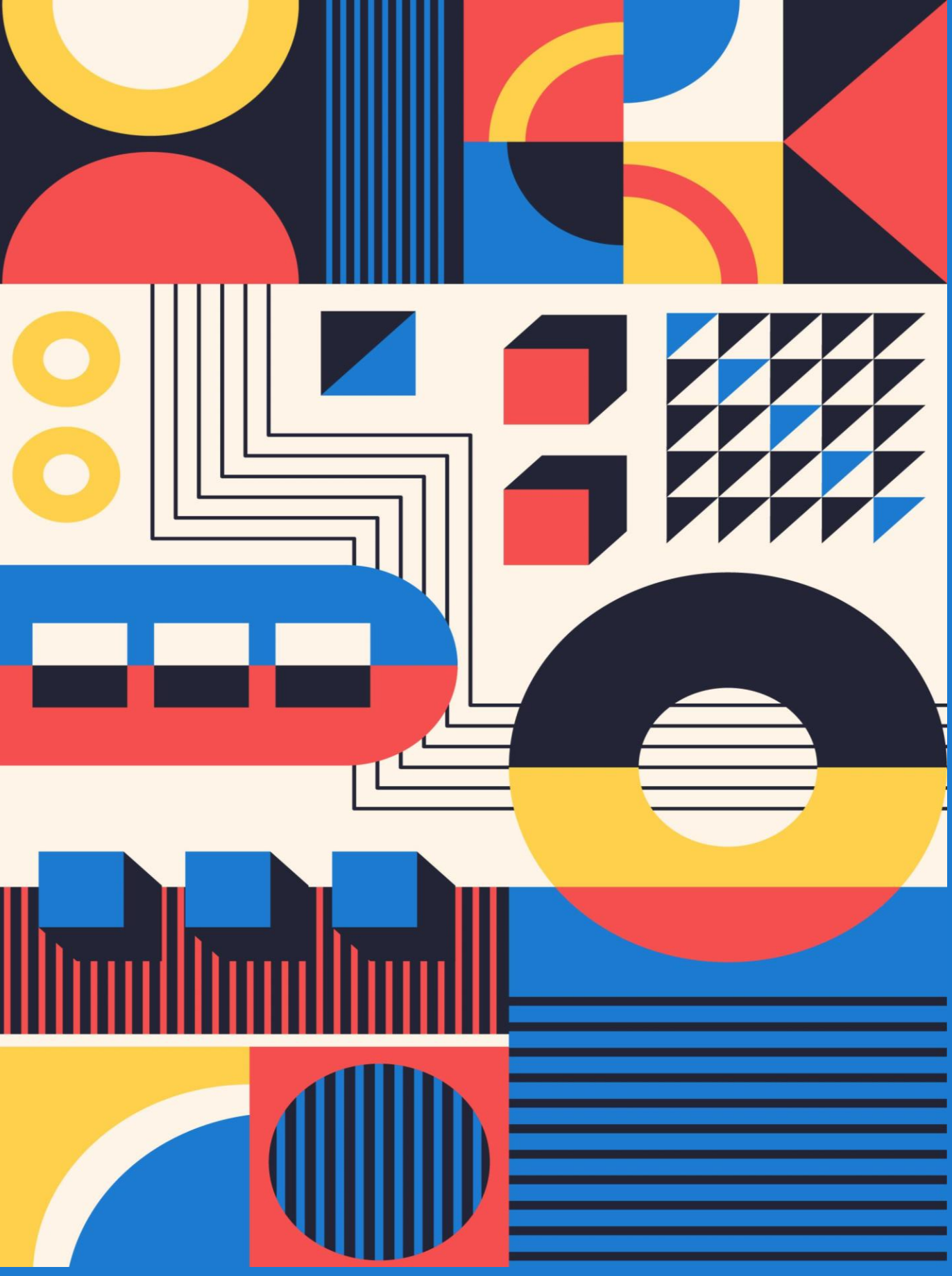

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01

David Brajković

Humanity as a Cultured Beast Through the Lens of Music in Burgess' and Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*

In the twisted realm of Anthony Burgess' literary masterpiece, *A Clockwork Orange*, the reader is invited into a dystopian world that echoes the discordant melody of a not-so-distant future. Published in 1962, this provocative novel immerses the reader in a world where the boundaries between morality and madness blur, and violence wreaks havoc on society at large. In 1971, the novel was adapted into a film directed by Stanley Kubrick, who was at that point already known for not shying away from controversial subject matters in his previous works such as *Lolita (1962)* and *Dr. Strangelove (1964)*. The release of the film propelled the novel to the mainstream and procured it with a new audience. With a surge in popularity, the discussion around the novel's meaning and symbolism became ever so present. Both the novel and its film adaptation contain a plethora of philosophical and cultural commentary embedded in a veneer of irony and shock factor. Some of the implicit themes the narrative explores are the question of free will and determinism, the tension between individualism and state control, the psychology of evil, and, as it will be argued in this paper, the perennial struggle between the civilized, cultured and spiritual aspects of human nature on the one hand, and its bestial aspects on the other hand. The last of the aforementioned themes, and the one this paper maintains is a central leitmotif of both the novel and the film adaptation, is coincidentally one of the least present ones in contemporary criticism of the novel and its adaptation. The appropriateness of using the term *leitmotif* in describing the topic becomes manifest in that the main source of its symbolism is articulated through the choice of music the narrative's atypical

protagonist Alex identifies with – classical music; namely, Ludwig van Beethoven and his *Ninth*, as it is referred to throughout the novel.

The use of music in *A Clockwork Orange* is exceptionally unique, but even more so unsettling for the audience, in both the novel and the film. According to David J. Code, Burgess' use of classical music in the novel falls into three categories. He refers to the first category as "pieces by composers [Burgess] simply invented" (Code 3). The second category is described as including composers of the Austro-Hungarian canon such as "J. S. Bach's *Wachet auf Choral Prelude*" and "'the Mozart'[...] Symphony Number Forty in G minor", while the third category predictably includes Ludwig van Beethoven's musical opus (Code 3-4). Unlike Burgess, Kubrick almost exclusively focuses on the *Ninth*, but introduces some additional pieces such as Purcell's *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary* and Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra*. The combination of classical music, which is principally associated with intelligence, order, impulse control and culture (Rideout and Laubach), with acts of unadulterated violence, chaos and brutality perpetrated by Alex and his droogs turn the audience's expectations on their head. Creating the association between classical music and pure brutality is meant to shock and unsettle, but there is much more to it than that. As Galia Hanoch-Roe notes,

> [Kubrick] utilizes the mythical status that Beethoven's *Ninth* has achieved in order to shock the spectator by the association between this work and extreme violence on the one hand; while being assisted, on the other hand, by the symbolism it contains, including all the textual and musical elements, in order

> to raise essential questions concerning music and western culture in general. (Hanoch-Roe 2)

There is no doubt that Burgess uses classical music and its connotations to illustrate the troubling relationship between brutality and culture. However, Alex's obsession with the *Ninth* in particular is very deliberate. The textual elements Hanoch-Roe mentions refer to Schiller's poem "Ode to Joy", which Beethoven largely appropriated in the text for the fourth movement of his *Ninth Symphony* in an attempt to express Schiller's vision of the unity of humanity. Schiller's poem, brimming with the spirit of Romanticism, solidarity and the sublime, contains verses such as "all people become brothers / where thy gentle wing abides" (Schiller, lines 7-8). On account of its promotion of brotherhood and unity, in 1985 the European Union adopted the *Ninth* as its official anthem. The relationship between its patently humanist message and the misanthropic actions it inspires Alex to execute demonstrates a seemingly incongruous yet strikingly compatible bond, as my discussion will show.

