of a solely male-dominated world. This layer comes from the lack of language a cat has. Animals are “deprived of language. Or, more precisely, of a response” meaning they are automatically born into a muteness, similar to the muteness that is placed on the female body during Victorian times (Derrida 32). As we must look at the actions of animals to understand the meta-language they are relaying, glimpses of space and autonomy become clearer. The male-dominated world has reduced the female to another, one whose language and body are not her own. The placement of the cat reveals something else, being the lack of apparent knowledge over nudity means animals are “without consciousness of good or evil” (Derrida 5). We can use animals as a stepping stone in determining the actions of a human since they are at an impasse of what constitutes as good or bad.

Where this film’s strengths arise is Katherine’s spiral into “villainism” and how she begins to fit into the femme fatale role. Before moving forward, I do want to give a brief

definition of what a femme fatale is, so that I can place my argument into the discussions surrounding the trope. First off, “there have always existed Fatal Women both in mythology and in literature, since mythology and literature are imaginative reflections of the various aspects of real life, and real life has always provided more or less complete examples of arrogant and cruel female characters” (Praz 199). These women are normally associated with exoticism or some form of other-ing that makes them appear outside the societal norms. Even though, they are transgressive in the ways they react in society, pushing the boundaries of their roles within it. For Katherine, she takes control of her world and enacts revenge on those that have forced her into the mold of a model Victorian housewife. She becomes provocative and cruel in her actions, but still pushes against the norms set before her.

*Lady Macbeth* is set in Victorian England, which is a contrast to the original novella that takes place in Russia. During the Victorian time period, “the female body, both in society and within visual culture” became a site of reflection, increasingly endowed with erotic potential and meaning, exemplifying the darker, more dangerous side of humanity” and “confined to the same realm as the animal” (Gauld 37). This means that women were regarded more as property and for the male gaze than who they are as a living being. Women were expected to stay in the home and adhere to whatever the male authority wanted them to be. Furthermore, Rosenman argues in her article “Spectacular Women: “The Mysteries of London” and the Female Body” that “they present[ed] an objectified body that is sexualized for male pleasure, particularly as the object of the male gaze” (Rosenman 36). Often, they were placed into a space that “muted” their bodies and created an atmosphere where they became other-ed. They were seen as inferior to their male counterparts, meaning that the patriarchal society placed them into a position where they could

never move past this. Their bodies were treated in a manner that pushed them into a specific set of standards.

Oldroyd places us into this time period in order to allow viewers to learn more about the values placed upon women. Ways in which he does this is by male characters consistently informing Katherine of her place in the household. An example of this appears in the film when a priest comes to visit Katherine. He tells her that “Perhaps a little more solitude and reflection will do”, as her servant told him that Katherine has been going outside and she has been missing church (00:26:48-00:26:51). We see him disapproving of the way she is spending her time when men are not present. She is expected to sit and act like a housewife and stay indoors, which she does not do. These moments are also where we begin to see her transition into the role of a femme fatale, as she tries to go against the societal standards set before her.

Along with this, by setting *Lady Macbeth* in Victorian England, viewers are able to witness the boxes placed around women and how femme fatales worked to expose the issues surrounding these standards. This has part to do with Katherine and her role as a femme fatale, as well as how Oldroyd positions the setting and overall appearance of the film. The spacing adds another layer to the loneliness attached to Victorian woman and how the ways Katherine was treated caused her to react how she does. Female bodies are not the only things that are able to do this though. In viewing the spaces around Katherine that are occupied by other living beings, a new level of analysis can be done in understanding the femme fatale’s inner desires.

For background, the plot of the film is based off the 1865 novella, written by Nikolai Leskov, called *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, which details an “anti-heroine’s slow, grimly determined journey into villainy” and how her surroundings both lead to and are hurt by her actions (Sims, par 2). This heroine’s name is Katerina (Katherine in the film). Within the

original text, the domesticated animal of a cat plays a large role in understanding Katerina's psyche. The film translates this into its own version of the story, still utilizing the cat but to much less of a degree. While its role differs, the effect it has on the femme fatale remains the same. In analysis of the cat and the space it occupies, we gain more insight into Katherine's lack and the trope of femme fatales.

Before examining the texts, I also want to provide a historical background on cats and how they are connected with women. To do this, we have to start with the theoretical discussions surrounding animals and how they fit into our society. I will be utilizing Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* to analyze the cat. Derrida's writings are described as knowledgeable for their abilities in "integrating insights into the history of philosophy with critique of current issues" as well as being able to analyze "culture and politics" (Lloyd 64). As a result, Derrida's writings are able to amplify the way we look at other-ed bodies in culture. His book on animals is no different, where he goes into an explanation of how the animal fits into our society. He looks at both the historical background provided on animals and how ideologies have molded our current perceptions on them. These ideologies include deconstruction, which is "the reversal of a wizened metaphysical hierarchy and its subsequent neutralization by an emerging concept" (Argyros 30). What this means is to show that language is complex within a given text. As the other-ed body has a lack of language, looking at the ways that language does not function with Katherine or the animal provides a deeper analysis into the overall context of Victorian life.

