

JOURNAL of MATHEMATICS

PENTAGON



PENTANGLE

Pentangle's History

is NKU's student-run journal featuring essays pertaining to all areas of literary studies,

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



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solicits submissions of critical essays pertaining to all areas of literary studies, including submissions must be in MLA format (8th ed.) and typed in Microsoft Word. Submissions should be at least 500 words and no more than 8000 words. Please email all submissions to pentangle@nku.edu. When submitting manuscripts, please include a brief biography and contact information.

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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

Gender Roles Challenged in Tolkien's *The Return of the King*

Sierra Mitchell

are seemingly irrelevant. After all, when considering the novel, a concept such as gender or gender roles is not an aspect that immediately jumps to mind, rather images of The Ring, Frodo, Smaug, or even Gandalf do. When reading , however, it is obvious that there is almost a complete absence of female characters and an over-abundance of male characters. A point of interest here, then, is that though there is a serious lack of female characters, there is not a lack of femininity and the book itself is not overly masculine. Many of Tolkien's lead characters such as Gandalf, Aragorn, and Samwise take on both masculine and feminine gender roles throughout the novel. In opposition, Eowyn who is arguably one of the most important female characters in The , portrays masculine gender roles in place of her own feminine roles. Though there are no characters in

these roles. Or, perhaps it is the feminine gender role that women are to be

With Eowyn's revelation that her only fear is to be caged (Tolkien 47) we can speculate that it is not a physical caging in Dunharrow that Eowyn is fearful of, rather it is the constraints of the female gender roles that men such as Aragorn, Theoden, and Eomer are trying to impose upon her. For Eowyn to break the constraints of Aragorn's gendered thinking, Eowyn must suppress her female identity and portray a male, Dernhelm (Fredrick 35). While the male characters can keep their male identity while toggling between masculine and feminine gender roles as we will see later, it seems as though Tolkien struggled with the reverse when it came to Eowyn. This is further proven with the fact that Tolkien wrote and rewrote Eowyn's character, and even at one point writing her as a man (Fredrick 35). Though Eowyn suppressed her feminine gender roles during the battle of the Pelennor Fields, it is her acceptance of her female identity that allows her to defeat the Lord of the Nazgûl. As he exclaims that no man may

Lord of the Nazgûl (Tolkien 114).

Tolkien did not necessarily have qualms with femininity itself; rather, it seems his issue was with women depicting masculine gender roles. Perhaps he saw women in masculine gender roles as a threat to the role of men in society. After all, during the creation of women had begun to take on more roles in society due to World War II (Hatcher 44). This could account for the criticism Eowyn receives from Aragorn in the Houses of Healing. Aragorn compares Eowyn to a white, shapely

these characteristics as well, according to traditional female gender roles. Aragorn takes this a step further by saying though Eowyn is beautiful like

Women are referred to as icy or cold when they do not show emotion, typically when receiving attention from a male. With this, Aragorn attempts to diminish Eowyn's critical accomplishment and place her back into the female gender role. It is important to consider that in this moment while Aragorn is trying to push Eowyn back into strict female gender roles, he is simultaneously acting out a female role as a male. He is in a

healing position during this criticism, which is considered to be a feminine trait, further showing that Tolkien embraces femininity for men, but not masculinity for women.

Only when Eowyn discards her masculine attributes and fully embraces in the Houses of Healing she becomes receptive to Faramir who pities her, and Eowyn begins to embrace her femininity, "something in her Faramir confesses his love to Eowyn, she sheds the remaining masculine

262). The emphasis on the word grown and barren in the context of Eowyn's healing can be connected to feminine fertility, as women bearing being considered barren.

Though Ioreth and Arwen do not get the type of character arc

appears only when purity has been restored to Minas Tirith, which is when she and Aragorn can then be married, with purity and domestication both

goal of the Rangers is to protect Mordor, not to obtain power. The creed and actions of Rangers can be seen as a healthy balance of masculine

traits in Aragorn. Looking at Aragorn's lineage, there is a hint of Elven blood that runs through his veins (albeit a small percentage, it is there nonetheless). One of the most notable physical characteristics of Elves is their extraordinary beauty, with beauty being a very prominent feminine attribute.