Accordingly, Hanoch-Roe further remarks on the shocking synthesis of the aforementioned phenomena, with reference to the "integration between culture and violence interwoven throughout history" (Hanoch-Roe 6). Ironically, the *Ninth* represents a merging of culture and violence that has been an inevitable coalescence throughout the history of mankind, with Alex being a personification of this seemingly contradictory, but very real, relationship. Humanity has been able to create majestic civilizations and cultural values such as the ones espoused by Schiller, while simultaneously being capable of violence of epic proportions. Besides the message it

clearly states, the *Ninth*, and other compositions of the classical genre, are deeply embedded in the Western cultural *mores* as representations of European civilizational heritage. With that in mind, classical music and violence being the two things Alex enjoys most is not as unthinkable and contradictory as it appears at first glance.

As Hanoch-Roe elaborates:

> Alex himself, who calls himself Alex DeLarge, is in other words Alexander the Great, Greek commander of the Fourth Century B.C., who was one of history's greatest warriors and conquerors on the one hand, and a student of Aristotle, the founder and distributor of Classical Greek culture on the other. This is but one of the many examples of the integration between culture and violence interwoven throughout history. The Nazi era, shown to Alex on film at the Ludovigo [Ludovico] treatment center, accompanied by the Ninth, is another prominent example of such combination. Coincidentally, the Ninth itself was highly regarded by Nazi officials and was played on Hitler's birthday. (Hanoch-Roe 6)

In one of his essays that would later be included in the novel's fully restored fiftieth-anniversary edition, Martin Amis notes a peculiar relationship between the most violent of urges, and the urge for culture and creative expression. Describing the part of the novel in which Alex returns home after a night of *ultraviolence* and starts blaring Mozart, Bach and other major artists from his rather extravagant multispeaker stereo, Amis claims: "Here we feel the power of that enabling throb or whisper – the authorial

insistence that the Beast would be susceptible to Beauty. At a stroke, and without sentimentality, Alex is decisively realigned. He has now been equipped with a soul, and even a suspicion of innocence" (Amis 4).

In a more straightforward sense, both within the scope of the novel, and also in the broader socio-historical context stretching back to the beginnings of human culture, music is seen as a vessel through which the *beast* acquires a soul and becomes *cultured*. Art and violence, therefore, are two aspects of humanity forever tethered together. In this sense, Alex himself is an artist. That is precisely the reason why he is so easy to sympathise with even in the most bloodthirsty and deplorable moments. In Kubrick's film, this merging of a cultured artist and primal beast is articulated on several occasions. Hanoch-Roe accentuates an instance of this, detailing that during his violent visions: "Alex's eyes, and the ultra-violent expression that he takes on, are surprisingly similar to those of Beethoven himself, as reflected in an enormous picture hanging on Alex's wall" (Hanoch-Roe 3). This anthropological perspective on the relation between violence and culture is concomitantly contrasted and enriched with Peter Höyng's view, which individuates and psychologizes it by claiming that "violence can contain an aesthetic quality and aesthetics can be linked to violence. Or, to put it flippantly and narrow this vast topic for our context, violence can be fun to watch while fun can be violent – just as long as one is not oneself a victim" (Höyng 7).

It is worth noting that this explicit agglutinating of violence, youth and dynamism with artistic expression as a form of aesthetics is a defining principle of *Futurism*, a social and artistic movement founded in Italy whose originator Filippo

Tomasso Marinetti was an open supporter of the fascist regime. Incidentally, allusions to fascism and other societal models are present in the description of the not-so-distant dystopia(s), both in the novel and the film. Analysing Cole's observations about the real-life socio-historical context that in a hyperbolized satirical manner underlies the world of *A Clockwork Orange*, a dichotomy of two equally dystopic societal models can be seen – the liberal and the authoritarian model. Quintessentially, the society the audience is introduced to at the very beginning of the novel and the film is a dystopia of a liberal model. To further cite Cole:

> On the surface level of plot and visual design [...] the film clearly confronts topical issues of postwar British modernity. But through its subtextual ties to post-Enlightenment democratic and libertarian ideals the music subtends this surface with more fundamental questions about self and society that have continually arisen across a much broader conception of the 'modern age'. (Cole 39)

The society Alex lives in is a representation of post-war Britain with its 'libertarian'[1] ideals. The values of such a society, and their byproducts, are implicitly criticized throughout the novel, which presents them as chaotic and unstable. The police are absent from the streets and vandalism can be seen from any corner. Alex himself comments on the decaying state of this anarchic society by describing the interior of his flat in Municipal Flatblock 18a: "[...] some of the malchicks living in 18A had, as was to be expected, embellished and decorated the said big painting [...] I went to the lift, but there was no need to press the electric knopka to see if it was working or not,

because it had been tolchocked real horrorshow this night [...]" (Burgess 37). A direct account of the state of this society is articulated by 'the old drunk' that Alex and his droogs terrorize in the second chapter of the first part of the novel, who states, "it's a stinking world because it lets the young get on to the old like you done, and there's no law nor order no more" (Burgess 20). Post-war Britain is equated to an anarchic hellhole catering to violence by being socially and penally lenient. This challenges the dominant Western paradigm of *acultural modernity* defined by Charles Taylor as a paradigm which perceives the decline of traditional society and the ascendance of modernity as a natural and inevitable progression towards advancement (Taylor 24-33). The state of such a society could further be described as lacking in social integration and regulation due to the absence of coherent legal and moral structures, which subsequently leads to a hyper-individualized and rootless populace. Such circumstances culminate in the formation of an anomic state of normlessness in a Durkheimian sense. According to French sociologist Émile Durkheim, societies degenerate due to the lack of strong social bonds and clear moral norms, leading to excessive and unchecked individualism. This is further elucidated by Olsen's definition of Durkheimian anomie as "one source of normative malintegration within social systems, since all social organizations are constructed around bodies of moral norms" (Olsen 7). The values which inevitably spring up to fill the void left by this normative malintegration are oriented around individuals with a strong enough will to assert their own *mores*. This critical commentary on the failure of the post-enlightenment liberal ideals to maintain a functioning society manifests itself not solely in the direct description of the society

but also symbolically through Alex's choice of music. As previously described, Beethoven's *Ninth* is a potent symbol of brotherhood, unity and similar ideals which serve as bedrocks of post-enlightenment thought. Burgess' subversion of these ideals does not end at merely alluding to their historical and cultural connections to extreme violence and brutality. He utilizes the *Ninth* as a symbol of the alluring ideals of post-enlightenment liberal modernity which can lead to societal decadence and normlessness.

Another point in the novel where the relationship between modernity and decadence becomes manifest is articulated by F. Alexander, the writer whose wife dies after being viciously raped by Alex and his droogs. Upon saving Alex from the troubles he experienced after being released from prison, F. Alexander refers to him as "a victim of the modern age" (Burgess 170), equating him to his wife who was brutalized years prior. An environment such as the one cultivated by the said societal model is propitious for Nietzschean figures like Alex who form their own morality and sense of individuality that makes them the de facto authority of the said society. The loss of binding morals and beliefs in modern societies incentivising the creation of individuals that form their own morality through "The will to power" is a central idea of Nietzschean thought that directly parallels the narrative of *A Clockwork Orange.* With that context in mind, labelling Alex as a Nietzschean Übermensch seems appropriate. By the time Alex is finished with the Ludovico treatment and reintroduced to society, the society seems drastically different from the one described earlier in the narrative. Alex illustrates the difference between these two societies by once more noting the interior of his flat that

underwent a noticeable change, saying, "what surprised me, brothers, was the way that had been cleaned up [...] And what also surprised me was that the lift was working" (Burgess 146). Nevertheless, the novel criticizes the new societal model and its stifling of human freedom. Law and order seem not only restored, but taken to an extreme, with what appears like the formation of a police state. Former criminals, including Alex's former droog Dim, are no longer violent thugs, instead opting for a career in the police force, thus enacting their violent impulses in a societally acceptable way. Alex can no longer function as an outlaw bending society to his will in the previously mentioned Nietzschean manner.