Historically, animals began to be domesticated by households, which was on the rise during the Victorian period but this had not yet extended to cats as the "animal revered by the Egyptians" was regarded as "less tractable than other domesticated animals prime for molding

and training” (Golden 17). Owning a cat appeared as a status of achievement and “pet keeping became a symbol of the model household, and represented the ability to control what seemed uncontrollable” (Cats in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century). Living in a world dominated by patriarchal standards meant that women did not have many things they could control in their lives. Having a pet allowed women to have a newfound superiority over something in their life. Since Victorian women had to live within patriarchal norms, this allotted them something new to have control over. Thus, as animals began to play a larger role in the family, “relations between humans and animals [had] bearing on power dynamics in literary texts composed during this period” (Golden 19). Cats began to be closely associated with women as both were seen as a separate species to man and as beings who were not able to be fully tamed. Both were viewed as acting “instinctually, naturally, independently, and powerfully” (Golden 28). Femme fatales fit this mold even more, as despite the circumstances, they remained outside the norms of Victorian life. Regardless of where they were, they reacted on their instincts and their unconscious desires. On the same spectrum, cats are seen as only half-domesticated, as it was believed that families could not completely take the wildness out of them. This was the same for women of the time, as a “women’s position has always been dual, both outside of dominant values and inside the society that lives by them” (Gardiner 113). Here is where the parallels between femme fatales and cats begin to arise. They are seen as half-domesticated and never fully a part of the lives they are told to occupy. Femme fatales are seen as pushing against the world they are a part of and using various tactics to get what they want. We do see moments where they are domesticated, but their inner thoughts never allow them to truly be so.

We are perceived as the only animals that have signifiers, as we do not know if the other can utilize language in the same form as ourselves. Signifier, in this sense, revolves around the

idea of interpreting a set of meanings that allows the mind to cue thoughts. Language is determined through the interaction between the signified and the signifier. It is important to note that the final signified is more of an abstract concept. Viewing the lack of language that animals have unearths signifiers that relate to human beings. Without the ability of language, we can look to cats to provide an analysis into pretense; more specifically in terms of femme fatales. Derrida states that, “the figure of the animal suddenly surfaces in this difference between pretense [*feinte*] and deception [*tromperie*]” (Derrida 127). He goes on to explain that this creates a “clear distinction between what the animal is capable of, namely, strategic pretense...and what it is incapable of and incapable of witnessing to, namely the deception of speech...within the order of the signifier and of Truth” (Derrida 127-8). The ‘Truth’ in this sense is the absolute knowledge of what is going on. The ‘Real’ is an unobtainable fantasy of reality. The ‘Truth’ ends up in the ‘Real’ as the ultimate meaning can never be attained if there is a deception of speech, which Derrida refers to as “lying” (Derrida 128). Looking at the pretense to the ‘Real’ allows for a more intricate depiction of the ways in which the world works. Femme fatales can be seen within this distinction because even though they have the capability of language, they are still incapable of witnessing the deception of the male body.

The femme fatale is able to expose these issues but their language is still contained to the society around them, no matter how much they try to push against it. This is important as even though, “the animal does not know evil, lying, deceit,” its lack “is precisely the lack by virtue of which the human becomes subject of the signifier, subject subjected to the signifier” (Derrida 130). The animal does not know what words lend to language. They do not have the knowledge that makes human beings subjects to the overall concept that language forms. Thus, an understanding of the words that form language is the lack that animals have. Since femme

fatales are able to use language but are hindered in what they can say, using animals can show what their lack of words means. As there are similarities between animals and femme fatales, we can use the lack of language animals have to expose the lack that femme fatales also possess.

Victorians were anxious of those they considered other, as they were worried about their values being destroyed. Femme fatales were other-ed, meaning the language they used was not understood. The presence of the other “continuously points to its absence which is manifested in traces” (Sarukkai 1408). As the other was seen as being without ethical values, the concept is able to show traces of where objects and subjects become visible. We see that right when Katherine is taken to her new husband’s home, she becomes solely an object. The traces of this switch from subject to object become visible. Suddenly, she takes on a similar role to an animal in a house, as her agency and language is gone. As we never truly learn about a Victorian femme fatale’s true feelings and emotions, we can displace them onto an area where femme fatales operate as an animal. They have the power of speech but without understanding the entirety of their voice; their lack becomes similar to that of the other. Just as the cat does not know that it is always nude, a femme fatale does not know the lack of language they have within patriarchal norms. As a result, they too run between the line of good and evil, not knowing whether to follow their conscious or unconscious. They lack the ability to make their feelings known or to understand the language of the arena of which they are entering. Here-in-lies why many of the femme fatales in Victorian literature either died or were thwarted, as the other-ness of who they were needed to be contained. What we can make of this “subjecthood” is that the “order of the signifier from the place of the Other, appears as something missed by the traditional philosophy of the subject and of relations between human and animal” (Derrida 130). Without putting femme fatales into the area of subjecthood, we miss key elements of the similarities

between them and animals. These intersecting areas of similarities reveals the traces and lacks that appear, as well as a glimpse into their meaning.

Space determines the autonomy of the body. Language plays an important role in figuring out where space begins. Katherine's environment explains the Victorian era values placed upon her. This is something we see through the male figures in her life. What's important in looking at these spaces is the language that both Katherine and the cat do not have. Whenever the cat occupies a space it represents either one Katherine has taken or one she wants. Language is not needed to relay this. Katherine and the cat's wildness give rise to the areas they want to occupy. They are not content in staying in just one space. An example of this in the film is when Katherine and the cat are both sitting at the table where Katherine eats breakfast. To add context, this is right after Katherine has killed her father-in-law. We see neither of them talking and the cat occupying the space that the male head-of-household normally sits in (00:41:05-00:41:09). Even though no language is spoken, we see that the cat is representing the space Katherine has just gained control over. This is also a space she wants complete control over. The cat only appears when Katherine's lack of language begins to disappear and she gains some control over her life. Now we may believe that lack has to do with the idea that Katherine does not have a phallus and does not occupy a male body. In this case, her lack has much more to do with power and the authority it allows. In Victorian society, males held the power. As Katherine wants the power associated with the phallus, and not the phallus itself, we see that what she is missing is the authority and freedom she craves in life. The cat has the freedom to come and go as a half-domesticated animal, showing what Katherine wants. She does not have power over her life, and the cat allows viewers to see areas in which she wants to gain what she doesn't have.