Aragorn again presents traditional masculine gender roles in when he is able to command the army of the dead: "... I go to Pelagir upon Anduin, and ye shall come after me. And when all

characters, such as Denethor or Saruman, ultimately face destruction in their respective ends. Tolkien's representation of female characters is considerably more involved, however. The breakdown of the female character type is comparable to the male's, as there are two distinct types. There is the female character type who embodies both traditional masculine and feminine gender roles as well as the female character type who embodies hyperfemininity.

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1955.

“Savage Servility”: Themes of Greed and Violence in Robert Lowell’s “For the Union Dead”

Alexi Kreutzjans

unapologetic statement of post-war society and what he seemingly believed to be the widely unacknowledged cost of greed and violence in America. In form, the poet reimagines the standard Eliot-esque method of writing poetry: that is, he places his own self and life within the context of Southern

that speaks to the world at large – not simply his own experiences. In this way, he adopts what might be considered a Wordsworthian approach in this work that expands beyond personal turmoil and, rather, connects it to more universal images that speak to wider audiences. Lowell asserts his political statement that the things one does to save the world may in fact be what destroys it and elicits a double meaning from the idea of freedom in

stanza.

These complex and revolutionary ideas ring true from the very beginning

glance, asserts a truth that is often misunderstood by its readers. Many times, when considering the Latin phrase “Relinquent Omnia Servare Rem” that gains attention and misinterpretation, particularly as a supposed cognitive of the verb . While this does

comply with one of the most common interpretations of Colonel Shaw as a symbol of free will and heroism, this is arguably a false ideal just as it is a false cognate, and an ironic one at that. William Nelles, author of the journal article “Saving the State in Lowell’s ‘For the Union Dead,’

that end up doing the most damage. In other words, the earth is destroyed

of anxious foreboding. Lowell moves forward with his work and the poet-speaker emerges in the present, which author Ron McFarland describes

thoughtful inference on the meaning behind the speaker's observations,

steam shovels, still exist, gouging an 'underworld garage.' The 'heart of

the Puritan legacy of the 'tingling Statehouse shakes with the 'earthquake'

that the speaker is drawing attention to themes of materialism in the poem, or appearance over true substance. Additional words and images of tingled and tingling (which the latter makes mention of) do even more to evoke the previously mentioned sense of anxiousness and tension. The monument that

of the South for its racist qualities, even in the present 60's. Much like the

Finally, Lowell reverts back to his original tone, reiterating previous ideas and themes. McFarland describes these references as a, "warning against nuclear war and racism, depicting Shaw 'riding on his bubble' and waiting for it to pop, and in the last quatrain he indicts the society that he sees as greedy in its desire for luxury cars and insensitive to the value of such an

violence of war juxtaposed with the political, social, and moral violence of

mundane workday; McFarland uses the example of a salesman, who,

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**Audre Lorde and Her Redefinition of
Love: “Martha” (1970), “To Martha:
A New Year” (1978)**

once knew, "I do not know your space now / I only seek a woman whom I
would be the Martha she knew before the wreck ("trapped there / by
wreck and the woman she loves has since slipped away.

Audre Lorde's belief in the transience of love is displayed in her poem,
wreck
6he s ee the due'w / 404051004C}TJT1 pd t}TJTy c t 1 Tf0.5td[fac t

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**“What is the Source of This Mystery?”:
Writing as Creative and Spiritual
Transcendence in Joy Harjo’s
*Crazy Brave***

Lisa Kuhn

transcendence. She does this by reaching into her toolkit of musical and artistic skills, Creek/Mvskoge heritage, and her desire to see beyond the physical. In her memoir _____, the reader can see a myriad of

plane. She taps into spiritual movement and mythology by raising the

the narrative with the dream sequence, she creates a hypnotic story. This

artistic skills, such as painting and music. Her work brings the message that the physical world is only a temporary stopping point for the human soul.

