EX ANIMO

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Letter From the Editor

The second volume of Ex Animo is a continuation of our publication's objective of presenting the best in undergraduate philosophical work. The continued efforts of Ex Animo to expand our engagement with the undergraduate community of writers and artists gave us the special opportunity to demonstrate an exceptional plurality of thought and expression in this volume. Ex Animo seeks the involvement of the undergraduate student population in their contribution of critical and sustained reflections on the world as we know it. We believe this volume is representative of the best efforts of the Ex Animo team to compile a collection of papers that achieves these objectives and we are proud to present this volume to our readers.

I wish to extend my personal gratitude to the Ex Animo team in their efforts to organize this issue and work through the variety of tasks needed to complete this project. I must also thank our faculty advisors from the University of Oregon's Philosophy Department, Dr. Camisha Russell and Dr. Stephen Brence, for their support of the publication. Finally, I would like to thank the founders for their work in establishing Ex Animo at the University of Oregon and Shane Cooney, in particular, for his continued support of the Ex Animo journal.

José Alfredo Ortiz Angeles

The Ecological Nietzsche: Considering the Environmental Implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy and the Possibility of Grounding der Ubermensch in the Indigenous Perspective

Joseph D. Ycaza

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There is a tendency among the environmentally-minded to hear Friedrich Nietzsche's calls for a life-affirming philosophy of the Earth as indicative of his support for contemporary environmentalism. As someone who is pursuing a degree in environmental science and who himself began his philosophical education in environmental philosophy, I must admit to having grappled with this tendency myself due to Nietzsche's use of naturalistic language. For example, Nietzsche, perhaps more so than any philosopher before or during his time, grounds his philosophy in a genealogy of human history that is fundamentally biological and evolutionary in character. He speaks of morality in terms of organic life and describes the emergence and meaning of human knowledge and art in terms of its usefulness to us as a species.[1] Nietzsche calls for humankind to overcome itself so as to "make way" for a new creative type of human: a being who has abandoned all activity which does not improve the conditions of the species—one who says "yes" to nature.[2] Nietzsche was also a proponent of "great health," of grounding philosophy in our bodies, and personally enjoyed engaging in the natural world himself. These facts make Nietzsche appealing to environmental philosophers who would like nothing more than to count him as one of the more influential Western philosophers to actively contend with the subject. However, there are several concepts within Nietzsche's philosophy that are omitted or misrepresented which render these attempts problematic. In this essay, I will be exploring the viability of an ecological Nietzsche, or how Nietzsche's philosophy may play out in practical contemporary environmental contexts, and whether his philosophy is compatible with any so-called environmental philosophy. Though there is a rich discourse around attempts to assimilate a Nietzschean perspective into environmental ethics, an attempt to restate it in its entirety would exceed practical limits. Therefore, only those themes that are most appropriate for the purposes of this essay will be included. I will then consider these implications and Nietzsche's philosophy more broadly within the context of indigenous peoples who, I would argue have a "healthier" and

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1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 261, 341, 419.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One* ed. and trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 25.

more sustainable relationship to nature and their environments, and consider whether they embody a more appropriate point of departure for Nietzsche's philosophical project than someone from a Western background.

It is necessary to clarify certain terms and ideas before engaging with Nietzsche's philosophy to avoid common pitfalls of misunderstanding. First, l distinguish between the terms "nature" and "environment" in this essay given that, while they are colloquially considered to be synonymous, nature has a meaning to Nietzsche that is distinct from our contemporary concept of the environment. Nature can be defined as all that is, or which composes reality as such. The environment, on the other hand, is the physical manifestation of nature that is perceptible to the beings contained within. Nature is composed of space-time, while the environment is composed of so-called wilderness and human artifice. This distinction is important for the simple reason that while Nietzsche philosophizes at length about nature, his views on the environment are less clear and are largely open to interpretation. It is also necessary to introduce some terms that are significant within environmental philosophy, as these are crucial in understanding whether they are characteristic of Nietzsche's philosophy. These terms are "anthropocentrism" and "biocentrism," which are both related to the perception of humanity's place within nature and within the environment. An anthropocentric perspective conceives of humans as being at the center of interrelatedness in nature and having a higher hierarchical value amongst these relations than other species, whereas a biocentric perspective views humans as being one species among all others in a non-hierarchical organization. (A related term that is sometimes confused with anthropocentrism is anthropomorphism, which is the act of prescribing human characteristics to some natural object or event.) In order to properly understand the arguments put forth by philosophers who have weighed in on the environmental implications of Nietzsche's philosophy, I will briefly introduce some of the most central concepts. They are Nietzsche's ideas on nihilism, decadence, will to power, the dissolution of the subject, perspectivism, and the overman (der Ubermensch).

Nietzsche's philosophical project is best understood in its historical context, as he formulated his arguments in response to what he saw as the rise of nihilism in Europe in the 19th century following the decline of religious faith. Nihilism has special significance within Nietzsche's philosophy, but, for the purposes of this essay, nihilism will be understood simply as the belief that the world is not as it "should" be and that, as such, the world as it is currently should not exist.[3] Nietzsche's related concept of decadence is broader than its typical usage and he employs this term to refer to that which arises from weakness and prevents one's full expression of strength.[4] These first two concepts are essential to understanding Nietzsche's critique of Western society and humanity's relationship to nature. Will to power, as perhaps the most central concept in his philosophy and the most misunderstood, describes the fundamental expression of life as self-

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3. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 23.

4. George de Huszar, "Nietzsche's Theory of Decadence and the Transvaluation of All Values," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6, no. 3 (1945): https://doi.org/10.2307/2707290.

overcoming. Nietzsche describes will to power as a force with "inner will," an "insatiable desire to manifest power; or, the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive," and "life at its highest potency."[5] Will to power is not conceived as a domination of others per se, but as bodies striving to "become master of all space and to extend its force," or the biological activity that allows an organism to thrive in its environment.[6] Conceived another way, will to power is what provides interpretation in a world of disembodied forces.[7] These various and often vague explanations of will to power are what have led to certain definitions being emphasized or the concept being confused entirely. However, the definitions I have provided are crucial in understanding attempts to interpret will to power from an evolutionary biology perspective. Another concept that has broad implications to Nietzsche's philosophy is the notion that there is no real subject—no "I" at the center of consciousness directing the mind or body, no "deed" separate from the "doer."[8] For Nietzsche, the subject is a fiction that humans created to aid us in practical manners of speaking; but in actuality, all that really exists is will to power and its expressions. Furthermore, he argued that we do not have access to nature or causality as such and all that is available to us are interpretations.[9] There is no "objective" reality and, even if there is, we cannot know it. This is why Nietzsche argues that the closest that we can come to objectivity is through perspectivism, or the compilation of the perspectives of multiple "subjects" to form a general consensus of reality. Lastly, as the terminal point of Nietzsche's philosophy, and one of the most important aspects when considering the ecological Nietzsche, der Ubermensch is conceived of as the next step in human evolution, where humanity and its decadent morality are overcome and we are "translated back into nature."[10] Der Ubermensch is a being that lives entirely in accordance with the will to power.

One of the first major attempts to co-opt Nietzsche into environmental philosophy came from philosopher Max Hallman, who claims that Nietzsche's philosophy, insofar as it requires that one see oneself as not being fundamentally separate from nature or the environment lends itself to the "biocentric egalitarianism" that is inherent to the philosophy of deep ecology.[11] Deep ecology is one of the original schools of environmental philosophy and was developed by philosopher Arne Næss.[12] The original platform was composed of eight principles, stating that, among other things, non-

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5. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 332, 340.

6. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 339.

7. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 342.

8. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 336-337.

9. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 350.

10. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* ed. Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 123.

11. Max O. Hallman, "Nietzsche's Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 13, no. 2 (1991): https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics199113225, 99-125.

12. Arne Næss, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long‒Range Ecology Movement. A Summary," *Inquiry* 16, no. 1-4 (1973): https://doi.org/10.1080/00201747308601682, 95-100.

human life has intrinsic value, humans have no right to degrade the environment except to provide for "vital needs," and that considerable action is required to change humanity's current relationship to nature. Hallman's claim has been argued against by philosophers who claim that this representation of Nietzsche's philosophy is either grossly simplistic, especially regarding will to power and perspectivism[13] or overlooks exploitation in his philosophy entirety.[14] I similarly believe that Nietzsche's philosophy is incompatible with any sort of egalitarianism and that any attempt to attribute egalitarianism to his philosophy should be met with deep skepticism. Nietzsche states that all living organisms are "egoistic through and through."[15] Exploitation is a fact of all life, and this is something that is borne out in the ecological sciences and, though it is recognized within the deep ecology platform, nowhere in Nietzsche's philosophy is this exploitation thought to be limited to "vital needs." I would also argue that Nietzsche would reject the deep ecology platform altogether on the basis that it essentially expands Kantian ethics into non-human nature by stating that non-human life has "rights" based on its so-called intrinsic value. Nietzsche was overt about his opposition to Kant and I believe that he would see deep ecology as yet another extension of the decadence of Western morality.

David Storey, another philosopher who has also claimed to find environmentalist elements in Nietzsche, argues that Nietzsche's philosophy exhibits a "hierarchical biocentrism." Storey contends that humans are of higher value because of our unique capacities. Additionally, due to the fact that humankind has affected all environments on Earth, our duty as humans should be to adopt a "new conservation" such that humans would have a hand in designing (and redesigning) these environments.[16] This appears to me as entirely too naive of Nietzsche's philosophy to be an accurate representation. Though Nietzsche calls for a transvaluation of our human values, this does not mean that hierarchies of value do not exist. Nietzsche, in fact, views all of life as will to power, or as valuing activity, and not something special to humans.[17] Nietzsche rightfully identifies that humans have unique faculties and himself believed humans to be "the most interesting animal."[18] However, he critiques humanity's false assumption that humans themselves have a higher value in nature because of these faculties. He argues: "The animal functions are, as a matter of principle, a million times more important than all our beautiful moods and heights of consciousness."[19] Nietzsche believes that we ascribe this higher value to

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13. Martin Drenthen, "The Paradox of Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 21, no. 2 (1999): https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics199921229, 163-175.