Space does not need to be determined by only language or the ways in which characters speak to each other. It has just as much to do with the lack that each living being experiences. In looking at *Lady Macbeth*, the cat only appears in the space of the home when Katherine is either experiencing freedom or is on her way to committing a heinous act she cannot come back from. We can attribute this to her cold-blooded killer side taking over. Derrida explains that “animality is on the side of the conscious *ego*, whereas the humanity of the human subject is on the side of the unconscious, the law of the signifier” (Derrida 137-8). In this regard, the cat is acting as the mediation between Katherine’s conscious and unconscious as her life is not where she wants it to be. Without understanding the language of the cat, we can see the ways in which it relates to Katherine’s actions, especially since it appears at key moments in the film. Once Katherine kills her father-in-law, and the funeral confirms he is dead, her conscious ego can no longer sustain her unconscious, which is why this is the moment the cat suddenly disappears from the film. It is responsible for viewers seeing where her sense of personal identity lies and the means she has gone to in order to get what she wants. In the cat disappearing, we could believe that this is a subtle interpretation that Katherine is a killer and not a victim of her surroundings. The cat leaves the space it occupies once she has gone too far. Since it is a mediator for the conscious and unconscious mind, it allows us to gain insight into the area that evades her. We are seeing that the lack she possesses revolves around power and the ways in which she can attempt to control her own space.

It is telling then that the cat does not appear when a male authority is around, especially with the setting of Victorian England that Oldroyd has created. The cat lends itself to the areas in which Katherine tries to occupy her space and gain control over various aspects of her life. During these times, Katherine is able to speak for herself and begin to turn against the

expectations that she does not like. We see the issues with her environment and the voice she does not have when there is a male present. Derrida explains how “when one says, therefore, that the animal doesn’t have the *logos*, that means, above all, that it doesn’t possess the “as such” that *founds* the *logos*” (Derrida 142). “As” determines the structure of our world since it provides a possible problem to whatever we are encountering. An animal is taken by its surroundings and is not given an idea of what it is taken by. They are deceived by logos as they do not understand the foundation of this deception. This does not mean it cannot expose where these may be. When looking at the ways in which the cat operates in *Lady Macbeth*, we see that the cat appears when Katherine has tried to understand what is deceiving her and holding her back. The first time we ever encounter the cat is right after all the men of the house leave and it sits on the stairs before jumping to a new height (00:14:39-00:14:43). Even though this is just a small moment, it gives insight into Katherine beginning to explore what is determining her structure of the world. The cat utilizes space to allow viewers to see exactly when Katherine is about to start looking for the “as such” that will allow her to figure out the structure of the world she lives in.

We also see the vertigo that destroys the femme fatale as she can no longer return to the lucid mind she once possessed. Vertigo is described by Derrida as “a sense of “the bottomless, the abyss,” of “what can make your head spin” ... [and] stupidity” (qtd. in Lloyd 73). This means that vertigo has to do with the psyche confusing the mind and causing a sense of stupidity where the mind temporarily does not know what to do. Looking at this vertigo exposes the lack that many Victorian women have. We can see how this drives them and adds to the trope of the character type. In regards to the film, Katherine takes on the form of the animal they are “the guiding thread” that “will finally invade the whole space—come to specify the question of the

world” (Derrida 149). This is why the cat no longer appears after Katherine has murdered her father-in-law. She changes the idea of living after this and we also see her mood alter to something more vicious. After she kills the first time, she questions why she cannot do it again to have the life she wants. She tries to invade the whole space meaning that other bodies no longer can occupy the home she is living in. Herein lies why the cat disappears after she kills her first victim and the death is confirmed. Katherine takes over the entirety of her space, pushing back her conscious ego and letting her mind fall into the abyss. She takes on a new form of animality, one that pushes her into a state of stupidity where the cat does not lie.

Each time the cat appears, it is during a time that momentarily destroyed Katherine’s stability. Once she moves past her lucid mind, other living beings can no longer occupy her space. This is why the last time we see the cat is when it is running across the floor at Katherine’s father-in-law’s funeral (00:41:47-00:41:51). Our perception of her changes at that moment, and this is when her slow decline speeds up into a full thrust into villainy.

Something telling with the idea of vertigo and its reveal of Katherine’s lack moves us back to the original text that the film is based off of. As said before, the film changed various elements of its plot, with one of them being its utilization of the cat. In the novella, the cat appears in Katerina’s dreams (the name of the femme fatale in the original novella). After she has killed her father-in-law, a cat appears while she is asleep. Dreams have been an important literary device in revealing more about the complexity and importance of various situations. The space occupied by dreams is one Katerina cannot control. The novella, describes how in Katerina’s dream “the cat goes rubbing himself between her and Sergei, and he’s so fine, gray, big, and fat as can be...and he has whiskers like a village headman” and after some time, Katerina decides she is going to chase him out, when he suddenly disappears (Leskov). It has

been stated that “the friendly cat seemingly [embodies] Katerina’s sensuality” (Wigzell 626). Just like the film, the first few times we see the cat, we are shown that the femme fatale is constrained by the boxes placed around her. At first, the cat signifies what is being “muted.” After this is, the cat begins to reveal more about who she is and what she wants. It is her conscious coming together with her unconscious desires, occupying the part of her ego that Derrida relates to animals. Looking at dreams offers a guide into a character’s “social characterization” as well as a “minimal clarification of her psychology” (Wigzell 626). This is why the cat leaves after Katherine kills her father-in-law in the film. She has let her unconscious desires take over. The first time we see the cat in the film is the first time Katherine is left alone. Both of these instances are the beginning of her decline into villainy. These moments of seeing the cat, embody the way in which the femme fatale’s space is limited, since we are seeing Katherine’s first breath of freedom.