The way both societal models tie into the *man as a beast* and *man as a cultured being* dichotomy is clear in the fact that they both push a respective side of that dichotomy through their structure and interworkings. The new quasi-fascist societal model tries to rid humans of their bestial condition and transform them into *homo culturalis* through societal conditioning, which requires strong suppression and infringement on freedom, choice and human rights. In opposition, the society from the first part of the book catered to entropy and incentivized the *bestial* part of the dichotomy but left humans with freedom and individuality. That culture of individuality implies the choice to pursue both violent and cultural impulses inherent to humans. Hanoch-Roe comments on this inherent, and somewhat contradictory duality of freedom and choice by saying:

> Freedom of choice includes the choice of violence and destructiveness as well as the choice of culture and aesthetic pleasure. The two coexist in all mankind

> and this is the joy to which we should aspire. Freedom of choice is also inherent in musical work, and even Beethoven's Ninth, moral, sublime and humanitarian as it is, also contains aggressiveness and impulsiveness, and thus allows a choice for each to hear or see it as one wishes. (Hanoch-Roe 8)

The duality of freedom and individuality, terms which can denote the ultimate emancipation of humanity from coercion and oppression but can also lead to hedonism and the breakdown of social bonds and virtue, has been a perpetual theme in countless philosophies and worldviews from Plato and the Christian tradition to many contemporary thinkers. Authoritarian and liberal societies alike fail in their insistence on cultivating and incentivizing only one of the two aspects of human modality by overlooking the universality of the tension between the *cultured* and *bestial* in humans that has been present throughout history.

In the symphony of *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess and Kubrick orchestrate a profound exploration of humanity's dichotomous nature, resonating with the timeless tension between the cultured and the bestial. Moreover, the juxtaposition of Beethoven's *Ninth*—a pinnacle of human artistic achievement—with scenes of brutal violence not only challenges our aesthetic sensibilities but also prompts us to question the very essence of culture and its capacity to elevate or degrade humanity. In this fusion of high art and primal instinct, Burgess and Kubrick beckon us to confront the uncomfortable truths about the human condition and the precarious balance between our loftiest aspirations and basest impulses. Beyond the individual psyche, the narrative casts a critical eye on societal structures— from anarchic social anomie to

quasi-fascist regimes—revealing the inadequacy of both in addressing the perennial struggle within human nature. The failure lies in attempts to suppress one aspect in favour of the other, overlooking the inherent tension that defines the human experience. As Beethoven's *Ninth* weaves through the narrative, the leitmotif becomes clear: humanity's quest for harmony amidst discord, navigating the fine line between civilization and beastdom.

End Notes

[1] For clarity, the term 'libertarian' here is being used as an equivalent to 'liberal' meaning the combination of philosophical, economic, political and moral ideas that trace their roots to the Enlightenment, not the more contemporary connotation present in American politics.

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02

Petar Sakač

The Tears of Eagles (and a bit of Tempest)

The Tears of Eagles (and a bit of Tempest)

Atop the peaks, the mountain spines
painted with trees of pine,
Feather, wing, sharp eye, and beak
Mother eagle and her eaglets
is whom you'll find, if you seek.

Mother eagle, the panopticon,
she sees, she's the life force,
the forest - one - .
She's the air that she glides.
the holes in the ground
where the darkness hides
she's the horizon,
all four sides.

Mother eagle, she's the queen,
Under her,

The decrepit bear,
His empty stare,
His claws are bare,
he kills, he roars, he scares.
A barely present fool,
An ever-useful tool,
The silent demon,
The forest's protector,
Unless given a drop of nectar.
Barely a thought

In his skull.

Please don’t mind,

if you would, his drool.

(Who would’ve thought,

you could buy a bear with honey,

like men’s souls with... umm… money?)

The builder beavers,

The architects

Building dams

And whatever next.

With sharp teeth

and sturdy tails.

They create.

They destroy.

Whatever brings

Their queen joy.

Little demons,

her hoi poloi.

Many others,

Many otters,

Many here,

Many there,

A lot of rabbits,

A few hares.

Many critters,
Holding hands,
Inside the rivers, rocks,
Flower, grass,
the wind, the sand.
They make the blood.
of the pine-forest flow.
Each alone,
They are together
so much more.

Above the mother eagle,
There's but the sun;
There is
but sky undone.

She lives in line with
and keeps in line
all the critters, movements, beings, time

for she gazed
for so long
all she sees is
all as one.

What she sees, she wants to teach,
all her younglings, all, and each.
The years are lessons,
She remembers.
As she cries,

the tears roll off her
eagle eyes,
slide down her beak
into the nest
the younglings drink
the sadness, joy,
the beauty, zest.
Great lessons,
for the blind kids,
for they must learn,
to see like her.

The natures critters,
too guidance seek.
The little critters
Worship the beak,
beak all-knowing
kind and meek.

Her voice carries many lessons
Her melody carries
echoes of generations.
After all,
the ancestors
are stored
in the ground;
they are the soil
that births new life.
(Did you think

the ground is dead?)
For when she sings
when she flaps the wings
The dirt can hear it
the dirt breathes
whatever life
the ether brings,
whatever life
slides off her wings,
To ground it seeps
and bends the forests
to the queen's needs.

(This is the secret)

Nothing ever changes
in this machine,
every critter, river, rock, and tree a cog
with a spirit within.

Until one day
From afar

She hears
joy and laughter.
She sees
bloodlust and fears.

Her tears stop,
she puts the eaglets to sleep.

The men,
They are moving,
once again.
They sow wrath
along the paths they take
and they take something
in what joy they make.

The forest gives
about enough to live.
the green breathes,
the blue flows,
the critters, well,
they make a show.

Man inhales,
man consumes,
at time destroys,
what he should love.

He fails to see
And just assumes
it's fine to grip, to grab, to strangle,
when letting go is
what he can't handle
(oh, such pain these children have).

Before they wreak havoc,
Shave the trees,
Pollute the rivers,
Kill the beings,
Steal the fruits,
Claim the ground,
Dig out the roots,
And what they don't eat
they turn to boots,
and coats and hats
and pants and suits.

Before the men
start to rape,
to pillage and to overtake,
To steal the kingdom
The mother sees, she hears, then speaks:
A piercing song from her beak.

She flaps her wings
calls up the winds
calls up the storm,
Clouds, skies and more,

Creates a tempest
that carries men
to create a distance

between them:
landing softly,
(for the queen is kind)
and far apart
she sees their folly
and holds hope
for healing hearts and healing minds.

Men fragment,
some cry, lament,
some have fun
and although swept,
they stick to the forest
like wet cement.

Surviving this
was enough to some
to try again, to restart,
they leave the forest
with a changed heart

Some thinking they
saw death then,
they might change
or might not
some run in fear
without a thought.
Some stay
to feast some more,
“Gust of wind?

What a snore.”

For those she calls the beaver workers
“Build a feast
made for them
tables seats
for the brave men.
Give them fruits of wood,
something to bite on,
like you beavers would.”

Fragmented men
Fragment their teeth
For the men
Found fruit to eat.

The beaver’s feast
does not sit well,
they run and cry
home to the dentists there.