14. Ralph R. Acampora, "Using and Abusing Nietzsche for Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 16, no. 2 (1994): https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics199416232, 187-194.

15. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 340.

16. David E. Storey, *Naturalizing Heidegger: His Confrontation with Nietzsche, His Contributions to Environmental Philosophy,* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016).

17. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 356.

18. Friedrich Nietzsche,"The Antichrist," *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).

19. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 355.

ourselves and project it onto nature and take it to be something that is actually primary. Even if we invert or dissolve the hierarchy and ascribe a higher or intrinsic value to non-human life or the environment itself, this is still a projection and is not at all something "natural." Attempting to assert what may be best for the environment from a biocentric perspective may itself even be seen as a form of anthropomorphism because we ultimately assert what we think is best for it from our own perspective. Therefore, while Nietzsche's philosophy seems to avoid the typical pitfalls of anthropocentrism as it is typically conceived of in environmental philosophy, I believe that his philosophy is incompatible with a biocentric perspective and ultimately exists outside of this dichotomy. On these grounds, I reject Hallman's claim that Nietzsche embodies biocentric egalitarianism and Storey's claim that Nietzsche extolls a biocentrism hierarchy. I also agree with philosopher Kaitlyn Creasy's compelling argument that the sort of new conservation that Storey calls for is ultimately nihilistic in attitude. In fact, it may be said that environmentalism, or moving towards a final state where humans and nature are in perfect harmony, is completely anti-Nietzschean and nihilistic in character.[20] As I defined earlier, nihilism occurs when one views the world as it is to be insufficient and that it should be changed or destroyed in its current form. Creasy argues that new conservation could only end in nihilism if we are to maintain Nietzsche's original arguments. I would further Creasy's argument and extend this claim to include environmentalism as such. Though there is certainly cause for wanting to change the world as it is, Nietzsche would condemn any such project that arises from these grounds. Therefore, I believe that an ecological Nietzsche would not be supportive of any environmental policy or action that does not first reconstitute our species' very relationship to nature, as anything that may be forwarded prior to our reconciliation will arise from a place of decadence and nihilism. What is not clear from a reading of Nietzsche, then, is what he actually imagines when he calls for a "return to the earth"; I believe that this is at least partially intentional. Not only do I think that Nietzsche, the man, enjoyed his established air of mystery, but Nietzsche recognizes that he is himself a product of Western civilization and is not entirely immune to decadence or moralization—even if he may count himself as being closer to a "higher" humanity, nor is he immune to anthropocentrism. Nietzsche had great respect for der Ubermensch and seemed to suggest that we in our current state are unworthy in comparison. Just as our primate ancestors could not possibly imagine our evolution into modern Homosapien, neither can we comprehend what potential lies in der Ubermensch. I do not believe that Nietzsche thinks that it is for us, as those who precede the overman, to decide what our fundamental relationship to the environment will be. The most that we as "lower" humanity can strive for, Nietzsche would claim, is to affirm our bodies and "return" to them by re-learning to trust our animal instincts—to literally trust our gut.[21] It is at this point at which we grow strong enough to evolve.

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20. Kaitlyn Creasy, "Environmental Nihilism," *Environmental Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (2017): https://doi.org/10.5840/envirophil201791153, 339-359.

21. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 347.

The question then becomes: what is the meaning of Nietzsche's directive? If Nietzsche would reject a traditional environmental philosophy and would be ambivalent to environmental and climate policy, does this mean that abstract problems such as climate change would simply go unaddressed under his philosophy? I want to entertain the idea, as Acampora does when he argues that der Ubermensch would be exploitative and therefore incompatible with egalitarian values, that this may in fact be the case.[22] Nietzsche believes that Western civilization, dating back to Socrates in Ancient Greece, is decadent beyond measure.[23] Our projection of moral value on nature and our assumption that we must escape our suffering or otherwise find or ascribe meaning to it has made our species weak. His prescription for humanity is to overcome this weakness, to overcome ourselves, so that we may yield to a stronger version of ourselves. It is entirely possible that Nietzsche would view a planetary existential crisis such as climate change as a wonderful opportunity for overcoming not only our weakness but our basic moral conventions (e.g. that widespread preventable death is evil). He states that will to power can only be manifested against resistance and that it, therefore, seeks resistance.[24] With over half of all species facing extinction and billions of people facing death and illness, humanity is facing not only a physical crisis but a true crisis of values. Though this is one possibility of Nietzsche's own views on the subject, I want to counter these arguments from Nietzsche's own premises and on practical grounds. Firstly, there is a real danger of humanity not grounding itself in the earth in the face of climate change but intensifying its own decadence and love of other-worlds. When faced with the powerlessness of oneself as an individual and as a member of the species, it is entirely possible that many would simply seek refuge in religion and the afterlife as humanity has done for centuries in times of crises. It is also likely that intoxication by substances and non-reflective activity will increase to remove oneself from the reality of the situation and escape suffering. This especially takes on new meaning within the technological age of social media and virtual and augmented reality, where individuals can simply "escape" into cyberspace. Nietzsche may assert that this weakness would lead to a "culling of the herd." But insofar as climate change is a crisis of planetary scale, I believe that, if left unabated, it would actually have the effect of wiping out all of humanity, "higher man" and all. Furthermore, I think that if Nietzsche would not be critical of the role that the global elite has played in climate change, then his account would be thoroughly impoverished and would be functionally useless in providing any account on the issue. It is entirely possible that Nietzsche's philosophy simply may not be equipped to deal with something as abstract as climate change. Therefore, I agree with philosopher Adrian Del Caro who argue that, while Nietzsche's philosophy in its purity cannot be assimilated into traditional environmental philosophy, this does not mean that Nietzsche has nothing to contribute to discourses on the

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22. Acampora, "Using and Abusing Nietzsche for Environmental Ethics."

23. de Huzar, "Nietzsche's Theory of Decadence and the Transvaluation of All Values."

24. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 346.

environment nor does this mean that the practical Nietzsche—Nietzsche, the man—would not condone environmental or climate action.[25]

Thus far, I have considered Nietzsche's philosophy in the context of the environment as it is conceived of under traditional schools of Western environmentalism thought. I want to expand the discourse by analyzing the environmental elements of Nietzsche's philosophy from an indigenous perspective in order to consider whether there are similarities between the two. To my knowledge, Nietzsche never made any mention of indigenous peoples in his primary texts and there is little engagement from other philosophers on this linkage. Part of Nietzsche's omission may be a result of the fact that he belonged to an elite class, but it is also likely that he was completely unaware of the indigenous worldview to begin with. The 19th century was fraught with the erasure of indigenous perspectives. Describing indigenous worldviews is not the primary focus of this essay so my discussion will serve merely as an overview. Indigenous here means being native to a given place. As I discuss indigenous peoples, I will do my best to be mindful not to essentialize this group but explore commonalities among peoples through a lens of multicultural pluralism. To aid in my discussion, I will draw upon the work of Native American philosopher Vine Deloria Jr. and ethnographer Anatoli Ignatov.

According to Vine Deloria, Jr., a Native American philosopher who has used multicultural pluralism to provide a broader indigenous perspective, two concepts that are crucial in understanding indigenous worldviews are the concepts of place and power. Place is the environment in which one finds oneself and the phenomena enabled by it and power is spiritual energy or life force. Precisely how much Deloria's concept of power embodies Nietzsche's will to power is beyond the scope of this essay, but I entertain the notion that the two are in fact similar. These two concepts—power and place—are together what constitutes the "personality" of objects in the natural world and afford the actions available to that object. Deloria also argues that Native Americans (and perhaps indigenous peoples more broadly) are non-reductive in their metaphysical considerations and allow for lived possibilities to emerge that would not be possible if they began from an assumption that they definitively knew how nature operates, as is the case with physics in Western science.[26] This translates into the relationship that indigenous peoples have with their environment, and overall, means that they often do not profess to know with certainty what is "best" for the environment and non-human nature. This sort of attitude is almost entirely different than that of Western environmentalism and seems to avoid the hubris of humankind that Nietzsche was so critical of. Anatoli Ignatov, an ethnographer studying animism among the Gurensi people of Ghana, argues that much of Nietzsche's perspectivism, (particularly that described in his book, Thus Spoke Zarathustra) is similar to the animism of African earth priests. He argues that both perspectives view the world as having its own agency and will

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25. Adrian Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004).

26. Vine Deloria and Daniel R. Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, (New York: Fulcrum Publishing, 2010).

to power and engaging with us in a mutualistic and fluctuating web of relations. The Gurensi bestow gifts upon trees and other natural objects in faith that these acts will be reflected back on them by the Earth. Environmental issues such as climate change are not viewed by the Gurensi in physical or even moral terms, but in the practical terms of its effect on this relationship and us: addressing these concerns are a matter of self-overcoming.[27] Ignatov argues not that Nietzsche's philosophy nor African animism are the keys to understanding a proper human relation to the Earth, but rather that both of them together in dialogue may cause us to reflect on this relationship and its maintenance so that we are once again "at home" on the Earth instead of exploiting it like we would an alien world.[28] I believe that insofar as Nietzsche viewed Thus Spoke Zarathustra as one of his most important texts, this account is especially significant.