This is why the dreams can reveal so much more than just Katerina’s sensuality, especially since the cat visits twice and the second times begins to speak to her, as it takes on the head of her late father-in-law. For Leskov to emphasize “the cat and its actions rather than the sleeper’s emotional reactions in the dreams, [he] shifts the reader’s attention from psychology to allegory and, it would seem, does so by drawing on traditional popular sources” (Wigzell 628). For one, “evolutionary theory revealed humans’ closeness to animals that the Victorians, in their anxiety, espoused a strict hierarchy of beings” (Berg 193). When the cat arrives the second time, we see a direct look at vertigo and the panic it inflicts upon Katerina. Her perception is destroyed as she does not know what to do or how to react. Her consciousness is coming alive and reminding her of the duties she should be upholding as a Victorian woman. The cat acts as a point of vertigo to take over her mind and stop any stability that she had once possessed. This is

why it is so important that the last time we see both of the cats, in both the novella and the film, are the points in which the femme fatale cannot turn back from what she's done.

Moving back to the film, Katherine's lack revolves around the power she does not have in controlling her life. Her life as a Victorian housewife bored her and does not provide the excitement she is looking for. We only see her truly happy a handful of times and for a majority of these, the cat occupies the space before her. For example, when her husband leaves, Katherine is excited to get to explore any part of the grounds she wants. Before she comes down the stairs, the cat occupies the breath of freedom before her (00:14:39-00:14:43). It represents the freedom she wants. Once vertigo becomes too much for Katherine to handle, her animality moves beyond the area the cat previously meditated. What this means is that the vertigo is sending Katherine's mind into the abyss. As she begins to fall deeper into her animality, her mind becomes more confused, sending her into a state where she can no longer distinguish her actions from good or bad. She remains in a state where all she does is give in to her desires. Then, as she begins to lose sense of right versus wrong, her animality surpasses that of the cat as the cat's conscious never understood good from evil. Katherine's mind suddenly cannot handle anything which pushes her "stupidity" into "animality" (Lloyd 73). What we can take from this is the duality of Katherine and the cat means for her. The cat represents a lack that will turn into a vertigo, which destroys any lucid elements that once occupied the femme fatale's mind. A cat can almost seamlessly return to the wild after being domesticated, so by putting the cat in comparison with a femme fatale, it reveals the femme fatale's eventual push past societal standards and into an uncontrollable state.

In going over the cat, we learn more about the trope of femme fatales. Analyzing Katherine reveals an absence of understanding femme fatale's true emotions. Many times, there

is a sense of uncertainty and the notion of did-they, didn't-they. With some Victorian femme fatales, we see how their surroundings offering little sense of authority in the lives they live. Is this the only reason they are doing what they are doing? In *Lady Macbeth*, viewers find themselves unsure of Katherine's intentions and if she was a victim or psychotic killer. The ending is left up for interpretation, once again creating an absence of truth. Looking at the seemingly domesticated cat, we gain insight into how space can reveal the veracity of the femme fatale and her desires. The question of victimization revolves less around them, as we see how their lack is putting them into a position that causes them to act the way that they do. This is how they are also able to expose the issues with the society that they are a part of. Their lack indicates what women are not able to attain but feel that they have a right too. The cat, and other domesticated animals, provide the link to seeing how the femme fatale wishes to function and where they begin to fall apart in their obsession with obtaining control.

Looking at both the film *Lady Macbeth* and the novella *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsenk*, reveals how analyzing the role of a domesticated animal can provide insight into the psyche of a femme fatale. The novella provides a direct look into Katerina's mind, showing the vertigo that leads to a breakdown of her conscious mind. The film is able to utilize empty space to provide insight into what Katherine wants and where her lack lies. Together, these two works offer a new analysis into the importance of looking at other living beings. As animals and women are put on a similar objectified level, they experience the same lack of language. As a result, space becomes an important identifying factor to seeing how femme fatales function. Cats reveal when language is not possible and when actions have gone too far.

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Jessica Eylem

## Female Confinement Through Two Senses of *Hüzün*

### 1. Introduction

Outsiders control Istanbul's exterior and body. The cultural exchanges that have occurred for thousands of years have created the *hüzün* of a landscape that does not fully belong to the city. *Hüzün* is everywhere and encompasses the entire city of Istanbul. It disrupts the ego by connecting both conscious and unconscious into a state of turmoil over personal identity. *Hüzün* paralyzes the inhabitants of Istanbul by creating an open wound of past and present; one which can never heal. When modernization efforts began in the early twentieth century, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk tried to add his own landscape onto the city. He tried to get rid of any remembrance of the Ottoman Empire, but this was not completely possible. Memories always remind Istanbul of what it has lost. Orhan Pamuk describes how,

“After the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the world almost forgot that Istanbul existed. The city into which I was born was poorer, shabbier, and more isolated than it [has] ever been before its two-thousand-year history. For me it has always been a city of ruins and of end-of-empire melancholy. I've spent my life either battling with this melancholy or (like all *Istanbulus*) making it my own” (Pamuk, *Istanbul* 6).