Gluttons run,
still gluttons some
in the forest,
they refuse to run.

The eagle queen
resorts to scare
the good people

with the bear.

The forest must stay untouched,
the queen knows at least this much.

The bear wakes
the earth quakes
the men, the most, they run in fear.

Few still stay,
think to slay
the drooling bear
it's only fair.

Luckily (for them, at least)
at least one man is smart,
his backpack holds honey,
the key to the bear's heart.

At the smell of the sweet delight
the bear's a puppy and ceases to fight.

Mother eagle came prepared,
she knows the bear.
The bear was there
just to scare.

(She saw, sees, and will see all)

The few who stayed passed her test,

they will now see more than all else.

Queen eagle flies and lands,
just next to where the men stand.
They feel the regal - sans the crown,
on one knee they drop down.

The tears slide down the queen's beak,
they drink the tears and go to sleep.
When they dream,
she starts to sing, to speak.
In the dreams they see her vision,
which cuts into their hearts with precision.

Opening the hearts of men
is what out of them she wanted.
They now see with what her tears are haunted.

The men now know the dream.
And it's there when they're awake.
Sent back home as wisemen,
To prevent men's mistakes.

She sees so much,
for so much pain,
lines her eyes
when she cries
day out day in.
Tis the burden

few can sustain.

It was all
in her plan.
The kingdom stands
clean of man.

As much as she could,

It was all
in her plan
to purify
the heart of man.

Her child now stands where she stood.

Nothing changes, men sow and reap,
The regal eagle always weeps.
Only ones, truly sane,
are the ones
who see through pain.

03

Taha Al-Sarhan

H.P. Lovecraft and Peering Beyond the Bounds of Infinity

Introduction

Weird Fiction emerges from the shadows of literary tradition, twisting the familiar into the unexpected, drawing readers into worlds where dread and wonder clash. China Miéville captures its essence in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, describing it as "usually, roughly, conceived of as a rather breathless and generically slippery macabre fiction, a dark fantastic ('horror' plus 'fantasy') often featuring nontraditional alien monsters (thus plus 'science fiction')" (Miéville 510). To clarify, it pertains to the genre of literature that accentuates the peculiar, the nonsensical, and the unrecognizable. Howard Philips Lovecraft's contributions to the literary world are noteworthy as he was a pioneer in the creation of the "Weird Fiction" genre. His works are renowned for their unique characteristics that have become synonymous with the genre in contemporary times. Miéville draws focus toward the differentiation between the conventional Gothic narrative and the "Weird" narrative. He says, "[t]he awe that Weird Fiction attempts to invoke is a function of lack of recognition, rather than any uncanny resurgence, guilt-function, the return of a repressed. It is thus as much a break from as an heir to traditional Gothic" (Miéville 512). A recurrent motif in Lovecraft's literature is the realization of the characters' minuscule stature in the immense scale of the universe, thereby instigating a state of frenzied madness.

Ann and Jeff VanderMeer elaborate in their compendium *The Weird* that the principle that guides "Weird Fiction" is that of sensation:

> Because The Weird often exists in the interstices, because it can occupy different territories simultaneously, an impulse exists among the more rigid taxonomists to find The Weird suspect, to argue it should not, cannot be, separated out from other traditions. Because The Weird is as much a sensation as it is a mode of writing, the most keenly attuned amongst us will say 'I know it when I see it,' by which they mean 'I know it when I feel it' – and this, too, the more rigorous of categorizing taxidermists will take to mean The Weird does not exist when, in fact, this is one of the more compelling arguments for its existence. (VanderMeer and VanderMeer 19)

The aforementioned experience is quite intriguing in that it capitalizes on the naivety and obscurity of its subjects, ultimately instilling within those who witness it a frightening sensation akin to inhabiting a realm where the force of gravity may be abruptly suspended. The essence of "Weird" literature resides in the examination of the unfamiliar, the charting of that which defies description, and the encounter of mankind with something so dreadfully incredible that it surpasses their boundaries and leaves them in a state of apprehensive uncertainty.

The present research aims to investigate the extent of human vulnerability in the face of immensely potent and unfathomable creatures within the following texts: "The Unnamable", *The Shadow Over Innsmouth, At the Mountain of Madness,* and *The Call of Cthulhu*. The paper proposes that Lovecraft's subversion of the sublime encounter results in the entrapment of human inferiority in infinity, thereby confining its subjects within the boundaries of their corporeal existence, unlike Immanuel Kant's and Edmund Burke's conceptualization of the sublime, where its subjects are prompted to acknowledge their own limitations, thereby paving the way for the attainment of human magnificence.

The Terror in the Sublime

Lovecraft's mythos emphasizes an overpowering feeling of cosmic naturalism, where mankind is insignificant compared to incomprehensible powers: in this situation, the sublime transitions from a natural to a cosmic dimension. Lovecraft's characters, akin to those in Naturalist fiction, grapple with uncontrollable and incomprehensible forces. Richard Lehan characterizes this conflict in Naturalism as a "romantic dilemma", when characters are enticed by an elusive ideal yet constrained by tangible circumstances (Lehan 229). In Lovecraft's texts, this conflict transitions from the natural to the supernatural; nonetheless, the fundamental tension persists—the characters are impotent against immense, indifferent powers. In *At the Mountains of Madness*, the protagonists contend with the unfathomable supernatural, facing the ancient Shoggoths and the enigmas of an extraterrestrial city. In "The Unnamable," the omnipresent sense of dread and gloom, coupled with the supposed presence of an unidentified being, engulfs the characters as they navigate a decaying graveyard. *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* intensifies this fear as the protagonist discovers his cursed ancestry linked to the terrifying Deep Ones. *The Call of Cthulhu* exemplifies cosmic fear, as the titular deity exposes humanity's triviality against an ancient, unfathomable force. Lovecraft's inversion of the sublime reflects Lehan's concept of romanticism, wherein humanity is displaced from the center of existence. His protagonists confront not only natural forces but also cosmic and supernatural ones, underscoring their powerlessness within the vast expanse of the

universe. The sensation of cosmic dread, exclusive to Lovecraft texts here, extends Naturalism's emphasis on humanity's impotence to a supernatural dimension, rendering individuals ensnared in an inescapable and uncontrollable reality.

Given that Lovecraft's work aligns with the American Gothic, it is essential to comprehend how this genre integrates aspects of Gothic literature with uniquely American motifs and locales. American Gothic, typically situated in ominous and cryptic settings, explores psychological horror and mental strife, often confronting societal concerns such as enslavement and racial prejudice. In this sense, the unfamiliar typically denotes the apprehension towards 'otherness'—be it racial, cultural, or societal. Paranormal components signify underlying concerns like the dread of racial amalgamation, the perceived threat of marginalized groups to existing social hierarchies, and the guilt and unresolved pain stemming from America's legacy of slavery. These supernatural phenomena signify not just a fear of the unknown but also a fear of addressing the repressed history of oppression and the resulting destabilization of identity.

A key component of American Gothic literature is the frontier, which serves as a space where themes of solitude, fear, and the unfamiliar are explored. The frontier forces characters to confront both physical boundaries, such as remote and desolate landscapes, and psychological boundaries, including the limits of human understanding and morality. In the context of Lovecraft's works, the term 'frontier' refers not only to the physical edges

of human exploration but also the metaphysical boundaries between the known world and the incomprehensible cosmic forces that lie beyond.