Viewed this way, a philosophy that affirms the necessary conditions to life, as Nietzsche imagined it, is truly a matter of perspectivism and attending to our own perspectives as well as the so-called environment's. The separation of oneself from one's environment is not possible insofar as we are not subjects but representations of forces and will to power, as Nietzsche claims. If we truly were to live in accordance with this fact, we would engage with the environment as if we are engaging with ourselves. Though we are certainly free to use our will to power in a domineering, exploitative manner against the Earth, this is not without consequence and the Earth may exert its own will to power in a similar way against us. Conversely, we may extend our will to power to bear gifts to the Earth, as if to a good friend, and it may do the same. This is borne out in Nietzsche's The Will to Power, where he states (of the will to power) "it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement ("union") with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power."[29] The relationship Nietzsche describes is distinctly not egalitarian, as this relationship is not equal or the same, but it is in fact reciprocal. There are no guarantees in life and, even as nature is brutal and full of suffering, it is those of "great health" that can face these horrors without resorting to nihilism or decadence. I believe, based on the brief account I have provided, that the indigenous perspective is a far more suitable starting point for what Nietzsche sees as humanity's next evolutionary leap—arising not out of and against Western culture, but outside of and prior to it. Of course, this is a matter of interpretation and still amounts to a significant co-opting of Nietzsche's work no matter how it is framed. Nevertheless, it is my opinion that this is better than having the grounding for der Ubermensch be in the aristocratic philosopher, as Nietzsche himself envisioned. One might argue that Nietzsche would view indigenous peoples and their cosmology as suffering from the same "otherworldliness" as the rest of humanity. My counterargument would be that indigenous cosmology does not assert other-worlds but merely

27. Anatoli Ignatov, "The Earth as a Gift-Giving Ancestor," *Political Theory* 45, no. 1 (2016): https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591716656461, 55.

28. Ignatov, "The Earth as a Gift-Giving Ancestor," 70.

29. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* 340.

provides differential interpretations of this world. If Nietzsche is to be taken seriously about perspectivism then these interpretations are entirely valid.

Of course, there are few indigenous peoples left compared to before the emergence of settler-colonialism. Not only has their population been decimated through various systems of oppression and dispossession but many cultures have been lost or destroyed to it as well. Many Native Americans, for example, do not live near their ancestral homelands or reservations, nor do they speak their culture's ancestral language or observe cultural traditions. By all accounts, indigenous people the world over are now exposed to the same Western decadence as everyone else, whether they chose it or not. Though the indigenous perspective regarding nature and the environment has helped to tamper the Western worldview, it has only been through great suffering and resistance that it has been able to survive. Insofar as I have argued in this essay that indigenous people and their cultures exhibit characteristics reminiscent of Nietzsche's vision for humanity, I want to end by bolding asserting that anyone who takes Nietzsche's arguments seriously should also take these perspectives seriously, even if they are incommensurable with Western perspectives. I encourage other philosophers to further explore the discourse on environmentalism within Nietzsche I briefly introduced, consider the arguments I've provided, and provide their own accounts of whether this is a compelling interpretation of Nietzsche. I also encourage all readers to support indigenous peoples in whatever way they can. Our evolution may very well depend on it.

Femininity and the Alien Other in *Under the Skin*

Mia Hardister

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Abstract:

In this paper, I attempt to analyze the 2014 film *Under the Skin* through its formal and generic elements and relate these to philosophical thought regarding objectivity and gender from theorists including Kant, de Beauvoir, and Irigaray, as well as media scholars Barbara Creed and Laura Mulvey. I argue that throughout the course of the film, by its presentation of horror, science-fiction, and film noir elements, as well as its cinematography, structure, sound, and mise-en-scène a commentary on the societal objectification of women is constructed, all stemming from its presentation of the female experience as something which is inherently alien.

I. Introduction

In examining Jonathan Glazer's 2014 film *Under the Skin*, it is perhaps worthwhile to first analyze the title. The phrase implies a few things: for one, a fundamental sameness, despite exterior differences: "enemies who are really brothers under the skin". It also evokes obsession: as Frank Sinatra famously sings, "I've got you under my skin/I've got you deep in the heart of me/So deep in my heart that you're really a part of me." Or, alternatively, it could imply irritation—when something bothers us, we might say it gets under our skin. On a more literal level, it might conjure up anatomical imagery, i.e., what actually lies under the skin, like blood, bones, and muscle, or the words might have a certain erotic connotation, suggesting intimacy. This multiplicity is no accident. The film itself is as ambiguous as its title, and the many concepts conveyed through its images and sounds are reflected and informed by the multiple interpretations of this phrase. Some of the most significant subjects that the film examines include femininity, subjectivity, and humanity, and it primarily uses genre tropes and formal filmic elements to convey these concepts. I will first present a synopsis of the film, then examine the film's use of generic conventions to develop its central ideas, through tropes commonly employed in the horror, science-fiction and film noir genres. Following genre, I will discuss the film's style of shooting, cinematography, sound, time, and mise-en-scène.

II. Synopsis

The film follows a female alien (Scarlett Johansson) who is sent to Earth —specifically Glasgow, Scotland—to seduce and entrap human men, harvesting their bodies for resources. She experiences several routine encounters in which the men she follows oblige to follow her home and are consequently killed. In one instance, on a beach, she attempts to seduce a surfer. He later unsuccessfully tries to save a couple from drowning and the three of them are swept away at sea. The couple's child is abandoned on the beach to die as the alien pursues her next victim (29:19). Eventually, she encounters a disfigured man, who engages in a conversation with her about his mistreatment by society (52:20). Feeling sympathetic to his plight, she flees the city (1:02:54) and attempts to more closely mimic humanity but is ultimately unsuccessful in truly embodying it —for example, trying and failing to consume food (1:08:19). She is taken in by a man who rides the bus with her, but runs away again after a failed sexual encounter (1:26:20). While fleeing, she is pursued by a logger in the woods who sexually assaults her (1:37:09). She tears away her human exterior to reveal an opaque, black body as the man sets her on fire and leaves her to die (1:38:34).

III. Elements of Genre

From examining the events of the film, one of the most explicit themes that start to emerge is that of womanhood and femininity. The director, Jonathan Glazer, has denied any intentions of presenting commentary on the current state of gender dynamics: "I wanted to make it more about a human experience than a gender experience."[30] Nevertheless, it seems especially important that the alien character takes the form of a woman. In my observation of the film, one of the most useful methods of explicating its meaning is by examining its use of genre conventions—in particular, that of the horror film. In her book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis*, author Barbara Creed presents a critique of Freudian and Lacanian theories of sexual difference through the lens of popular horror film conventions regarding women.[31] She argues that the Freudian position, that women are horrifying to men because they are castrated (and therefore the victim) is problematic because it identifies women as natural victims. In contrast to this idea, she describes the construction of the monstrous-feminine through abjection: "That which does not 'respect borders, positions, rules', that which 'disturbs identity, system, order.'"[32] Creed focuses on abjection primarily as the blurring of borders: human and inhuman, male and female, and normal and abnormal sexual desire. She states that the main purpose of the horror film is

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1. Danny Leigh. 2014. "Under the Skin: Why Did This Chilling Masterpiece Take a Decade?" *The Guardian*, March 6, 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/06/under-the-skin-director-jonathan-glazer-scarlett-johansson.

2. Barbara Creed. *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Femininity, and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1993, 10.

3. Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine*, 51.

to "eject the abject" and reinstate these boundaries.[33] *Under the Skin* reflects these concepts distinctly: we see how the line between human and inhuman is distorted as the female alien attempts to "learn" to be human, as well as the line between male and female, as the predatory role she assumes serves as a reversal of typical conceptions of gender dynamics. Additionally, her tactical use of seduction and simultaneous aversion to actual sexual contact could be seen as transgressive of normal sexual desire, thus crossing this boundary as well. The ending of the film resolves these refusals of boundaries as she is sexually assaulted and rejects humanity, returning to her alien state, thus ending her predatory status and reflecting Creed's view that the goal of the horror film is resolution of the abject. Thus, the film's use of the horror convention of the monstrous-feminine allows us to form an understanding of the subjugated role of women in society, as fear is derived from female transgression of societal boundaries, and they must ultimately be drawn again in order to reaffirm masculine hegemony.

I posit that the science-fiction aspect of the film, an alien on Earth learning to interact with humanity, is in and of itself a metaphor for gender dynamics and the subject/object relationship. In Simone de Beauvoir's formative work *The Second Sex*, she develops the concept of the woman as Other: "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being… She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other."[34] For the first half of the film, the protagonist's relationship with humanity is detached— she has little understanding of what it means to be human and views people as objects, as exemplified through the scene where she leaves the baby on the beach to die. When she meets the disfigured man, there is a transformation in her ability to view others subjectively, as she begins to develop a sense of empathy for humanity, and a greater desire to become human herself. In the end, though, she herself becomes the object as she is left to die, drawing a parallel with her previous treatment of the baby. Just as she can only approximate humanity but never fully embody it, the woman as Other that de Beauvoir identifies will never be able to reach absoluteness. Thus, the film's science-fiction generic qualities mirror the theory of gender dynamics identified in *The Second Sex*.

I argue that *Under the Skin* also incorporates conventions of the film noir, which is defined best less as a genre and more as a series of shared elements, seen in this film through the sense of paranoia, the importance of the city, and, most significantly, the character of the femme fatale. The femme fatale is seductive yet malicious, and often serves as the antagonist in film noir, often to the extent of murder. While it could be argued that this trope is empowering, as it upsets

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4. Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine*, 57.

5. Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. France, 1949. p. 1, https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/introduction.htm

the typical power dynamics of women and men, it is also often approached from an objectifying and conservative male perspective, as the femme fatale often serves to contrast the more wholesome wife or girlfriend character of the stereotypical male noir protagonist. As defined by film scholar Jack Boozer: "The frequency and similarity of her incarnations in classic noir films clearly point to a mass market demand to see these demonstrably ambitious and thus dangerous women put back in their domestic 'place.'"[35] The film invokes this trope, as the female alien stalks the city streets in search of men to seduce and trap for her mission. By the ending of the film, she loses touch with what she has been instructed to do and is also harmed by the patriarchal human society she has entered—she is ultimately "put in her place" as is typical of the ending of a film noir. Yet, these moments are framed negatively, in contrast with the typically "happy" film noir conclusion of the femme fatale paying for her power. Therefore, while *Under the Skin* utilizes this concept from film noir, it does so from a critical perspective by subverting certain aspects of the trope. It demonstrates the violence that occurs when women are viewed as object rather than subject, thereby extrapolating the concept established by its portrayal of woman as the alien Other to its logical endpoint. Additionally, it responds to the idea that the traditional power structure between the genders must be maintained by demonstrating.

IV. Elements of Film

 I recognize that the broader formal elements of the film are incorporated into the development of the concept of female alienation. One of the most distinctive aspects of the film is its method of filming. The crew was equipped with hidden cameras and rode around in the back of the van that the protagonist drives around. Scarlett Johansson, the character's actress, would approach random passersby in character, and their initial conversations would be filmed. The crew would then explain the project and the individuals would agree to take part in the film.[36] This means that many of the interactions shown on screen are genuine. This contributes multiple dimensions to the film: first, it blurs another line. As previously discussed, many of the film's ideas can be understood from the way that it plays with boundaries, particularly human and inhuman, as well as male and female. The hidden camera style of filming presents another ambiguity, as it complicates the distinction between the real and the unreal. Secondly, the method of filming is used to place distance between the viewer and what is shown on screen—as Ara Osterweil identifies in her review: "Part of the reason the film so successfully de-familiarizes its world is that the viewer's own gaze is at least triply mediated to see the world simultaneously through alien eyes, the van's windshield, and the lens of the camera."[37] Both aspects are significant because of the way

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6. Jack Boozer. "The Lethal Femme Fatale in the Film Noir Tradition." *Journal of Film and Video* 51, no. 3/4 (Fall 1999): 22

7. Leigh, "Under the Skin."

8. Ara Osterweil. "Under the Skin: The Perils of Becoming Female," *Film Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (June 2014): 45

they enable us to view a familiar world as if we are also an alien, therefore contributing to the overall image of the woman as Other by allowing us to empathize with such a perspective.

The film's cinematography also contributes to its observations on femininity. There is a focus on the body, but in a way that seems reflexive of the established cinematic concept of the male gaze. The cinematic male gaze was first identified by film theorist Laura Mulvey, but its origins can be traced back to Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of "the look", as defined in *Being and Nothingness* with his example of looking through the keyhole of a door, then realizing you are being watched: "But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me. What does this mean? It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure - modifications which I can apprehend and fix conceptually by means of the reflective cogito."[38] The acknowledgement that one is being looked at forces an individual to view themselves from the perspective of the person looking, which creates an inherent difference in power. Mulvey extrapolates this concept, as well as the Freudian notion of scopophilia, or visual pleasure, to film. She describes how in a cinematic context, pleasure is derived from looking, specifically with the position of the male as seeing and the female as being seen.[39] "The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong erotic and visual impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness.*"[40] In films, we primarily see this conveyed through the way the camera chooses to represent female characters. Oftentimes, women on screen will be shown in a way that calls attention to their physical appearance for example, with a slow pan that highlights various features of their bodies, or close ups of body parts will be shown disembodied from their person, making them into objects of male desire.

In *Under the Skin*, we see this concept subverted in a few ways. Firstly, I argue that through her position of power and the framing of the camera, the protagonist takes up a female gaze, scrutinizing and deriving pleasure from the viewing of men's bodies. On a few occasions in the film, we see the same technique of the slow pan that is commonly used to accentuate the female figure, instead following her gaze as she sizes up her male victims. Secondly, the scenes of seduction and nudity themselves are shot neutrally. The film relies somewhat on preexisting knowledge of the actress Scarlett Johansson as a Hollywood sex symbol, which creates certain expectations for how she will be shot, only for her nude scenes to be mostly devoid of eroticism. By reversing the male gaze in this way, the film calls attention to the way that the female body is typically framed in cinema, and how the audience is normally permitted to reduce female characters to

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9. Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1946: 260

10. Mulvey, Laura. *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. Indiana University Press, 1989: 61

11. Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure*, 62

mere objects. Additionally, this subversion of gendered expectations in cinema harkens back to Barbara Creed's position that the "monstrous-feminine" is derived primarily from abjection, particularly transcending the boundaries between male and female.[41] The fact that the female alien in the film possesses a predatory gaze that would traditionally be associated with men is part of what causes her to become horrifying, and one of the elements of abjection that is ultimately resolved by the film's conclusion, demonstrating societal lack of tolerance for women breaking from their designated gender roles. This reaffirms the idea of the woman as Other, as femininity is so inherently disparate from masculinity that to subvert their traditional conceptions is to embody terror.

I contend that a notable formal element in the film which echoes its overall message on the alienating nature of womanhood is sound. Dialogue is incredibly sparse, and the screenplay only totals about fourteen pages. In the second half of the film, the protagonist only utters around three words. Apart from her, all characters speak with a Glaswegian dialect, so although the film is entirely in English, the few sentences that are included become difficult to understand unless the viewer is a native of the region. The effect of this is similar to that of the distancing effects of the method of shooting, creating a sense of alienation from what would otherwise be a familiar environment. The score is another essential element, providing much of the film's sense of atmosphere with its low, electronic hums and repetitive, haunting violin motif. Jonathan Glazer mentioned that the original intention was for there to be no score at all, and that the protagonist was to be exposed to music for the first time while riding the bus. Although this concept was not utilized in the film's final cut, Osterweil observes that as the noise of the city ceases and we hear more natural sounds, this creates an interesting dynamic with the artificial sounds of the score, evoking the internal conflict and attempted development toward humanity that the protagonist experiences.[42] Therefore, both the sparse dialogue and the mix of diegetic and nondiegetic sound become important aspects of constructing the film's observations on subjectivity and humanity. As stated, the film's portrayal of the protagonist's alien status and attempts to approximate humanity can be interpreted as a metaphor for gender dynamics as viewed through the lens of the woman as Other, and thus, the way that the film's soundscape contributes to the distinction between the human and the inhuman reflects its messages regarding the objectified status of women.

Time is a significant element of my argument, as its structure, at least for the first half, feels incredibly repetitive. The protagonist drives around until she finds a victim, asks them where they are going and offers them a ride. They accept, she lures them into her room and undresses, they follow her and are absorbed into the surface below them. The rhythmic

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12. Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine*, 51.

13. Osterweil, "Under the Skin", 46

nature of these sequences serves as a comment on the routine nature of life but is also reminiscent of Chantal Akerman's 1975 film *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 bruxelles*, which has been identified as "the first masterpiece of the feminine in the history of cinema."[43] This film follows a mother as she completes her daily chores and sex work over the course of three days. With a runtime of nearly three and a half hours, painstaking attention is paid to the execution of each action and how her routine is constructed. In both *Under the Skin* and *Jeanne Dielman*, the repetitive structuring conveys the inherently objectifying nature of participation in such rote and mechanical work. In order to analyze this idea of work which is inherently dehumanizing, we can examine the words of Immanuel Kant, while also expanding upon them through a feminist lens, in a similar manner as Luce Irigaray, whose philosophy will be further explored later. In the Kantian view, the ability to view another person as a tool is detrimental to the subjectivity of humanity. Kant therefore identifies the "supreme principle of morality" as such: "So act that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means."[44] While this concept itself is not inherently gendered, it is significant that the work being done in both films is dependent on the female status of the characters- seduction and domestic chores. The fact that it is women's work specifically is significant, as objectification based on gender is what primarily allows them to be reduced to mere tools, which then additionally recalls the concept of the female figure as the alien other, unable to be viewed by a societal whole as a subject unto themselves. Consequently, the film's use of time and repetition provides an observation on the devaluation of women and the work they engage in.

The film's underlying meaning about the inherent alienation of femininity is derived through the film's mise-en-scène, a film term that refers to everything visible in a shot, including acting, costuming, and set design. In her essay on the film, Elena Gorfinkel relates the film's use of reflective surfaces as a visual metaphor that connects to Luce Irigaray's book *Speculum of the Other Woman.*[45] The book engages in a critique of the nature of Western philosophy and psychoanalysis, which she posits does not allow for a specifically female subject because it has been formed primarily through a male lens.[46] Irigaray uses a mimetic writing style to respond to and expand upon the exclusively male perspective of various philosophers, and examine how their gender informs their systems of belief. The title is derived from her use of the metaphor of the speculum to examine Freud's view that woman is complementary to man, therefore mirroring him:

"Thus the "object" is not as massive, as resistant, as one might wish to believe. And her possession by a "subject," a subject's desire to appropriate her, is yet another of his vertiginous failures. For where he projects a something to absorb, to

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14. Lieve Spaas, *Francophone Film: A Struggle for Identity* (Manchester University Press, 2000)

15. Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (1795): 421.

16. Elena Gorfinkel. "Sex, Sensation, and Nonhuman Interiority in *Under the Skin*," *Jump Cut* 57 (Fall 2016): 2.

17. Luce Irigaray. *Speculum of the Other Woman*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

take, to see, to possess … as well as a patch of ground to stand upon, a mirror to catch his reflection, he is already faced by another specularization."[47]

Gorfinkel draws parallels between Irigaray's ideas and the presence of mirrors and reflective surfaces in *Under the Skin*, ranging from the scene near the beginning of the film where the protagonist looks into a compact mirror to apply her lipstick, to the reflective black surface that engulfs her victims, arguing that this is indicative of the lack of perception of the woman as a subject, as she is seen as a mere reflection. Her essay also argues that the structure of the film itself becomes a part of this concept of the speculum, as it is divided almost perfectly into two halves which invert each other: the protagonist as the predator and the protagonist as the prey. The use of mise-en-scene in conjunction with the dual structure of the film contribute significantly to its observations on the nature of gender dynamics, specifically that women are alienated from and objectified by the male figure, who view them not as whole beings, but as mere distortions of themselves.