Istanbul embodies contradictions of past and present that intensify the *hüzün* felt throughout the city. As women have to bear the weight of Istanbul's history, their bodies are confined the most through *hüzün*. They also exemplify the complexities *hüzün* brings forward. This offers a set of discrepancies for women. The writer Orhan Pamuk details how these discrepancies result in women being confined in a way that disrupts their being. Within his texts we can see this through the women he portrays. For this paper, I will be analyzing how the women in Pamuk's

*Istanbul: Memories and the City* and *The Museum of Innocence* show the ways *hüzün* has confined the female body through two senses; the first being the struggle between tradition and modernization, and the second being cultural exchanges. These texts help exemplify how *hüzün*, tradition, and modernization are all affected by memory. As well as this, the intersection of tradition and modernization creates new restrictions that are placed on the female body.

## 2. *Hüzün*

To provide theoretical background, *hüzün* has forced a new gender confinement onto the female body because of the project of modernization. We need to look at why women cannot get past the dichotomy of tradition and modernization in Istanbul to then see how this can be seen in Pamuk's texts.

Pamuk states that "*hüzün*, the Turkish word for melancholy" has multiple meanings attached to it (Pamuk, *Istanbul* 90). Understanding these multiple meanings allows for a broader look at the various ways women are confined through this concept. They are not just confined through melancholy but also a multitude of other tools. That being said, melancholy is the first-and-foremost aspect of this concept. *Hüzün* is connected with Freud's discussion of melancholia; going one step further in its implication of the ego. Freud makes the argument that,

"the distinguishing mental feature of melancholia [is] a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment" (Freud 244).

The ego of Istanbul pushes its hate onto women, who become objects. Through their objectification we can see where melancholy rises from. As Istanbul is constantly reminded of its past through women and tradition, its wound never heals. *Hüzün* appears from “the pain [*Istanbullus*] feel for everything that has been lost, but it is also what compels them to invent new defeats and new ways to express their impoverishment” (Pamuk, *Istanbul* 103). It cannot be escaped as it always finds a new object to implicate.

Pamuk illustrates that just as melancholia creates a dejection and delusional expectation of punishment, *hüzün* rises out of a black mood; one that paralyzes the inhabitants of Istanbul. This black mood creates a similar expectation of punishment and forces the city of Istanbul to find new ways of enacting this onto its citizens. They are paralyzed by past and present, where values are placed in contradicting roles. Pamuk shows in his texts that as women once again hold the traditions of the city, the black mood forces them into a paralyzing role of confinement.

Thus, for my analysis, the definition of *hüzün* appears “in two distinct senses...one of them is the more common association...of the feeling of loss. The second...is connected to the city’s landscape” and “a production defined through a series of cultural exchanges” (Akcan 40). This means that *hüzün* can appear with both melancholy and in regards to the cultural exchanges that have been created by those in power. Within these senses, memories become essential to women. Memories create the melancholy that reminds the city and its citizens of the past, while also providing remembrance of the new types of modernization that the government is imposing. This is heavily placed onto women, who then have little control over their own subjectivity. Control is dictated by government policies and the male authorities in their lives, both of which promote differing values for women to follow and what memories they should keep.

Cultural exchanges disrupt the ways in which women are confined as they push them into a sphere of being both the subject and object. Women become both subjects and objects, as the two senses of *hüzün* create conflict in their lives. They are subjects to those who believe women represent modernity, but are also the gatekeepers to children. This means they must also represent the modernity that the state wants its youth to possess forcing them to hold on to tradition. What this means is that they are expected to adhere to modernization efforts and follow the guidelines set out for them. At the same time, they are objects to those in power, constantly falling under a voyeuristic gaze where their every move is analyzed. They are watched by their children and the men of the house at home, while also being watched by those in power when they leave. They have no sense of comfort or time to be individuals.

They fall to modernization and tradition, as they are objectified by those in the public and private sphere. At the same time, they are also made into subjects who represent these same ideologies. What this means is that they become subjected to the ideologies that modernization and tradition bring forth. They cannot escape these as they are also made into objects under a voyeuristic gaze. Essentially, their bodies become an object that represents *hüzün* and the memories attached with it.

### 3. Exhibitionary Complex

Providing a brief description of the exhibitionary complex will also help position how these women are confined through *hüzün*. Tony Bennett's scholarly article "The Exhibitionary Complex" will be of use to do this. In his analysis of the exhibitionary complex, Bennett goes over how it involves putting objects and bodies into a public sphere for inspection (Bennett 74). This is done to expose the economy of power—one nestled in the formation of a political system. Here is where the second of *hüzün* once again falls. Order becomes important as it also reveals

the various areas where unruliness is beginning to appear. The exhibitionary complex becomes “a response to the problem of order, but one which worked differently to transform the problem into one of culture—a question of winning hearts and minds as well as the disciplining and training of bodies” (Bennett 76). While the complex exposes the problems with order, it does so by questioning how the training of bodies leads to their subjection. The body becomes a point of discipline.

In the article, he also draws on Foucault’s discussion of the display of power. What Foucault discusses, in *Discipline and Punishment*, is that “the classical age discovered the body as object and target of power” then becoming “in the grip of very strict powers, which imposed on its constraints, prohibitions, or obligations” (Foucault 180). The powers controlling society also have a power over the body where scales and objects of control lead to a modality of disciplines. The second sense of *hüzün* falls under cultural exchanges, which are determined by the controlling society and those in power. Women are then controlled by a modality of disciplines: being *hüzün* and what accompanies it. What results from this is an increase of “forces of the body (in economic terms of utility)” and a diminishing of “these same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (Foucault 182). By normalizing judgement discipline becomes a “modest, suspicious power”; imposing procedures and making the individual into an object (Foucault 188). As the body is influenced by disciplines, power becomes a concern through aspects of knowledge and how these affect cultural power dynamics.

Looking at women through *hüzün*, we can take the exhibitionary complex as another way to analyze the women in Pamuk’s texts. The way they fall to points of discipline and are inspected reveal the *hüzün* that is placing them into a set of confinements.