The concept of the frontier has historically been essential in crafting the narrative of American development and identity. Initially envisioned as a boundary between inhabited, agricultural territories and the expansive wilderness of North America, the frontier served as both a tangible and metaphorical space. It proved essential to the colonial endeavors of European settlers, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries, as they aimed to advance westward across the continent. The westward expansion escalated during the 19th century, culminating in the belief in Manifest Destiny—the conviction that the United States' expansion over North America was both legitimate and inevitable, sanctioned by divine providence. The frontier was perceived as a place of possibility, presenting the prospect of land, resources, and fresh starts for people. Nonetheless, it also bore considerable ideological and cultural ramifications. The frontier represented a fundamental antithesis between civilization and wilderness, or "savagery," with settlers portraying themselves as catalysts of progress and order. This narrative, entrenched in the colonial mentality, depicted the wilderness and its Indigenous populations as impediments to be overcome or subdued in the quest for national expansion and economic advancement. The displacement of Native American communities and the subsequent violent confrontations were frequently rationalized through the concept of a civilizing mission, portraying Indigenous peoples as the "other" that required control or eradication.

The frontier symbolized both the tangible limit of American growth and the psychological and cultural confines of human comprehension. It was a location where the familiar intersected with the unfamiliar, where interactions with alien terrains and cultures elicited significant concerns on identity, ethics, and the boundaries of human understanding. This perception of the unfamiliar frequently emerged in American Gothic literature, wherein the frontier served as a backdrop for narratives of isolation, terror, and the disintegration of social standards. Paranormal elements in these stories often symbolize underlying worries regarding the volatility of American identity and the ethical ramifications of expansion.

Kevin Corstorphine argues that the wilderness' and the frontier's original connotation was as a place where wild animals roamed, but it now denotes the untamed and otherwise untouched territory: "The 'wild things' of American Gothic have always been found in terms of a journey that is seemingly outward facing but ends up in the realm of the individual psyche" (121). This transformation reflects a shift from a physical to a psychological wilderness, highlighting the internal struggles and fears of the individual. He further states: "This raises an important distinction from the start, so that the condition of being wild subverts human reason and logic" (121). Here, Corstorphine emphasizes the idea that encountering the wilderness challenges the protagonist's sense of order and rationality, pushing them into a realm where traditional logic no longer applies.

"Bewilderment" serves as a central motif in American Gothic, encapsulating the characters' deep uncertainty and disorientation when faced with incomprehensible forces. This sentiment is intricately linked to the naturalist model, a literary method that underscores the impact of environment, heredity, and social circumstances on how people behave. In naturalism, people frequently find themselves powerless against the formidable forces of nature or fate, illustrating a deterministic perspective. In American Gothic, this feeling of powerlessness is intensified by the eerie and uncanny aspects of the supernatural, when characters confront not just the uncontrollable forces of nature but also the unknown and frightening. Bewilderment embodies the psychological and existential struggle characterizing both naturalist and Gothic settings. Corstorphine elaborates on this by stating: "If the story of the expanding frontier articulates a simple dichotomy of civilization against the wilderness, then the end of the frontier marks a more subtle Gothicism, marked by the haunting presence of the past" (Corstorphine 125). This implies that while the physical boundary of the wilderness is nearing its end, the psychological and historical elements of the wilderness become more prominent, resulting in a Gothic ambiance that is filled with the lingering vestiges of the past. The main characters in Lovecraft's texts frequently come upon entities from an ancient era, highlighting the enduring presence of historical and ancestral anxieties in the current consciousness. Corstorphine's research indicates that these encounters encompass both physical creatures and the persistent, spectral remnants of historical tragedies and unresolved conflicts. This adds complexity to the American Gothic story, compelling people

to face not only tangible dangers but also the emotional and existential burdens of inherited anxieties and unsolved recollections.

Acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the concept of the sublime, as defined by eminent philosophers such as Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, is essential. This is particularly relevant in light of the fact that these philosophers advocated a more humanistic approach to the sublime, predating the literary works of Lovecraft. It is noteworthy that in this study, both interpretations of the sublime shall be employed. Moreover, the main emphasis will be on fear and unknown factors, which are crucial elements of the sublime that shall be utilized in the analysis at hand. Burke claims that "[t]o make anything very terrible obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes" (Burke 101). Burke underscores the significance of obscurity in amplifying anxiety, contending that when danger is ambiguous or unfamiliar, it becomes increasingly daunting. This corresponds with an anthropocentric perspective, wherein the human subject is central to the experience, and dread is heightened by our incapacity to completely grasp what exists beyond our control. The anthropocentric approach Burke mentions is further described by Corstorphine who mentions that it is rooted in humanity's need to be the center of the world:

> Proponents of deep ecology view environmentalism as inherently flawed in its goal of preserving the natural world as the 'environment' of humanity, necessary yet secondary to our subjectivity. Rather, deep ecology calls for a

> rejection of anthropocentrism and 'demands recognition of intrinsic value in nature'. (Corstorphine 127)

Burke and Corstorphine examine the influence of human-centered viewpoints on our comprehension of fear and the natural environment. Corstorphine opposes this anthropocentric perspective by emphasizing the limitations of human-centered reasoning. He cites deep ecology, which advocates for the dismissal of the notion that environment serves solely as a backdrop for human activities. Deep ecology asserts that nature must be acknowledged for its inherent value, irrespective of human perspective or perception. Collectively, these concepts indicate that both fear and our interaction with the environment are influenced by the limits of human comprehension, with Burke emphasizing how ambiguity increases fear and Corstorphine advocating for an ecocentric viewpoint that transcends anthropocentrism.

Burke defines the fear encountered in the sublime as dread, in the sense that "[t]error is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime" (Burke 99). In order to reach the sublime, one must encounter a force of great magnitude, such that the experience is marked with intense discomfort. Burke maintains that the notion of power necessitates a superior quality in the entity, object, or ambiance in question, "pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior" (112). Furthermore, he posits that any entity possessing the capacity to carry out agony is inherently equipped to actualize such a capability, rendering it all the more petrifying, as per his assertion "that the idea of pain, in its highest degree, is much stronger than the highest degree of

pleasure; and that it preserves the same superiority through all the subordinate gradations" (Burke 111). According to Burke, "[n]o passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear" and fear is one of the primary effects of the sublime (98). Burke maintains that the sublime is something that "anticipates our thinking" and "hurries us on by an irresistible force" rather than just a concept we reflect on after the event (Burke 98). The concept of the sublime in Lovecraft's literature serves as a catalyst, eliciting a profound sensation that allows humanity to experience the intense surge of emotion that Burke effectively emphasizes. Bradley A. Will expounds upon this notion, arguing that the advent of an entity that generates such a sentiment is the trigger for the sublime to manifest: "[t]his cosmic outsideness takes the form of objects and entities which intrude on the mundane world delineated by human understanding, disrupting and violating the natural laws through which Lovecraft's characters and readers have come to know their world" (Bradley 8). When examining the concept of the sublime in relation to Lovecraft's literature, one must acknowledge a particular state marked by the cessation of rational cognition, which arises from the transgression and encroachment of the sublime upon the human psyche.

Furthermore, the style of writing that Lovecraft uses often mirrors the themes of cosmic indifference through a detached and objective tone, emphasizing the insignificance of human concerns in the vast, uncaring universe. This narrative style frequently employs meticulous and clinical descriptions, creating a sense of distance between the reader and

the emotional experiences of the characters. The use of the passive voice and a focus on external events over internal emotions further reinforces the theme of indifference. Additionally, the inclusion of archaic and complex language can evoke a sense of timelessness and alienation, enhancing the feeling that human struggles are trivial in the grand scheme of existence. Through this stylistic approach, the writing itself becomes a vehicle for conveying the overwhelming and impersonal forces of nature and the cosmos, underscoring the futility of human endeavors against the backdrop of an indifferent universe.