V. Conclusion

Under the Skin refuses to conform to the typical conventions of Hollywood cinema, which in turn leaves much of its meaning up to interpretation. Despite the fact that the director did not intend for the film to comment specifically on the experiences of women, the way the film responds to genre conventions allows us to view the violent and inescapable nature of misogyny through a new perspective, as additionally seen through its formal elements.[48] This creates an interpretation of the film that characterizes it as a comment on the subjugation of women. Although the film is presented in a deliberately alienating way, and with a detached protagonist, its message is universal. For these reasons, the commentary that the film presents becomes valuable to us as an audience as we reflect on what it means to navigate society as a woman. By linking the science-fiction alien to the experience of womanhood, the film puts forward a distinct notion: that they are inherently the same.

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18. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 134.

19. Leigh, "Under the Skin."

Cartesianism, Feminism, Coloniality: Rethinking Gender Formation from Astell to Lugones

Luisa Laguisma

<p style="text-align:center">❧</p>

This essay will examine both Mary Astell's proposal for women's education as a protofeminist project and Descartes' meditations on rationalism and the mind-body duality to understand how Astell's project functions as liberatory in her immanent approach to the Cartesian method. I argue that while Astell uses Descartes' rationalist philosophy to justify the rational capacities of women, Descartes' philosophy may in principle be used to justify the further subjugation of women and colonized peoples through the separation of mind and body. In addition, I will employ Maria Lugones' "Coloniality of Gender" to further evaluate the historicity of the claims made by Astell and her use of Descartes. Through Lugones, I contend that the gender dichotomy, a colonial imposition, is essentialized by Astell through the logic of modernity. I, thereby, show the necessity of a decolonial analysis for undoing the presuppositions of a colonial logic with the purpose of abolishing the gender binaries imposed by coloniality.

Astell begins with perception to carry out her understanding of mind-body functionality. Her connection to Descartes's method shows a belief which assumes gender to be congenital yet must be reformed through education and reason. Through thought and regulation of will, Astell justifies a position of gender presentation based on experience and our intellections of those experiences. For Astell, ideas are what we know and our immediate perceptions. What we know is not to be mistaken for what we know to be true or false, but rather they are matters that we have knowledge of. Both Astell and Descartes agree that ideas exist independent of their truth or falsehood. Astell claims, "[I]f by false we mean that which has no existence; our ideas certainly exists, though there be not anything in nature correspondent to it."[49] What counts as false, rather, is our judgment of such ideas. What appears to us and the ideas that follow cannot be false insofar as the idea already and certainly exists. The faculty of ideas is our raw understanding as we receive them. Since our own perceptions can deceive us, we must train our faculties of reason so that we may understand their validity. This is not to minimize and underestimate the merit of ideas, but to view ideas as a point of departure to arrive at knowledge.

Descartes makes a similar account in Meditations, suggesting that "[W]e need not fear that there is falsity in the

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1. Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest,* King's Head (1697), 111.

will itself or in the affects, for although I can choose evil things or even things that are utterly nonexistent, I cannot conclude from this that it is untrue that I do choose these things."[50] Descartes' mind-body distinction is revealed in his theory of ideas and falsity. Our perceptions are not exactly concerned with truth, but instead with experience. Say that from afar we think we see someone, only to come up to them and find that who we think we saw is merely a shadow cast from a tree. It is not untrue that we had an idea of seeing someone, but rather our judgement and reality of it that follows from the idea. The idea of seeing someone is not false because the experience itself cannot be denied. As an idea, the concern is not with the truth of the idea but with the representations of our reality. Ideas exist in our minds according to things we know outside of us. So the idea of seeing someone is true as we know people to exist. For both Descartes' and Astell, our understanding succeeds ideas because of the body's limitations. Immediate understanding may remain confused regarding experience; however, in their view, intellectualization helps to overcome the limitations of this confusion—Astell understands this as a correction.

Astell's adaptation of ideas takes influence from Descartes' meditation three, where he suggests similarly that, "[M]oreover, I do know from experience that these ideas do not depend upon my will, nor consequently upon myself, for I often notice them even against my will."[51] Descartes points out as well that our ideas occur against and do not depend upon our will. As thinking things, we cannot control our thoughts and perceptions as we receive them. We can think and believe that we saw a person from afar whether or not we choose to see them. While these ideas are in us, they are distinct from our will because the will negotiates with the thought. If we were to assume the opposite, namely that thought negotiates will, then we deny our own ability for intellection. Through the mind-body distinction there is a difference in our perception and the direction of our will because our bodies cannot intelligibly understand its experience.

In Astell's method, correcting our ideas requires learning to regulate the will. Astell argues the will to be "whose office it is to determine the understanding to such and such ideas, and to stay it in the consideration of them so long as is necessary to the discovery of truth." Astell accepts that the faculty of ideas and understanding is passive. Therefore, the faculty of the will is the faculty that makes determinations. By "regulating" the will, Astell reasons that we must train the direction of our thoughts in order to make judgments that conform to the truth: "[W]e can neither observe the errors of our intellect, nor the irregularity of our morals whilst we are darkened by fumes, agitated with unruly passions, or carried away eager desires after sensible things and vanities." For Astell, our reasoning is derived from our ability to discern and negotiate several judgments. We can remedy the confusions of our perceptions through the will because we cannot

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2. René Descartes, "Meditations" from *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources* edited by Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company (2019).

3. René Descartes, "Meditations" from *Modern Philosophy* edited by Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins, 48.

depend on the body to give testament to the truth. That is, through the regulation of the will, we can better understand our ideas and conform them to reason and virtue. As much as our ideas come from impulsive experiences, our judgements can arise as impulsive reactions to such experiences—the unregulated will thereby blurring our vision of truth. Reason, for Astell, holds moral significance because without it we succumb to our will's unregulated desires and emotions.

If, according to Descartes, reason is a universal human capacity not exclusive to only the few, then indeed this would extend to women as well. Astell argues in acceptance of this claim that, "[G]od does nothing in vain, he gives no power or faculty which he has not allotted to some proportionate use, if therefore he has given to mankind a rational mind, every individual understanding ought to be employed in somewhat worthy of it."[52] Astell surveys Descartes' argument as an emancipatory principle for women to be educated. God does not allot certain rational capabilities to only a few individuals or groups, but to the whole of humanity. This would suggest that women be included as people with the universal capacity to reason and therefore worthy of exercising that faculty through education so that they may be useful to society. As long as a woman is a thinking thing, she is also a judging thing, so such judgments should be refined through education. Astell contends that as women continued to be withheld from formal education, they were not taught how to regulate their will; thereby having to rely on their passions to form their intellect. Through education and knowledge acquisition, one can exercise their reason for moral and metaphysical purposes by control of the passions. Astell argues for the inclusion of women in education so that women may engage in a discourse of comparing ideas that will make judgments clearer thereby empowering them socially. She is not simply claiming that reason is conducive to being educated, but rather that the faculty comes into practice *through* education and that education will lead to women conforming their knowledge to will themselves towards what is considered good.

The proposal that Astell posits is not just education for women, but education that is specific to women. Astell also expresses fear of reproducing such knowledge, "We should not be deceived by the report of our senses; the prejudices of education; our own private interest, and
readiness to receive the opinions whether true or false of those we love."[53] As much as our perceptions can deceive us, we can also deceive ourselves through our own reasoning, hence, the necessity of regulating the will. Astell suggests that the purpose of her project is to educate women to discover their own rationale so as to overcome the reliance on passions. While such a project was meant to turn women around from corruption per education specialized for women through modern rationalism, the challenge is in how women's education will not contribute to their own corruption. Not only does she propose the inclusion of women in education, but a separatist approach of education for women. This indicates Astell's attitude on the difference in forms of thinking between genders, i.e., whether women have separate rational

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4. Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, 115.

5. Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, 111.

complexities from men based on a gender essentialism. This form of bourgeois feminism that Astell uses for her proposal thus takes the gender divide as its premise and accepts an ingruous binary gender essentialism.

Astell justifies the purpose of women-only education, "[F]or indeed it concerns us most to know such truths as these, it is not material to us what other people's opinions are, any farther than as the knowledge of their sentiments may correct our mistakes."[54] Astell regards truth as neither agreeable nor disagreeable; rather, matters of truth exist outside of our opinions to the extent that our will and faculties can come to the same conclusions. She acknowledges the prejudices in education, perhaps the very prejudices that were used to justify poorly educating women. An education that is separate for women would act, for Astell, as a way for women to be in a space where they are not faced with dogmatic ideas that hinder their ability to reason but where women are allowed to be curious and produce knowledge of their own distinction. Since women were kept out of activities of reasoning in education, they were never given the capacity to correct their mistakes and critically apply the use of reason.

Astell annexes Cartesian Rationalism as a source for emancipation. In this regard, raising the consciousness of women would mean appealing to them through their gender. Astell argues, "[W]e are conscious of our own liberty, whoever denies it, denies that he is capable of rewards and punishments, degrades his nature and makes himself a more curious piece of mechanism."[55] For Astell, we are conscious of our liberty because of the union between our mind and body. Perhaps, for Astell, we come into this world as free beings, but we deny ourselves liberty when we become passive to our bodies and limitations. Through rationalism, we can make our liberty realized. Considering the argument Descartes poses—i.e. that the mind's mental capacities are not physical—our judgments would operate independently of the physicality of the body, externalizing sex and gender. Despite arguing against the logic of women's incapacity to reason, (i.e appropriating Descartes' principle of universal reasoning to correct it) Astell argues that women's capacity for reason exists independently of their gender if she fully accepts Descartes' separation of mind and body.