#### 4. *Istanbul: Memories and the City*

In his memoir, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, Pamuk details his own experiences and interwoven discussion of Istanbul. He discusses the women in his life and how they, as well as Istanbul, are haunted by the differing values that tradition and modernization bring forward. Moving into the two senses of *hüzün* and tradition, the women portrayed in Pamuk's memoir hold the role of caretaker, where they are expected to teach children of the past but prepare them for the outside world. Women hold onto memories but only relay those which are deemed appropriate by people in power. The culture expects them to be traditional mothers but when they leave, they must portray the epitome of modernity. Here is where we begin to see how the second sense of *hüzün* disrupts the women in Pamuk's text. The landscape in which they are living is constantly changing. This extends into the homes as well. Women must keep up the appearance of the home, spread the traditions that have been passed down, and also stay with the new efforts of modernization. The home becomes an area where all of this can be seen. The individual rooms within the homes then function as a space that is occupied only for memories or the passing down of tradition.

Pamuk details how sitting rooms “were furnished not for the living but for the dead” (Pamuk, *Istanbul* 10). As a result, no one was to touch anything that was in the sitting rooms and were made to act like another artifact within it. The home becomes their confinement, where tradition holds true. There was a sadness and gloominess placed over the sitting room as it represented all those lost through pictures and women. Both represent a single memory. This memory never changes or has the opportunity to do so. Women must live within the frame of their home just like picture on a wall. This means that they represent a single frame of tradition and must embody that for their entire life. The sadness over this lends itself to a melancholy over what has

been lost and what it is being replaced. Women do not know if the traditions they are teaching their children will be passed down but know that they must do this in order to keep these values alive. Since they must do this, with no guarantee that traditions will hold up, there is a melancholy over having to teach them and live with them every day.

Walking into the home shows the past and how it lived on through women. We see this with the generations of women that Pamuk discusses. *Hüzün* starts with the city and then seeps into the home. As Istanbul is controlled by *hüzün*, every resident feels the melancholy and cultural exchanges that encompass the society. This ends up finding a place in the home, where the same set of values and contradictions are taken into the space. It creates a melancholy of inconsistencies that forces these women to try and find a balance between tradition and modernization. They were to hold onto these but also demonstrate that they were a modern family with areas like the family room. This is all distinguished through the confinement that *hüzün* introduces. We see that women occupied a specific place in this room. They become artifacts in their own family's museum; never leaving.

Pamuk talks about how if his grandmother “thought we weren’t sitting properly on her silver-threaded chairs, our grandmother would bring us to attention...Sitting rooms were not meant to be places where you could lounge comfortably; they were little museums designed to demonstrate to a hypothetical visitor that the householders were westernized” (Pamuk, *Istanbul* 10). Pamuk’s grandmother kept traditions alive by having her grandchildren sit and act proper around their elders but westernization changed the feel of the room. It displayed western influence by being pristine and in order, also connecting the *hüzün* felt by the second sense. Cultural exchanges, brought by those in power, emphasized that westernization efforts be practiced even at the home. As this was the case, the Pamuk’s grandmother was trying to keep

tradition alive by having her grandchildren sit properly but also made sure that the room was up to western standards. The objects placed in the room represent the same ones that disrupt the ego and push it into a confinement of sadness. This is because they acted in the same way as picture: relaying only one memory. The memory cannot be escaped and even if it is put away, the objects presence is still felt. For this reason, the objects within the room projected a melancholy onto the ego. Women kept this alive by keeping the sitting rooms as the epitomy of tradition versus modernization, becoming the objects for *hüzün* to be seen through.

The women and their homes must reflect exactly what both the public and private sphere want, forcing them to always experience the dissonant values that occur from both. We see an example of this as Pamuk's aunt makes her whole home into an exhibit where "she [is] to spend the next half century gazing out the window, she brought her piano with her. No one ever played...But it wasn't just the unplayed piano; in each apartment there was also a locked glass cabinet displaying Chinese porcelains, teacups...and censors that no one ever touched" (Pamuk, *Istanbul* 9). She had no control over where she was moving or how her home would function. Instead she was required to move and place objects in her home that were just to be looked at. These objects had to show the wealth of the family and the western influences that encompassed Istanbul. Pamuk's aunt then functions in the same way, as an object not to be touched because she represents the object that brings melancholy to the ego. *Hüzün* makes her into an object, through cultural exchanges; ones that implicate the ego of the city for the memories that women bring. Women become objects in their home, once again becoming the tool for which, the ego feels sadness. Thus, just as the piano and porcelains remained in the same place, so did the women of the household.

The *hüzün* that appeared out of being in the middle of the private and public sphere forced women, like Pamuk's aunt, into a state of melancholy which resulted in their confinement. Mothers must teach both tradition and independence but do so at the price of their own individuality. Pamuk's mother wanted instances of freedom but was never allowed them for she had to return home to teach her children the ways of life. Pamuk talks about how his mother "would give my brother detailed instructions about what he was to say, how he was to behave, and where to find the things he was to bring her the next time we came" (Pamuk, *Istanbul* 80). Even though his mother wanted to leave at times and disappear, she always returned because it was her duty to teach her children the ways of society. This is because leaving the home would mean experiencing the modernization that Pamuk argues Istanbul wants women to conform to. For traditions to be kept alive, women must keep up the home and work as the caregivers to the next generation. The home becomes their confinement, where tradition holds true. Men are able to break these roles and leave the house but for women they are confined to the cultural dynamics of power that have been set for them to stay home and be caretakers.