On the other hand, Kant's notion of the sublime is imbued with Enlightenment humanism: "It is the state of mind produced by a certain representation with which the reflective Judgement is occupied, and not the Object, that is to be called sublime" (47). Kant further elaborates on the interaction between the subject and the object in encounters with the sublime. He argues that to fully experience the impact of the sublime, we must possess a sense of the sublime, and to truly appreciate beauty, we must have a sense of beauty. He explains that minds attuned to the sublime are drawn into profound emotions, such as friendship, contempt for worldly matters, and thoughts of eternity, particularly during serene moments like a calm summer evening with stars twinkling through the night sky and the moon rising. In contrast, the bright daytime inspires activity and joy. Kant concludes that the sublime moves us deeply, while the beautiful enchants us (Observations 16). The state of sublimity, by its very nature, necessitates a subject to

apprehend it. In the absence of the human element that perceives this awe-inspiring phenomenon, there can be no corresponding object, and consequently, no sublimity. Despite the centrality of the human subject, its inherent powerlessness renders it a marginal entity. Kant's 'sublime' objects are used to provide the subject with the "courage to measure ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature" (Kant 58). Consequently, the presence of a subject is a prerequisite for the apprehension of the sublime object. In Lovecraft's texts, the characters function primarily as bearers of fear, rather than fulfilling any other discernible purpose. The characters in Lovecraft's literary works seem designed to highlight the inherent fragility of the human condition. Lovecraft emphasizes his protagonists' linguistic incapacity to coherently comprehend and articulate their experiences or encounters. The protagonist struggles to fully convey their experience, leaving the reader similarly challenged in understanding the complexities of Lovecraft's mythology. The purpose of Lovecraft's peculiarly constructed names for divinities, as well as those of antiquated cities and magic, is to eschew familiarity by rendering them unpronounceable and unintelligible. The reader is directly engaged by a narrator who has since departed from this world, succumbed to madness, or perhaps even both, often presented in the form of an epistolary composition.

Such awareness of materiality is what Lovecraft's sublime inverts. The Kantian sublime, which acknowledges the inherent fragility of the human form, is subject to further examination. Kant's concept of the sublime allows individuals to confront their own

limitations, fostering a deeper understanding of their place in the world. This confrontation with the vast and overwhelming forces of nature leads to a heightened sense of self-awareness, which Kant argues is a step toward achieving moral and intellectual 'excellence'—a state where individuals transcend their physical limitations and engage with higher principles such as reason, autonomy, and moral duty. Kant notes: "The feeling inspired by morality (without profit) is beautiful or sublime; my joy at the perfected in myself (feeling of self-esteem, of one's own worth) is noble; my joy at satisfaction (feeling of goodwill) is beautiful" (265). This underscores the connection between the sublime and personal development through moral feelings. Furthermore, Kant states:

> Thus true virtue can only be grafted upon principles, and it will become the more sublime and noble the more general they are. These principles are not speculative rules, but the consciousness of a feeling that lives in every human breast and that extends much further than to the special grounds of sympathy and complaisance. (24)

This emphasizes that the pursuit of the sublime is deeply rooted in broad, universal moral principles, which elevate the individual's capacity for achieving excellence.

On the contrary, Lovecraft's notion of the sublime engenders a state of suspended human inferiority, perpetually trapped in the infinite expanse of the universe, thereby constraining individuals within the confines of their material nature. The subject's experience of the sublime is intensified by their inability to discern the object, resulting in a state of heightened chaos, weakness, and defeat. On the other hand, the

anthropocentric foundation of Kant's philosophy is evident in his analogy of the sublime to a perfected manifestation of the human species.

Lovecraft elaborates on fear in the introduction to his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” stating that it is the most ancient emotion experienced by humanity: “The oldest and strongest emotion of humankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown” (Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror” 5). This association reveals that Lovecraft’s writing addresses a fear stemming from the acknowledgment that mankind, despite its moral frameworks and imagined significance, is inconsequential in the expansive cosmos. The core of cosmic horror surpasses mere representations of monsters and violence; it is fundamentally connected to the acknowledgment of humanity's intrinsic limitations. It is the focus of Lovecraft’s literature to switch from the inherent centrality of humanity to that of the cosmos. Lovecraft's deliberate subversion of the focus of his stories’ plots are evident in his focus on the monsters or the grotesque as the central object of the narrative, rather than the subject experiencing them. Miéville expounds upon the concept of an “anti-narrative,” demonstrating its intricacies: “His stories are often little more than excuses for descriptions of Weird presences, and what narrative ‘revelations’ there are predictable. His is a surrender to the ineluctability of the Weird, again implying no eruption of strangeness into a status quo, but a Weird universe” (Miéville 512). This concept is closely related to the philosophical underpinnings of Lovecraft’s cosmic horror. The impact of destruction of the dread in Lovecraft’s cosmic

horror lies in its ability to fundamentally change the reader's perception of monsters, shifting them from figures of sheer monstrosity to beings of inscrutability.

The Infinitely Horrifying

This acknowledgment of the limits of human understanding powerfully illustrates our inherent limitations and inferiority. Vivian Ralickas advances the notion of this dread: "In Lovecraft, the subject suffers from a violation of its sense of self, but it is graced with no consolatory understanding of the human condition to mollify its fragmented psyche" (Ralickas 365). In this context, the concept of the sublime as a tool for shaping subjectivity is inverted; instead of fostering greater comprehension, it intensifies the darkness and terror of the subject's experience. Ralickas observes that Lovecraft's characters endure a disruption of their identity, devoid of any reassuring revelations about the human condition to mitigate their fragmented psyches. In the following, examples from "The Unnameable," *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, *At the Mountain of Madness* will be used to clarify how the sublime exists in each of these texts and its role in them.

The Unnamable:

"The Unnamable" (UnName) follows two friends, Randolph Carter and Joel Manton, as they discuss the nature of supernatural horror in an old cemetery. Manton is skeptical of Carter's belief in unnamable, indescribable entities that exist beyond human understanding. Their discussion takes a terrifying turn when they encounter a monstrous,

indescribable entity, proving Carter's theories correct and leaving them both traumatized by the encounter. The following excerpt illustrates the previous point:

> After the doctors and nurses had left, I whispered an awe-struck question: "Good God, Manton, but what was it? Those scars—was it like that?" And I was too dazed to exult when he whispered back a thing I had half expected—"No—it wasn't that way at all. It was everywhere—a gelatin—a slime yet it had shapes, a thousand shapes of horror beyond all memory. There were eyes—and a blemish. It was the pit—the maelstrom—the ultimate abomination. Carter, it was the unnamable!" (Lovecraft, "UnName" 181)

In the above passage, Manton attempts to construct an understanding for both him and the reader. He acts as a stabilizing force amidst uncertainty, leading the reader to reflect on and investigate how they might understand such a mysterious entity. This language in this passage enhances introspection through an 'anti-narrative' technique that diverges from traditional storytelling strategies. Conventional tales often adhere to a linear framework, highlighting a progression of events, character evolution, and definitive conclusions. This text subverts conventional rules by emphasizing introspection and the investigation of the unknown, encouraging readers to connect with the characters' psychological intricacies instead of a linear narrative. By emphasizing the characters' internal thoughts and emotions, the narrative generates a disjointed and confused experience that mirrors the ambiguity of their existence. This method facilitates an in-depth exploration of existential concepts, prompting readers to reflect on the complexities of human experience rather than following a conventional narrative. This anti-narrative technique enhances reader involvement while emphasizing the deep detachment and

horror intrinsic to Lovecraft's universe, where comprehension is elusive and meaning frequently obscured by mystery.