In addition, I am suspicious of whether or not Astell viewed women's reasoning as equal or diverse from that of men. This is not a claim of Astell positing natural inferiority to either gender, but rather questions if she believed in thought informed by and conforming to a binary of masculine and feminine. If we consider the claim of gender being a social construct while simultaneously viewing the mind as separable from the body, this challenges the notion of the social conditions the body experiences and how it is reacted to by the mind. Since Astell proposes to have a separate school for women, it is possible she believed in a feminine rationale

that varied from men. While the mind is aware of its gender and the body is not, we consider the view that there are

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6. Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, 113.

7. Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, 101.

social and cultural influences that inform how we view and think about our bodies and selves. Gender is not innate in the body nor its biological functions but created and named with words we used to rationalize it. If the body experiences and the mind seeks to understand those experiences, such understandings may be socially and culturally conditioned towards a standard norm informed by modern rationalism.

A will that directs gender-specific thought would mean that Descartes' overlooks how the mind is never fully separated from the body. If gender has historically been associated with the body, but exists in the mind, this union shows how one can never be fully alienated from the body as Descartes suspects. Astell argues, "[I]f all Men are born free, how is it that all Women are born slaves? As they must be if the being subjected to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown Arbitrary Will of Men, be the perfect condition of slavery?"[56] Considering Astell's own critique of marriage, she must have understood how the woman herself is reduced to the body. Astell claims women's condition to be that of slavery, meaning that she lacks agency as she is reduced to the body, whereas men are seen as the embodiment of the mind and rational beings. This must be why—for Astell—Cartesian rationality is important to her project of women's emancipation: because *liberating the woman's mind would amount to liberating the body as well*.

Regarding marriage, Astell saw mental liberation from it as a physical liberation. Whereas Descartes' saw the body as a cage of the mind, Astell reasons through her proposal that the mind can cage the body as well through unregulation of the will. Descartes' poses that in order to control the manipulations of the body, one must aim to be fully independent of its influence through a utilization of the mind. Promoting an alienation for the body, women are called to disdain the body in response to being reduced to it. The problem here lies in that if women are asked to separate themselves from their bodies, they will never be fully conscious of how their bodies are dominated by the minds of men. Though she appropriates Descartes' method, she divests from fully carrying out his belief of full transcendence from the body. Through her method of regulating the will, she calls on women to transcend stereotypical notions and challenges them to rationalize themselves towards emancipation. Astell speculates on the gender binary of her time and raises consciousness of how its formation informs rational capacities.

As a flaw limited to the conditions of her time, wherein gender and sex were synonymous, Astell acts upon and in rejection of the meanings of gender. Her proposal to open up women's education while simultaneously exposing the inequalities of marriage signifies her belief of gender being an essential and legitimate category in society. Astell uncritically accepts Descartes' dualist rationality as justification for Women's place in society while having no material analysis, thus constituting her bourgeois feminist proposal. Despite her concern for women's emancipation, Astell nonetheless remains wedded to and, uncritically perpetuates, a gender binary peculiar to a European social framework.

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8. Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, 76.

Thus, her formidable critique finds its limitation in the epistemological presuppositions of the society in which she is involved, namely, a society predicated on Western Rationalism wherein gender formations remain essentialized.

In order to understand the complexity of gender, we need to turn towards an analysis that also stands outside of Europe. Accordingly, we will examine how the colonial project itself conditioned this binary form of gender. Thus, I turn to Maria Lugones' "Coloniality of Gender," where I will demonstrate how Astell's perpetuation of the gender binary arises from her uncritical acceptance of a Western Rationalism that justifies and essentializes gender formations. Maria Lugones uses the framework of Anibal Quijano's "Coloniality of Power" to establish gender formation as a colonial arrangement. Lugones broadens Quijano's scope of the coloniality of power by linking it to gender formation. Furthermore, not only does Lugones closely articulate the coloniality of gender, she also identifies the formation itself as a necessary concept of inquiry for understanding the West's efforts for social order and hegemony. Lugones refers to coloniality as "an encompassing phenomenon, since it is one of the axes of systems of power and as such it permeates all control of sexual access, collective authority, labor, subjectivity/intersubjectivity and the production of knowledge from within these intersubjective relations."[57] Colonialism formed identities that were framed around European terms and rationale. As such, these value-laden definitions and statuses, in terms of modernity, lead to the naturalization of labor through hierarchical relationships as both racial and gendered. The Eurocentric model of power throughout colonialism gave rise to social and geocultural labels such as "East" and "West,""European" and "African," and "Man" and "Woman:" the intention being the reproduction of knowledge under the control of Eurocentric hegemony, thereby making such knowledge seem organic under the guise of this control. By situating the West as a point of departure, the formations of gender and race act as a point of reference and establishment of power relations mediated by needs of empire building.

Prior to colonization, a rigid gender binary was not enforced nor was it a requisite for a society's relations. One can identify the fluidity of gender relations prior to colonization by examining Non-Western societies. Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí writes in *The Invention of Women* that gender has "become important in Yoruba studies not as an artifact of Yoruba life but because Yoruba life, past and present, has been translated into English to fit the Western Pattern of body-reasoning."[58] Fundamentally, the application of gender in the Yoruba society was a measure externally imposed via Eurocentric translations of the body. Indeed, Oyěwùmí criticizes this same system of knowing that Astell fashions her proposals against but is unable to comprehend in its severity and complexity; the limit of Astell's critique is found in her inability to recognize the colonial dimension of this system of knowing. What specifically differentiates both

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9. María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): http://www.jstor.org/stable/4640051, 191.

10. Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1997): 30.

Oyěwùmí and Lugones from Astell is their regard of gender as mythically constructed—along with race—while Astell assumes the notion of "womanhood" to be a universal experience. Instead of understanding gender as a social category, Astell presupposes its essentiality and views patriarchal society as exploiting the nature of womanhood whereas, for colonized people, its exploitative dimensions begin with the genesis of a European construct of gender itself. Modernity's imposition of dualisms—"Mind and body," "Man and Woman," and "Superior and Inferior"—thus act in service as a pervasive attempt to homogenize the world and cognitively subjugate those gendered and racialized.

Lugones brings in Paula Gunn Allen to explain the rigid binary that is imposed through colonial language. Native American tribes recognized multiple genders and homosexuality; gender was not a system for subordination, but of egalitarianism. Gynecratic egalitarianism, a familiar practice amongst Native American tribes, valued a woman's spiritual and governing role. Lugones addresses the immaterial nature of gender by noting that, "[A]llen emphasizes the centrality of the spiritual in all aspects of Indian life and thus a very different intersubjectivity from within which knowledge is produced than that of the coloniality of knowledge in modernity."[59] Organization of gender roles were recognized but not strictly regarded into an aggressive binary unlike Eurocentric gender systems. Gender took on more fluid positioning, much like the Hijras of South Asia or the Babaylan of the Philippines, in that gender was dreamt or recognized in ritual and thereafter practiced in society. Here we can see that the genesis of gender in these societies arose through practice and not through the mind. Rather than the emancipation of women as a result of thought alone, here we can ground it in practice, making it much more liberatory through the recognition of agency. Through the coloniality of gender, the imposition of the gender binary sought to solidify meaning of patriarchal gender roles as a valid rationality for global domination. Native American females, through coloniality, were linked to inferiority and thus transformed the tribal way of life to hierarchy that put "man" at the top. As it stands, the violence of this colonial imposition is enforced through western philosophical logic and deemed universal; the very imposition of a colonial logic curtails indigenous ways of knowing and being.

The Eurocentric locating of gender within biological anatomy contradicts these practices of organization. This is most likely what Lugones' means when suggesting that "'gender' is antecedent to the 'biological traits' and gives them meaning." In other words, Lugones argues that gender was used to legitimize the definition of biological traits, naturalizing biological differences through the idea that gender was itself tied to it. Lugones demonstrates how the colonial invaders ushered in patriarchy that put a supreme male entity at the center, forcing colonized people into a dichotomy of man and woman, while simultaneously negating them of status. This demonization was fueled by Western Civilization that branded (white) manhood as supreme in both body and mind, consequently reducing colonial subjects,

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11. Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System," 198.

on the basis of race and gender, to animality, as Lugones notes.

For racialized and gendered colonial subjects, Oyěwùmí argues, "[F]or females, colonization was a twofold process of racial inferiorization and gender subordination. The creation of 'women' as a category was one of the first accomplishments of the colonial state."[60] While we have already identified the binary of man and woman in globalized Eurocentric terms, it is both imposed as universal and made exclusive through its normative notions. The coloniality of gender constituted white men and women as normative. Through Cartesian duality, as previously mentioned, man was associated as supreme embodiment of the mind with women being associated with the body. If normative notions of man and women were in relation to white gendered beings, the experience of non-white, racialized people were excluded from knowledge as such, and excluded as beings—even more so for racialized women.