_____). Harjo does exactly that in a multitude of ways in her work, never staying in one form for long.

One type of transcendence found in Harjo’s memoir is spiritual. Why do humans look to religion or spirits? For many people like Harjo, the reason is the desire to be more than we already are. It is a search for our origins, our

destination after this life, and whether there is anything after. Not everyone is on this search. Some accept only what they see, basing any decisions and

it is one that concerns the here and now: how can I make life better while I exist? Harjo imparts this wisdom about the search for meaning: "Though we have instructions and a map buried in our hearts when we enter this world,

260). In short, life is quite jarring at times. Other seekers may follow a more formulaic search, perhaps by participating in organized religion. Some may follow ancient traditions, handed down through the generations, but do not necessarily subscribe to widespread spiritual practices. Then there are folks who follow their own path, seeking answers in a variety of sources. Whatever

were when they began. These seekers most likely have practices that aid them in their search for meaning. This is where writing enters the picture. Writing is a tool of transformation. It is where a person can shapeshift into a storyteller, tasked with sharing deeper truths. A writer both remembers and invents, reaching inside for ideas and experiences while also looking outside

contains elements that, to a non-Native reader, may appear to be fantasy. It is a mistake to leave this conclusion uncontested. When Harjo writes lines like "My father and I surfaced in an ancient memory once

reality, an attribute of both her Creek/Mvskoge world view and her unique personality. Spirits come through with messages: "Someone accompanies

dark and light, manifest: "...I woke up in the midst of a struggle with a

these incidences in Harjo's life, there is no denying that through her prose she is able to transcend mere physical form and the limitations of that state

remarks on Harjo's literary voice and ability to seamlessly change from scene to scene. He observes: "This apparent surreality of many of Harjo's settings and situations is not really a distortion; it is simply a presentation of

metaphor of her perspective.

Harjo was a musician before becoming a poet. Her background in this more about how this muse is even stronger than her painting: "It is music,

described as listening to music more than reading the work of other poets... when she writes poetry she does not start with an image but rather with a

occurred then, through jazz. The music was a startling bridge between

Ortiz Cofer's anthology

(University of Georgia Press, 1999), she recounts: "...as I began my own particular journey, I found a way towards the realization of knowledge in this world, a way to hear beyond the ordinary waves of language...I am

way to look beyond what is in front of her and what she has the physical ability to communicate.

Identity is another form of transcendence represented in

Lisa Kuhn

OpenStax, 2015. https://openstax.org/r/american-literature-1e-1.1

Edyta Wood educates about the importance of Native writers like Harjo telling their own stories instead of white writers assuming Native voices on their behalf. In her opening line, she points out that:

With very little presence of Native American authentic representations in popular culture, American literature, or American consciousness in

takes place. They are rebirth. Harjo's book is full of this practice.

before the reader by simply using words. She refuses to be stagnant. Her skill with the written word is ever evolving into yet a higher form than it once

to fabulous treasures that grow more valuable over time.

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Ashley Hopkins

The lyrics state that Cinderella seems so easy, replying “it takes one word for slut. However, the precious princess is not rebutting that she was

murder victim, neither one of them hides from desolation row.

Line 14 and 15 also introduce Quasimodo, the Hunchback of Notre Dame. Quasimodo is also known to hide from the public, but in line 15 the fortune teller takes all her things inside, excluding Cain, Abel and Quasimodo. The hunchback is known for hiding within the bell tower from the public because of his deformities; however, he does not hide from desolation row and is left to be part of the chaos. The fortune teller that Dylan mentions could be seen as Esmeralda, a gypsy who befriends Quasimodo. Dylan could be suggesting that Cain, Abel and Quasimodo are part of her things, and when she takes the rest of her belongings inside, she is not including them to hide as they were once supposed to be in their original stories. Here, Dylan is suggesting that people like the characters listed who invoke chaos are not to hide from desolation row but are free to be part of it.