Moreover, Ralickas states: “The purpose of cosmic horror is to communicate an effect” (Ralickas 367). Consequently, the narrative undergoes a shift in emphasis from the characters to the horror, encompassing the sensations of fear and apprehension. Lovecraft stated that “[a] certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present” (Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror” 7). His creations aim to eradicate the anthropocentric bias of mankind, as evidenced by his narratives wherein the planet Earth is of no consequence to the stories’ creatures, who exhibit a complete lack of interest or concern towards it. The deities, primordial deities, and ancient entities exhibit a marked apathy towards the human condition and display scant regard for their corporeal manifestation. Ralickas also attests to this notion, mentioning that “Lovecraft's fiction consequently denies our planet a place of importance in the universe and revokes the human privilege of having been the first species of higher intelligence to populate it” (Ralickas 367). As such, the aforementioned displacing contributes further to the terror that Lovecraft’s works and style embodies.

In “The Unnamable,” one would struggle to formulate an image of the horror that Manton experienced. Words are used to explain its recognizable forms like “gelatin, slime, eyes” and it has a “thousand shapes of horror beyond all memory” (181). The deliberate act of morphing between various forms confounds any attempts to rationalize the nature

of this entity. The subject matter transcends tangibility and comprehension, precluding the possibility of understanding and transforming it from a corporeal entity into an abstract notion: the unnamable. James Goho, an important figure in Lovecraft studies, highlights that 'The Unnamable' specifically attempts to resolve the problem of naming and knowing what is outside of normal experience. But as language is the tool we are trapped in, it illuminates the indeterminacy in using it to represent things or spaces of an undetermined nature (Goho 10).

The Call of Cthulhu:

In Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu*, the plot follows Francis Wayland Thurston, who investigates a series of mysterious and terrifying events linked to the ancient cosmic entity Cthulhu. Through various accounts like that of his great uncle George Agnell, Thurston learns about the existence of a cult worshipping Cthulhu and the awakening of this monstrous being from its slumber beneath the sea. The story culminates in the realization that Cthulhu's influence extends far beyond human understanding, leaving Thurston with a profound sense of dread about humanity's insignificance in the cosmos. The notion of being insignificant, surrounded by darkness and uncertainty is established in the beginning of the story:

> The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated

> knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age. (Lovecraft, *CoC* 238)

The preceding passage contributes significantly to the representation of uncharted territories. Lovecraft has effectively conveyed the notion that the shapes and entities that lie ahead are nearly inscrutable, therefore instilling a sense of anticipation that ultimately culminates in a successful evocation of the desired emotional response. Furthermore, Lovecraft employs an 'anti-narrative' technique to ensure that the monsters retain their intended abstract nature, devoid of full formation and realization. Lovecraft's monsters persist in their ability to evade comprehension from both the readership and the characters depicted therein, regarding their essence and distinctiveness.

The notion of trying to represent shapes, however, has not been completely hidden in Lovecraft's works. For example, in *The Call of Cthulhu* (CoC), the narrator attempts to depict Cthulhu itself:

> If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing. A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings; but it was the general outline of the whole which made it most shockingly frightful. Behind the figure was a vague suggestion of a Cyclopean architectural background. (Lovecraft, *CoC* 239)

The initial representation of the "being" occurs in the introductory chapters, prior to the protagonist's actual interaction with the creature. This depiction is inadequate, as it mainly reuses well-known imagery from other horror and fantasy works. The depiction—merging

aspects of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature—exhibits a deficiency in originality and profundity, yielding a clichéd portrayal instead of one that elicits authentic terror. While the vivid depiction of a pulpy, tentacled head and monstrous body is compelling, it fails to transcend conventional representations of monsters, resulting in a need for a more original or nuanced examination of the thing. However, as the narrative progresses and the main character is confronted with the unfathomable, "Cthulhu", a descent into madness ensues, transforming him from a mere observer to a distorted participant. As T.S. Miller comments on this, "[h]is status as an uninvolved observer can no longer protect him from the cosmic horror that consumes him" (Miller 126). The inclusion of Cthulhu in the narrative serves to blend the cosmic and the proximate, a feat that Lovecraft accomplishes with great clarity by portraying Cthulhu as an otherworldly entity that is both incomprehensible and yet possesses anthropomorphic traits. The protagonist's harrowing confrontation with the cognizance of Cthulhu elicits corporeal distress: "I now felt gnawing at my vitals that dark terror which will never leave me till I, too, am at rest" (Lovecraft, *CoC* 252). The internal bodily horror connects with the external cosmic horror on an unimaginable scale, and as Miller puts it, "[i]n making a humanoid entity like Cthulhu the focal point of the narrator's visceral terror, not only has Lovecraft recentered in the human body the cosmic horror he had removed from it, but, in doing the latter, he has given a body, a face, and arms" (Miller 127). The transference of horror is observed to oscillate between the physical and the cosmic, thereby demonstrating the profound impact of cosmic dread on the human body. This serves to illustrate the perverse nature

of the unknown, which relentlessly "gnaws" at the body of the individual who ventures too close, ultimately leading to their affliction.

At The Mountain of Madness:

In *At the Mountains of Madness* (MoM), the narrator, Dr. William Dyer, recounts the story of his journey to Antarctica, where he and a student named Danforth, accompanied by other members, explored a dead city tucked away amid the tallest mountains in the world. Lovecraft begins an invocation of the sublime in the description of the mountain: “Thought of this titanic mountain rampart 700 miles away inflamed our deepest sense of adventure” (516) and in the radio transmission: “You can’t imagine anything like this. The highest peaks must go over 35,000 feet. Everest out of the running” (Lovecraft, *MoM* 516). The magnitude of the mountains is a crucial factor to contemplate due to their imposing, daunting, and somewhat menacing stature. The profound enormity of the mountains' overwhelming impact is exemplified by the frequent recurrence of the phrase “mountains of madness” throughout the text. The phrase highlighting the overwhelming impact of the mountains' sheer enormity. Lovecraft uses this to suggest that encountering such a colossal and otherworldly force could leave one's mind fractured and unsettled

Dr. Dyer’s expedition involves exploring the unknown and navigating an uncharted frontier. The text exhibits the anxieties that arise from venturing into uncharted territories, as evidenced by the explorers' unsettling discovery of an ancient metropolis erected by extraterrestrial beings predating the emergence of mankind. Here the text immediately

suspends human knowledge by making them find something beyond their understanding. Moreover, Lovecraft does this with the description of Shoggoth: "They were normally shapeless entities composed of a viscous jelly which looked like an agglutination of bubbles; and each averaged about fifteen feet in diameter when a sphere" (Lovecraft, *MoM* 548). It is simpler for something to adhere to a logical, theoretical understanding if it has a clear shape or appearance. The entity known as the 'Shoggoth' appears to defy the conventional principles of creation as perceived by these individuals, thereby endowing the creature with an aura of the sublime. The attempt to understand the vastness of what they encountered fails, as Dyer explains:

> Our exact motive in looking back again was perhaps no more than the immemorial instinct of the pursued to gauge the nature and course of its pursuer; or perhaps it was an automatic attempt to answer a subconscious question raised by one of our senses. In the midst of our flight, with all our faculties centred on the problem of escape, we were in no condition to observe and analyze details; yet even so our latent brain-cells must have wondered at the message brought them by our nostrils. (Lovecraft, *MoM* 567)

Through the previous quote, it becomes more obvious how the sublime is being achieved and experienced. As the protagonists escape, their impulse to look behind them exposes an intense desire to understand their pursuer. The protagonists are ensnared between the instinctual desire to comprehend their assailant and the dread that immobilizes their logical reasoning. This tension—between fear and curiosity—captures the spirit of the sublime, compelling both characters and readers to confront the boundaries of human comprehension in the presence of unfathomable terror. This scene exemplifies how the

cosmic backdrop of Lovecraft's novella creates a suspension of rational thought in the presence of terror, facilitating the emergence of the sublime through their encounter with the unknown. The sublime experience emerges from this tension, where the immensity and incomprehensibility of the cosmos elicit both horror and wonder, therefore underscoring the fragility of human comprehension.