The home stopped Pamuk's female family members from having individuality, and we can see how this extends to women outside of Pamuk's text. Women are always controlled by the *hüzün* that creates them into objects and confines their body through cultural exchanges. No matter what women are forced into a sense of *hüzün* that confines them. They cannot escape the two senses of *hüzün* that Istanbul has forced onto their bodies because they have become the new defeat for which Istanbul expresses its impoverishment. As those in power will look for ways to normalize judgement and discipline, women are utilized to impose power and keep Istanbul in a state of *hüzün*. The powers controlling society create a modality of discipline, through the exhibitonary complex, through which women become an area where order is enacted. Then

through discipline, women also fall to objectification. Within this, they lose their own individuality. They are punished through the melancholy of *hüzün* whenever they try to enact their own freedom. This punishment culminates into a confinement of their freedom and being. Just like the women in Pamuk's life, the women of Istanbul are denied individual freedom through the contradictions of the public versus private sphere, something we see portrayed in Pamuk's other texts.

### 5. *The Museum of Innocence*

The novel *The Museum of Innocence* presents the character Kemal who has fallen in love with his distant cousin Füsün. Pamuk details their story and what eventually becomes of their romance. Kemal begins collecting objects that remind him of Füsün, which at the end of the novel he makes into a museum to embody her. In the novel, Pamuk identifies the ways memories disrupt the self, showing the second sense of *hüzün*. This is done by making sure that cultural and the exchanges within it play an important role in the lives of each of his characters. He is able to use Füsün character as a way to portray the first sense of *hüzün*, since her melancholy coincides with how Kemal is feeling. She becomes the object to which his ego is tormented by, making her into an aspect of *hüzün* itself, something we saw in *Istanbul: Memories and the City*.

*The Museum of Innocence* deals with a love triangle whose account is provided through a first-person narrative, meaning we are only getting Kemal's thoughts. As the story moves forward, we see Kemal's obsession with Füsün intensify, as he begins collecting objects that remind him of her. We do not learn if Füsün feels the same way about the objects that Kemal does. We only learn how her melancholy and sadness take a toll on others. Kemal always talks about her "sad eyes" and the impact that have on his being (Pamuk, *Museum* 670). He also

discusses how her persona makes him realize that “for most people life was not a joy to be embraced with a full heart but a miserable charade to be endured with a fake smile, a narrow path of lies, punishment, and repression” (Pamuk, *Museum* 378). Kemal uses her to denote how he feels. If she is happy, so is he. Füsün begins to directly act as the object that punishes the ego. She makes Kemal realize that he has to plaster a fake sense of happiness onto his being, which he resents. Either way it reminds him of everything that he has lost, which is what the first sense of *hüzün* brings. Füsün’s sadness and melancholy through her confinement result in her becoming the object for which these same feelings are placed onto others. We still do not get Füsün’s actual thoughts though, making it so *hüzün* provides Kemal the dynamic to speak for her and eventually determine her whole being.

Kemal decides what makes up Füsün’s story instead of her. She is not given her own authority to denote her own uniqueness. The fact he feels he can do that exemplifies the exhibitionary complex of power dynamics and the second sense of *hüzün*. Tony Bennett says, in his article “The Exhibitionary Complex,” that the complex revolves around putting objects and bodies into the public sphere—something Kemal specifically does (Bennett 74). Even the way in which Kemal approaches taking these objects shows the power dynamics that have taken over the text. Kemal is obsessed with Füsün, even though she is married, and still feels he can drop in on her and take these commodities. He details how he,

“stole the most things from the Keskin household. By now these objects were no longer just tokens of moments in my life, nor merely mementos; to me they were elemental to those moment. For example, the matchboxes on display in the Museum of Innocence: Füsün touched every one of them...whenever I held any of these matchboxes...I was able to relive the pleasure of sharing a table with Füsün...But even before that, whenever I dropped a

matchbox into my pocket, pretending not to notice what I had done, there was another reason to rejoice. I may not have “won” the woman I loved so obsessively, but it cheered me to have broken off a piece of her, however small” (Pamuk, *Museum* 511).

Kemal gains control with every object but also experiences more sadness with each as well. The objects result in a form of self-punishment that relay a delusional expectation onto Füsün. They paralyze him and cause a black mood, one that *hüzün* rises out of. He decides that he can make all these items he has stolen into a museum, without her approval, showing that he has the ultimate control over what constitutes as her essence. The second sense of *hüzün* changes the cultural exchanges and production of these objects. Füsün has no control over what Kemal is doing and to remain a traditional Turkish woman, she could never have that power. Here is where dualities between tradition and modernization begin to take place as Füsün must act in accordance with what the male authorities in her life want instead of being able to determine everything for herself.

Characters in *The Museum of Innocence* cannot reconcile between the traditional, yet modern woman Füsün is. This goes for every female character in the story though. It is discussed how even Kemal himself cannot balance out these contradictions as “the strictures of the mid-twentieth-century Turkish society, and his internalization of them, have ruined his life and turned him in on himself” (Grosholz 524). He cannot grasp the idea of a modern woman and becomes attached to the idea that Füsün is only his. Here is where we can take Pamuk’s character to see how the modern woman is still objectified and confined today. Füsün does not remain in the home yet she is still confined in a similar way to the women of Pamuk’s memoir. Even though she becomes an actress, roles and decisions are still determined for her by Kemal and her husband. Objects still create her identity and are used to confine her, as her body is

commodified for the purpose of making money. She becomes an object more than a person, resulting more in the “sad eyes” and melancholy Kemal uses to describe her. He wants to believe Füsün was meant for just him and since he takes her virginity he believes that this is the truth. Thus, when Füsün leaves him and marries another man, he becomes obsessed with figuring out who she is and obtaining her in some way, leading to his collection of various objects she has either touched or owned. With each object or memory, we are looking at a different segment of space, one that shows how the female characters are confined.