Another biblical reference in the song is the Good Samaritan. The lyrics

18.8 005005000.5 005000A10005A3rF4A9A6 (18.8 004C0/i({4v)-1ply4C0/i({5A71029

ark in Genesis Chapters 7-9: "God put the rainbow in the sky as the sign (Genesis Chapter 9). Ophelia is looking out at a promise of no more great

through Noah's rainbow. Again, Dylan intertwines biblical characters with classical literature characters to prove that all are hypnotized and see into the destruction of the world on desolation road.

Hood with his memories in a trunk / Passed this way an hour ago with

if they were treasures in a trunk. While Einstein is well known for his genius in discovering the theory of relativity, Robin Hood is known for stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. In this verse, Einstein is carrying his memories like a treasure disguised as Robin Hood, who is known to steal the treasure. Given that the memories can be related to the mind, it is shown that Einstein is trying to protect them from desolation row. Robin Hood as a

a genius who is known for science. This verse can also be seen as a way of Einstein stealing his memories from the rich to give them to the poor, just as Robin Hood does with actual treasure. Passing by a monk, another tie to

Within the desolation row, science is disguised as traveling with religion. Science and religion together play a part in man's enlightenment and leading to chaos among men.

Dr. Filth is an actual doctor who was known in the Holocaust for cutting

crimes. Since this verse is during the holocaust, the patients can be seen as a gateway to the gas chambers that were used, as gas is highly explosive. The lines following the opening of verse six are "Now his nurse, some local loser, she's in charge of the cyanide hole / And she also keeps the cards that read,

hear them blow / If you lean your head out far enough from Desolation

from history as Einstein was.

by a nurse who is helping Dr. Filth. The nurse can be seen as a common member of society who is turning a blind eye to the horrors that are happening in front of her but reads from the bible to pray for it to be better, even though she does nothing to make it better.

Verse nine references famous authors Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot.

49 “Praise be to Nero’s Neptune, the Titanic sails at dawn

Nero is the Roman emperor and Neptune is the God of the Seas.

Already within this verse there are ties to classical mythology as well as real events such as the Titanic. The God of the Sea is being praised while the Titanic is getting ready to sail out. The two poets Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot

from Greek mythology laugh at them. Sirens are laughing at them as if the high rich culture that came with the two authors is being mocked by the

to classic literature such as mythology tales tied in with famous poets. Throughout the encounter with the poets and the mythological creatures, no one has time to think about the chaos as they are on a sinking ship, the Titanic. While the social classes battle, desolation row is still happening but no one involved is thinking about it.

In conclusion, Dylan uses biblical characters, various literary works, and real-life people as a motif to push the idea that urban chaos and lack of order does not distinguish between good and evil characters, but is inclusive to all. Although some characters such as Cinderella, Romeo, and the Good Samaritan are seen by most as good, moral people they are caught attending and peeking at the corruption within desolation row. People who are seen as bad or typically hiding from the general public, such as Cain, Quasimodo, Dr. Filth, and Robin Hood, are welcome and no longer have to hide when

literary, biblical, and historical characters to demonstrate how the lines of good and evil are blurred.

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Dolly Parton's Literary Songwriting

Kaitlyn Craig

history. She has really paved the way for so many other women after her to make their place in music and show what they can bring to music that men can't. Dolly has had a career that has lasted almost 60 years, and

she started from very humble beginnings in the Smoky Mountains in East Tennessee. Dolly Parton is very inspired by the old folk tradition of telling stories and passing them down generation to generation, which is very important to the history of where she is from. This tradition had a lot to do with her childhood, she would sing songs and tell stories to lift the spirits of her family members in their hard times. a short story than how one typically expects of a song. Three Dolly Parton songs that do

of Dolly's that she is sharing with her audience. It is a story about Dolly's actual childhood. Her family was very poor, and it was nearing