Accordingly, the work of Oyěwùmí, Allen, and Lugones make the inseparability of women of color and gender explicit. It is important to point out the explicitness in the very naming of racialized women under the umbrella of "woman of color"; a term which seeks recognition for such women while also reaffirming its existence outside of the mythical construction of women. Thus, one could argue it as an echo of the colonial legacy. Nevertheless, the inseparability is understood in terms of intersectionality. Lugones argues:

> "Intersectionality reveals what is not seen when categories such as gender and race are conceptualized as separate from each other. The move to intersect categories have been motivated by the difficulties in making visible those who are dominated and victimized in terms of both categories. Though everyone in capitalist Eurocentered modernity is both raced and gendered, not everyone is dominated or victimized in terms of their race and gender."[61]

In terms of the mythical constructions of race and gender, one did not predominate the other for racialized and gendered people. Especially in women of color, there was no racialization before gendering nor the opposite. Rather, it is in the combination between the two fictions that constituted deep inferiority under colonial force; the overlapping of labels which separate women of color from women. For Lugones, the framework of intersectionality guides the understanding of the coloniality of gender. The treatment of race and gender in relation to European/whites and colonized/nonwhite peoples informs the power relations in conflict. I argue that the dissection of these intersectional categories, once studied distinctly and closely, will show how the combination of distinctions form an identity that is distinct but on the basis of colonial fictions. At the same time, the cultivation of this identity is challenged by recognizing oneself unaccompanied by epistemic attachments. Simply put, how such an identity will come into being within the colonial structure and actively

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12. Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women,* 30.

13. María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism." *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 192.

against the conditions that manifest through it.

The colonized woman's experience is very much distinct in experience from that of white, bourgeois women, but it is in the generalization of the status of women to signify "white women" where the cognitive problem of coloniality also resides. Where the term woman denotes white bourgeois woman, and man to white bourgeois men, the exclusion of colonized peoples forces them to identify with labels done to them in efforts for recognition. We have identified terms of race and gender to be colonial impositions, though I am hesitant to characterize the term woman of color as problematic. The term is correct in its frequent use of distinguishing the status of racialized women; in contrast, "white women" is often used in a dialogue that discloses the experience of victimization based on the intersection of race and gender. However, I claim that it remains accommodating to colonial language and reiterates its existence. In the same fashion, Astell's uncritical reiterance of gender essentialism also proves how maintaining such logic implies the problem without actually overcoming it.

Pre-colonial notions of gender thus challenge Astell's use of Descartes and proposals for women's liberation. Astell presupposes women to be universal and essentially characterized through the white European bourgeois experience. By engaging with simple reformations of the colonial system, she risks legitimizing and reproducing its power. Lugones claims of the white bourgeois womanhood that "[T]hey understood women as inhabiting white bodies but did not bring that racial qualification to articulation or clear awareness."[62] Astell held privilege through claiming womanhood without having to consider its racial implications. The relationship of Astell to the coloniality of power and gender is such that her and the women she advocated for were bound to the heterosexual system that excluded them from the production of knowledge and means of production. White bourgeois women nonetheless were administered to reproduce the race that would expand global domination. Astell understood the relations of power between man and woman through marriage in so far as it established a man's patriarchal dominion over a woman. Yet her acceptance of Descartes mind-body duality is a reflexive response. Whereas mind-body duality asks to separate the mind from the body and hold authority over the body, for both the colonized person and the woman—whom she posits as slaves to marriage —the subjugated person cannot overrule the body if the person is not even an owner and barely an agent of its own body. In addition, the Cartesian argument of universal rational capacities that Astell uses to justify education for women loses its meaning when we consider the inferiorization of colonial subjects to subhumans and animals.

Through the work of Maria Lugones, the understanding of gender as it appears to be fixed is complicated through her raising of gender's historicity within colonial power. The work herein lies in how to decolonize gender in the interim and to examine the ways in which the coloniality of gender is serving its purpose in the present. The process of

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14. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 203.

decolonizing gender questions the points in which gender is a compulsory experience or a subjective, resonated identity. I am particularly interested in the application of decoloniality in relation to gender and how to confront the violent imposition of a Eurocentric conception of gender. Moreover, I am interested in the confrontation of gender without seeking recognition based on colonial terms and without fetishization of the past. We see the decolonization of gender in the movement to actively resist the colonial language and frameworks for gender. It is not about diversifying such colonially rooted impositions but working to destabilize it as a norm and point of reference. Doing so would, as a result, demobilize the systems that rely on its contradictions to exist. As suggested by Lugones, "[T]hus, it is not an affair of the past. It is a matter of the geopolitics of knowledge."[63] Lugones elucidates how colonial language is used as a way to undermine non-Western approaches. This undertaking consequently constitutes the struggle for power and recognition. Through the notion of coloniality, present conditions of colonialism are reproduced ideologically and structurally. This knowledge seeks to establish globalized standards while concurrently establishing differences against that standard.

I am also wary of the ways in which decolonizing gender is going to confront gender altogether. How will it necessitate gender to the degree that gender is made obsolete or revised? To turn to making gender an obsolete category, especially without proper analysis of the intersections between race and gender, may render those who identify with genders outside of and beyond the eurocentric binary invisible. It risks misrecognizing the work of trans, third gender, and two spirit people. On the other hand, efforts to revise its meaning, without taking into account the coloniality of gender, may flatten its own efforts and risk essentializing once again. This essentializing harkens back to bourgeois proposals such as Astell's that assumes an exceedingly broad perspective. The work of decolonial feminism seeks to understand its spectrum—across various cultures and practices—so that difference can be meaningfully and affirmatively recognized.

While I have identified decolonial feminism as understanding the spectrum and context through which various gender practices emerge in cultures, future work must be in dismantling the deficiencies that create gender-based oppression in the first place. Simply moving to ideological recognition does not dismantle the base at which gendered oppression operates, and only invites new strategies of exploitation and makes us participants. Along with the mere recognition of various gender identities, I find that this strategy may suppress the ways race, class, and power affect how gender is perceived. The goal of dismantling the gender dichotomy then is for people to not be reduced to gender in many aspects—meaning gender untied to labor and a system that depends on the significance of gender in order to operate. To not be limited to the gender binary in everyday life of expression and relation allows for the gender binary to lose significance as the point of reference. The aim is not to work *with* the rigid gender binary or go against the binary for

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15. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 742-59.

the sake of going against it but rather to build a new system based on openness and agency over necessity.

Cancel Culture: An Unproductive Form of Blame

Boochie Post

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In this paper I argue that Miranda Fricker's account of blame in "What's the Point of Blame? A Paradigm Based Explanation" can assist in explaining why cancel culture is ultimately unproductive. In particular, the phenomenon of cancel culture possesses pathological forms of blame. There are three specific pathologies outlined by Fricker that can be observed in cancel culture. They are as follows: cancel culture does not leave room for people to learn from their mistakes, it does not express its blame in the proper ethical register, and cancel culture allows for blame to fester and spread. In the first half of my paper, I will lay out the distinct aspects of Fricker's paper that relate to cancel culture and a definition of the term cancel culture. In the second half, I will explore the real-life cancelation of actor Lea Michele so as to validate the presence of cancel culture in our society today. Furthermore, I will expand on three of Fricker's pathologies that are present in cancel culture and refute a counter argument people may pose who are supportive of cancel culture.

In Miranda Fricker's paper, Fricker vindicates the practice of blame. She is cognizant of the diverse utilization of blame and believes that there is a prototypical form – 'Communicative Blame' – from which all other forms branch out. To begin our discussion of cancel culture, we must first understand where the phenomenon stems from. Understanding cancel culture's deviation from productive forms of blame helps us recognize cancel culture's fruitlessness in real-life situations, such as the cancelation of Lea Michele. Fricker calls for a paradigm-based approach to blame. The practice is "significantly disunified," which means that certain features of it may not be visible in all instances.[64] Communicative Blame is the form of blame where all other cases derive from. There are three different kinds of blame; the first: "first person reflexive mode ('I blame myself for the failure of the marriage')," the second: "second person interactions ('it's not okay to make fun of me/him/them/others like that')," and the third: "third person cases ('I blame the doctor/the parents/the school/the government for what happened')."[65] Communicative Blame is a "basic second personal interaction of X blaming Y for an action, motive, or attitude (or lack thereof)..."[66] So why is Communicative Blame so productive? Largely, it is due to the two kinds of speech acts involved. Fricker describes them as illocutionary and perlocutionary

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1. Miranda Fricker, "What's the point of blame? A paradigm based explanation." *Noûs* 50.1(2016): 166.

2. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 173.

3. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 167.

speech acts. The distinctive property of illocutionary speech acts is that they require the full attention of the hearer in order to succeed. In Communicative Blame, the illocutionary point is to encourage an "admixture of judgement and...remorse" so that the wrongdoer can acknowledge the moral significance of their action and feel sorry.[67] The perlocutionary speech act is the second step in the process of Communicative Blame. Once an apology is uttered, the perlocutionary act comes into play, and the wrongdoer is spurred to change their behavior for the better. The combination of these speech acts results in more moral understanding and unity, "along with a candidly disciplinary hope."[68] If blame does not exhibit a sequence of both speech acts followed by moral alignment, Fricker believes it is not functioning properly. Blame which fails to include both speech acts has the possibility of further distancing the blaming and blamed party rather than aligning their moral understanding. This misuse of blame does not have a desire to unify both parties, nor does it conclude with a sense of hope.

Cancel culture is an example of blame not operating in a productive manner. In cancel culture, there are no universal principles that people utilize to make appropriate accusations. Individuals make judgements carelessly, insofar as those judgements do not fit under a set of conditions identified by Fricker. There are six conditions where blame is appropriate. Some of these conditions were misused in Lea Michele's cancellation, which we will explore later in the paper. For now, I will describe an unfolding of events among two friends in order to discern all six conditions of appropriate blame. Imagine that a man, John, has failed to take care of the pet fish of his friend, Max. Max went out of town for the weekend and had asked John to watch over his fish. In this instance, John felt too lazy to check on Max's fish, and figured the fish was low maintenance enough that he did not have to take care of it. When Max got back, his fish had flopped onto the floor and died. The first condition Fricker asserts is, "the blamed party must be blameworthy."[69] Max believes John is blameworthy because he did not have a legitimate excuse to not take care of the fish. The second condition is, "blame must...be proportionate to the wrongdoing for it is the degree of wrongdoing that justifies the degree of blame."[70] Max feels justified in his blaming because it was John's lack of effort to check on the fish that resulted in the fish dying. Fricker claims the third condition is, "blame should be appropriately contained in its proper remit, both temporally and in terms of the relationship(s) it affects."[71] Max did not hesitate to blame John because John was the only person he had asked to take care of the fish. The fourth condition is, "blame must be expressed in the proper ethical

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4. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 173.

5. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 174.

6. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 168.

7. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 168.

8. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

register."[72] Max knows that John did not maliciously kill his fish out of spite, but still holds him responsible for its death. The fifth condition is, "blame must be properly geared to people's entitlement to take some risks in learning how to do things for themselves and make their own mistakes."[73] After being confronted by Max, John now knows the importance of pet sitting, and that he made a mistake by being lazy and assuming that fish are low maintenance. The sixth and final condition is, "blame is inappropriate when it is applied in cases that exhibit a certain kind of 'incident' or outcome moral luck."[74] In this example, there is a combination of an incident and genuine fault. It was bad luck that the fish flopped out of its tank, but it could have been saved if John had decided to be there.

Fricker's six conditions establish a framework that, when abided by, reduces the possibility of inappropriate blame. Cancellation, practiced by cancel culture, disregards this framework and thus can been seen as a consequential action of haphazard blaming. Cancel culture as defined in this paper draws from Adrienne Maree Brown's definition from her book, *We Will Not Cancel Us.* Cancel culture is the phenomenon of labelling people and organizations as bad or disposable and subject to one punishment: "a call out, often for some form of instant cancelation."[75] This definition of cancel culture is most commonly practiced on the internet, specifically on social media platforms like Twitter. Its goal is to ostracize the blamed party from ever being involved in any more moral discussions on account of the blamed being accused of immoral behavior. Often the practice utilizes social media platforms in order to reach a large audience and gain quick and momentous support. Social media tends to pressure users to agree with the masses because individuals who receive more likes are often viewed as being correct in their opinions. As a consequence, those with the most 'likes' become popular, and people on social media desire to associate themselves with those likeable individuals. Therefore, the more 'likes' there are for canceling a celebrity, the easier it is for instant cancelation to occur. Additionally, cancel culture adopts terms that are easily recognizable by the majority of society in order to further garner encouragement for instant cancelation. Terms such as racist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynist, and ableist are all used as concise descriptions of immoral behavior of celebrities. Due to the natural leverage that these words hold, people feel comfortable instantly canceling a celebrity accused of immoral behavior.

A preliminary definition of cancel culture allows us to then dive into more detail about the pathologies the phenomenon contains. When examining cancel culture under Fricker's six conditions of blame, it is clear to see that the fifth condition is ignored. This is where the first pathology is observed in the phenomenon. Cancel culture does not leave room for people to learn from their mistakes. The culture is an act of supervision over public figures, like Lea Michele.

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9. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

10. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

11. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 170.

12. Adrienne Maree Brown, *We Will Not Cancel Us: And Other Dreams of Transformative Justice*. AK Press, (2020):   42.

Fricker states that we set "others up for a fall if we anticipate that their actions may go awry and then blame them when they do, with or without an explicit 'I told you so'."[76] By supervising everything an individual does or says, we are anticipating their behavior. Celebrities are just like any other moral human, but because of their large platforms, we assume that they have better moral judgement and make better decisions than the average Joe, and we hold them to this standard. Furthermore, we perceive celebrities as not entitled to take risks in learning and making mistakes. Fricker states that there are many things that can go wrong in a person's life "('intellectual, practical, emotional, moral')," which she believes are underdetermined as to whether they are an individual's personal fault, or "simply an unfortunate playing out of endemic risk."[77]

A recent real-life cancelation of a celebrity was in 2020 of actor Lea Michele. Her case can stand as an overarching example of the pathologies where blame was utilized in an unproductive way. After the murder of George Floyd, Michele took to Twitter to express her solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Samantha Marie Ware, one of her former co-stars from the TV show *Glee*, responded to Michele's tweet saying, "I believe you told everyone that if you had the opportunity you would 'sh*t in my wig!'."[78] Ware recalls this as one of many micro-aggressions Michele spewed at her while shooting the show. Some former set workers came forward as well with accusations of Michele exhibiting rude, privileged behavior and making racists comments. While Michele took to Instagram to apologize, thousands of *Glee* fans had already called for cancelation. Michele's apology did not help because of her word choice. She apologized for 'perceived' rude behavior, and this diction added fuel to the fire. Many fans viewed her apology as selfish and shallow. Following her cancelation, Michele's reputation as a credible actor has been demolished, and she has not been able to secure prominent acting roles since.

The very nature of cancel culture's use of blame is instant cancelation. Cancel culture calls for immediate cancelation, thus making it difficult for the accused to have their apology accepted by society. An apology will most likely not save a celebrity from ostracism because cancel culture is anticipating their actions and does not view them as entitled to making mistakes. In Lea Michele's case, an apology for her rude behavior seemed warranted. However, when she did provide her apology, fans felt even more of a reason to cancel her because of her poor word choice in the apology. Cancel culture will assume the celebrity's reason or excuse for wrongdoing will be flawless. When it is not, because of "intellectual, practical, emotional [or] moral" fault, the attempted apology is not accepted.[79] Subsequently, the individual is disbarred from any more moral discussions, resulting in an unproductive and useless practice of blame.

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13. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

14. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

15. Pundir, Rima. "Fans 'Cancel' Glee Star Lea Michele After Weak Instagram Apology To Samantha Ware." The Blast, June 5, 2020.

16. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

In addition to cancel culture forbidding the blamed party to learn from their mistakes, the phenomenon also does not comply with the fourth condition: it does not express its blame in the proper ethical register. Fleeting mistakes are treated as if they speak to a deeper, evil character trait inherent to the wrongdoer. Fricker believes that if someone blames another for an "off-catty comment" as actually a genuine indication of that person's internal character, the blamer is "thinking excessively ill of another's character."[80] In cancel culture, the target of the blame is often labeled as sexist, racist, or homophobic to their core. These massive titles bear negative connotations, naturally, and when they are utilized by cancel culture, it is difficult for the target to be viewed as anything besides that title. After Lea Michele was accused of being racist due to her microaggressions on set, she has been omitted from the limelight. Even if she is seen in the public eye, the way society now perceives her is unequivocally negative. The permanence of social media posts makes it difficult for momentary instances of immoral behavior to seem just that: momentary. In regard to Lea Michele's apology via Instagram, thousands of people noticed Michele's poor word choice, and all they had to do to immortalize her words was to screenshot her post. Even if Michele attempted to delete the apology and post a new, better formulated one, the public would already have the former saved in their camera roll. The flashy, image-based nature of social media makes it a good place for instances of morally corrupt behavior to be publicized. And, consequently, for people to be labeled as inherently immoral individuals when their "off-catty" comments are captured. When cancel culture uses social media as its playground for blame, it is not operating in a proper ethical register. Blame is ultimately unproductive when it occurs in an unsuitable ethical register.

The third and final pathological trait that makes cancel culture unproductive is its negligence towards Fricker's third condition: cancel culture allows for blame to fester and spread. In order for blame to be productive, it must be "contained in its proper remit, both temporally and in terms of the relationship(s) it affects."[81] It is common for cancel culture to dig up a celebrity's past and ridicule them for their morally corrupt decisions without acknowledging that what is morally acceptable in society shifts and develops with time. Michele only remained on the show from the years 2009 to 2015. The accusations against Michele arose in 2020, when there is a possibility that Michele had since changed her ways. In cancel culture, the accused wrongdoer can be called out for poor moral decisions they had made several years in the past. In this pathological practice of blame, time and an individual's moral naivete are not taken into consideration. Fricker states that if blame festers or spreads, it will have "degenerated into ressentiment."[82] At this point, blame is unproductive because it is unregulated and stemming from a psychological state of pure hatred in the blamer. If the

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17. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

18. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

19. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.

blaming party is coming from a position of unadulterated hatred, there is no sense of "candidly disciplinary hope" in their accusation.[83]

Supporters of cancel culture may argue that the phenomenon is productive. They may say that it aims to change the moral behavior of the wrongdoer. This is because it contains a key component of what Fricker identifies as Communicative Blame—which she calls the most productive form of blame by bringing the wrongdoer to remorse and transforming their moral attitude for the better. Supporters of cancel culture may believe that their behavior is in line with the objectives of communicative blame. These two steps, remorse and change in behavior, are crucial to expand the convergence of moral understandings between the wronged and wrongdoer. Yes, most of the time the wrongdoer targeted by cancel culture is brought to remorse. Yet supporters fail to recognize that cancel culture does not care about change in the moral behavior of the blamed party. Cancel culture's aim is not to bring increased alignment of moral understanding between accused and accuser. The very nature of the sub-culture is instant cancelation. This does not allow room for the wrongdoer to make an acceptable change in their behavior, and therefore, there is no increase in moral alignment. Furthermore, demolishing an individual's image to the point where they cannot function in their chosen career path is not identified as a key element of productive blame under communicative blame.

In the case of Lea Michele's downfall, individuals who took to social media to cancel her did not take their positions in hopes of seeing Michele change her behavior for the better. Michele was not given the space to learn and grow from her immoral actions. One of the steps of suitable blame, namely the increase of moral alignment between Michele and the blaming parties on social media, was never utilized. The result of the actor's cancelation has forced her to a confined space in Hollywood of relative nonexistence. Given that cancel culture does not abide by a form of blame that seeks to resolve issues and align moral understandings of the accused and accuser, the outcome of the accusations is ultimately unproductive. Consequently, cancel culture falls into the realm of pathological blame, and only aims to cause more separation and apprehension among individuals.

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20. Fricker, "What's the point of blame?", 169.