These objects “become more real than the people who owned them” but at the same time expose Kemal and what he is reconciling with (Grosholz 524). In the novel itself, Kemal states at one point that “every object and person in the house...her mother, her father, the dining table, the stove...the sweets bowls—had merged with my mental image of Füsün” (Pamuk, *Museum* 511-2). He does not truly understand who Füsün is and why she acts the way she does but he is willing to do anything he can to project the once happy time they had together. She is the object that tortures his ego.

We already see the power dynamics at work as Kemal creates an embodiment of someone else’s character, but his vision allows for self-observation. Putting his museum into the public eye and creating a rhetoric for Füsün without her having any say exemplifies the exhibitionary complex that reduces the female body into an artifact. The complex “perfect[s] a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged” (Bennett 82). This means that a subject can become an object which we see with Füsün. The way her body is looked at shows how objectified her being is. She no longer has subjectivity over herself. The ideal that appears out of this cannot be achieved but by viewing the system and its exchanges. With this, we see how *hüzün* places undo tension on the female body. Füsün is not appreciated

for who she is in the moment. Her body is constantly being pushed in different directions. For example, at one point in the novel Kemal wanted to take Füsün to Paris. This becomes an area “where we realize he is toying with the idea of making “a modern woman” out of her...Kemal wants to transform Füsün into the world of “substitutes” to make her a part of his collection” (Gürle 106). Kemal cannot understand the real Füsün so he tries to make her into the image he has created with the stolen objects. He truly objectifies her being since he cannot reconcile between the women and the image. He places tension onto her body to try and change her.

Even after her death, tension still remains; the same one that disrupted her being when she was alive. Kemal states that after Füsün’s death, “every corner of Istanbul was teeming with reminders of her. The moment we were airborne, I noticed that outside Istanbul, I was able to think about Füsün and our story more profoundly. In Istanbul I’d always see Füsün through the prism of my obsession” (Pamuk, *Museum* 679). Once again, the system of looks changes Füsün from a subject to an object. She becomes the object that can be exchanged for what those in power are looking for. Kemal makes her into his ideal after her death which creates tension out of the idea that he never understood her to begin with.

Pamuk uses Istanbul here as a comparison to how women are seen in the culture. Istanbul reminds citizens of the past through objects like bricks and homes, and Füsün reminds Kemal of the past through similar objects. She is disrupted by *hiüzun* because of the power dynamics that have placed the modalities of exhibition on her body. Her tension is seen through the objects that Kemal has taken, the ones that cause him great shame. As he is reminded of her on every street corner, he feels a sadness that never goes away. She becomes the *hiüzun* he can never forget.

## 6. Recognizing and Understanding *Hüzun*

It becomes important to recognize *hüzun* and understand the importance it has on the female body. *Hüzun* disrupts the ego by pushing both the conscious and unconscious into a state of turmoil over personal identity. Since the women of Istanbul embody the narrative of the city, their bodies are confined the most. *Hüzun* confines their psyche as they become the new impoverishment of Istanbul. Recognizing the patterns of *hüzun* and the melancholy it pushes onto women reveals the amount of confinement they are placed into.

Pamuk portrays the conflict that embodies women within his texts. He does this through the two senses of *hüzun* and the memories that come out of them. The women in both of these texts are affected by *hüzün* and used as objects to affect others. *Hüzün* culminates through a black mood which paralyzes the citizens of Istanbul. Women are paralyzed through this but as we have seen also become objects through which *hüzün* operates. Pamuk shows this with his memoir, showing how the city is filled with a melancholy over defeats but also a triumph surrounding its ability to deal with them. Here is where women are directly hurt by *hüzün*. The women in his life feel melancholy over the tradition they must continue to portray. They cannot escape this tradition so they become objects within the house. They are not able to celebrate the triumph since they are the reminder of the past. The female body is caught amid this through the memory of tradition. Tradition keeps them from fully being able to integrate into the modernization of the city.

We also see how women are used as objects through which *hüzün* affects others. In his second text, Pamuk shows how the bodies of his female characters, specifically Füsün, are put into an exhibitionary complex by not being able to control the way their bodies are displayed. This represents the second sense of *hüzün* as the dynamics of cultural exchanges are exposed.

Füsun does not have the ability to control which objects are chosen to exemplify who she is, which puts her being on display like an object for commodification. The way she is portrayed shows the extent *hüzün* controls the lives of women.

We also see the extent *hüzün* affects women within the novel, taking aspects one step farther than Pamuk's memoir. *Hüzün* affects a collective ego; which Pamuk is able to portray through the way Füsun disrupts the lives of everyone around her. She is both controlled by *hüzün* and the object of it—in turn affecting others. By also becoming a vehicle for *hüzün* to operate through, she confines those around her into a similar state of melancholy.

What we are seeing with all of this is that *hüzün* has an impact on the way that the female body can function. The body cannot do anything without a male presence or authority controlling it. This is where cultural exchanges come in and disrupt the body. With tools like the exhibitionary complex, we can see that women's roles are confined to the home and to what those in power determine for them. Memories are not able to release women of the dualities they must always compete with. Instead these entrap them and force them into objects. Being pushed into this role, women cannot leave it because of the existing cultural exchanges. This is something that *hüzün* disrupts when connected with the female body. Past and present coincide into a discrepancy of how women are supposed to be, in some cases forgetting the individual experiences that could reveal an alternate description. Without having the individual freedom to be and experience what they want, the two senses of *hüzün* confine the women in Pamuk's texts, lending itself to the women of Istanbul and how they too are controlled by these same ideologies. *Hüzün* turns women into objects, which then enacts pain on those around them while simultaneously hindering themselves.

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