colors to Dolly's mom, and so she sewed them into a coat for Dolly for

1968). The lyrics of this song don't lean into the traditional rhyme

scheme of most songs, and she isn't doing much vocally with her voice. This makes it sound like she is really cades, she is still that little blonde girl from the Smoky Mountains. This song leans into the folk mountain region storytelling tradition the most because she also talks about the

area of the country. As mentioned in the quote before, she talks about

also persecuted and targeted for it, just like she was with hers. She was so proud of her coat, and the kids at school were picking on her about it, but she didn't understand because she knew that it was made with love and that it was very special and from her mother. She holds true to being proud of who she is, and this is also very Dolly. You cannot argue that Dolly follows the crowd and goes with what everyone else is doing. She is very iconically herself and she doesn't care about what others are saying negatively about her. She leans into it and usually forms a joke out of it,

Dolly has also made two movies of the same name of "Coat of
takes the same story from

details throughout the story. She also says, “You could have your choice (Parton 1974). There isn’t particularly an answer, or a resolution to this

song, so that is giving artists even more abilities to take the story and expand it.

Dolly’s storytelling and her sassy honesty are what has gotten her the massive fanbase that she has. People love her ability to take them away with the stories in her songs. The book

is a massive Dolly Parton fan. She is overweight, but her mother is a famous beauty queen in their small town, and she now runs the annual pageant. Willowdean decides to enter the pageant almost as a joke,

starts as a joke but then it becomes something that she needs to prove to herself, her mother, and the community. It is a story about following the lessons of Dolly Parton and being boldly yourself. This story is pretty much the perfect way to explain Dolly’s fanbase. It is so widespread, it includes people from every walk of life. Dolly’s unique personality and her unabashedly being herself has also made her an icon to the drag queen community. Her exaggerated appearance is something that they love to replicate, and she is a common appearance in drag bar theme nights. She even lost a Dolly Parton look-alike contest to a drag queen once. This widespread fanbase is all because of her willingness to be honest and open with her audience in the way that she tells stories through her music.

Dolly’s career is one of the longest and most successful in music

entirety of it. She has never lost that ability to just write a song that tells a story and brings everyone together. After all of that success and all of that time in the industry, you would think she would be jaded or have changed from her small-town self, but she hasn’t. She is still very grateful for her ability to share her talent and her songs with her fans, and she still remembers what it was like to be a little girl in a run-down home in the mountains of East Tennessee. She is so humble and she uses

so many ways, but some of the most notable are starting Dollywood to bring jobs to her hometown of Gatlinburg, Tennessee, starting the Dolly

bringing books to children, donating money to fund COVID vaccine

research, and even donating \$1000 per month for over 900 families who platform to help so many, and that is so respectable and humbling from a person of her status. She is still going strong and releasing music and other projects at 75 years old.

Contributors

Haley Beggs

English. She is an avid poetry lover, cheesy romance novel consumer, and an early 2000's television fanatic. She spends much of her time hanging with those she loves, writing, or attending hot yoga classes and attempting

Lisa Kuhn

Lisa is a giant book nerd who loves to talk and accidentally make up words. She is currently in the Master of English program at NKU. She loves dissecting and analyzing texts, which is why she chose to pursue the Literary and Cultural Studies track in the English major. Lisa believes that

Sierra Mitchell

Sierra Mitchell is a junior at NKU who is working towards her bachelor's degree in English Secondary Education. She plans on becoming the most

lives with her supportive husband who always makes sure she doesn't forget to eat, as well as a dog and two cats who always make sure she doesn't get enough sleep.

Alexi Kreutzjans

Alexi is a senior at NKU and will graduate this spring with a major in English and a focus in Spanish. Her English major track is Literary and Cultural studies, so she is a strong advocate for reading and research. She plans to attend graduate school in the same area of study, where she will pursue her interests in Victorian and Gothic literature. Her biggest wish is to become a college professor, where she will be able to share these passions with her own students.

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