Furthermore, it is the intense emotional tension Lovecraft evokes—particularly the interplay between fear and curiosity—that heightens the sense of dread inherent in the sublime. This emotional dynamic aligns with Burke's observations on the relationship between pain and fear, illustrating how Lovecraft's portrayal of the unknown stirs both terror and fascination.

From hence I conclude that pain and fear act upon the same parts of the body, and in the same manner, though somewhat differing in degree; that pain and fear consist in an unnatural tension of the nerves; that this is sometimes accompanied with an unnatural strength, which sometimes suddenly changes into an extraordinary weakness; that these effects often come on alternately, and are sometimes mixed with each other. (Burke 231)

Burke's viewpoint underscores that Lovecraft's depiction of the sublime, in this case the encounter with the Shogotths, elicits a significant emotional and physiological reaction in the reader. The intense emotions provoked by the cosmic unknown provide a comparable tension, merging terror and awe while intensifying the sensation of dread as readers face the boundaries of their comprehension within Lovecraft's cosmos.

The many assertions made by Dyer that he is unable to accurately express the horrifying things he has witnessed are helpful in providing context for Danforth's descent into madness. Language is one of the ways in which humans might attempt to make sense of the world around them. Because Dyer does not have the language skills to describe or even recount happenings that are so far apart from the typical human experience, the events themselves must unavoidably continue to achieve the highest sense of dreading the unknown and unexplored. Such failure to comprehend the horror drove Danforth mad: "I have said that Danforth refused to tell me what final horror made him scream out so insanely—a horror which, I feel sadly sure, is mainly responsible for his present breakdown" (Lovecraft, *MoM* 570).

The Shadow Over Innsmouth:

Lovecraft elaborated on the literary work of Arthur Machen, specifically citing *The Great God Pan* as a precursor of cosmic horror. He described the story as one that "[t]ells of a singular and terrible experiment and its consequences [….] She is a daughter of hideous Pan himself, and at the last is put to death amidst horrible transmutations of form involving changes of sex and a descent to the most primal manifestations of the life-principle" (Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror" 63). One could interpret Lovecraft's perspective as a manifestation of his fears regarding the blending of his own cultural identity with those he viewed as foreign, reflecting his anxieties about miscegenation and the potential repercussions of venturing into uncharted territories. This is echoed in his admiration for

Machen's *The Great God Pan*, where the narrative explores the horrifying consequences of a singular, unnatural experiment, ultimately reflecting the dread of encountering the unknown and the primal forces that lie beyond human comprehension. Lovecraft's preoccupation with the permeability of the boundaries separating various planes of existence led him to develop a deep-seated fear regarding the consequences of the closeness and intermingling of humans with entities of he considered to be of a non-human nature, as his well-documented racism shows. Within *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (SoInn), a young man (Olmstead), who is left unnamed, travels to the decaying town of Innsmouth, discovering its disturbing secret. The townspeople have made a pact with underwater creatures called the Deep Ones, resulting in interbreeding and the transformation of residents into these hybrid beings. As Olmstead uncovers his own connection to Innsmouth, he realizes he too will transform, leaving him with a chilling sense of his inescapable fate.

The narrative explores the concepts of hybridity and miscegenation, which have the potential to sustain asymmetries of authority and cultural stratifications. The use of these themes may function as a mechanism for cultural domination, leading to the dispersion of the human inhabitants of Innsmouth due to their compelled crossbreeding and matrimonial alliances with the Deep Ones. The apprehension towards the potential annihilation of racial purity is evident in the physical characteristics of those who were compelled to interbreed with the Deep Ones:

> They were mostly shiny and slippery, but the ridges of their backs were scaly. Their forms vaguely suggested the anthropoid, while their heads were the heads of fish, with prodigious bulging eyes that never closed. At the sides of their necks were palpitating gills, and their long paws were webbed. They hopped irregularly, sometimes on two legs and sometimes on four. I was somehow glad that they had no more than four limbs. Their croaking, baying voices, clearly used for articulate speech, held all the dark shades of expression which their staring faces lacked. (Lovecraft, *SoInn* 606-607)

The depictions in question emphasize the anomalous and unappealing traits of the denizens of Innsmouth, including their disproportionate anatomies, interdigital membranes, and swollen, pale skin. Lovecraft employs descriptive language and vivid imagery to amplify the unique corporeal characteristics of these beings. Furthermore, his deliberate choice of the ocean as their source of origin is significant, as the ocean embodies a sublime encounter with the enduring fear of obscurity. The extensive uncharted terrain provides a blank slate on which to depict plausibly dreadful circumstances, making it an ideal setting for such narratives.

This deliberate use of the unknown not only amplifies the horror but also reflects Lovecraft's themes of existential insignificance and the fragility of human comprehension in the face of the vast, indifferent universe. Moreover, it harbors esoteric wisdom that could potentially deconstruct their inflated sense of significance. The subject at hand concerns the deterioration of one's mental faculties, as opposed to the act of physical self-harm. However, in the case of the inhabitants of Innsmouth, there is an additional aspect of physical metamorphosis and transformation. The town is situated near the ocean, making it a community on the edge of uncharted territory. This proximity to the ocean, an

embodiment of the sublime and the unknown, amplifies the horror as the residents undergo physical changes, symbolizing the blending of human and cosmic forces. The residents' bodily transformations signify a dissolution of distinct boundaries, leading readers to examine the fundamental principles of human comprehension. In this context, Lovecraft projects his racial anxieties onto existential difficulties, demonstrating how, in his view, the amalgamation of cultures and identities undermines the coherence of human reason and exposes its vulnerability in the presence of the cosmic sublime.

The narrator's fears regarding his ancestral lineage and subsequent identity formation are demonstrated by the conspicuous absence of his name in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. Anna Klein supports this point, noting that the narrator's lack of identity, especially in a story about genealogy, reflects his state of mind: "His identity is in a state of denial from the beginning" (Klein 186). This is evident in his recounting of the tales as a "layman": "For my contact with this affair has been closer than that of any other layman" (Lovecraft, *SoInn* 572). Despite his awareness of his non-professional status, he identifies himself as a member of the Innsmouth community. The narrator appears to be experiencing a state of disorientation within a liminal space. This space is marked by a sense of discomfort, as the boundaries between the individual and the collective, as well as the interior and exterior, are ambiguous and unstable. This mental state is characterized by indeterminacy, where meaning is in a constant state of flux and the conventional becomes unfamiliar. This is evidenced by his response to his own dual persona.: "And I

have carried away impressions which are yet to drive me to drastic measures" (Lovecraft, SoInn 572). Revealing his name would entail the verification of his persona, thereby leading to a precarious predicament, as it involves the acknowledgement of his ancestral ties to Innsmouth, given that he is of hybrid Deep One lineage, which he is attempting to disavow because it would lead to the destruction of his entire self, physically and mentally.

Conclusion

The pursuit of navigating the unknown and the accompanying fear in *At the Mountains of Madness* can only result in lunacy, just as even the smallest piece of information about the unexplored broke Danforth's psyche, made Manton go insane in "The Unnamable", ruined the unnamed narrator in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* mentally and physically, and resulted in the death of Professor Angell in *The Call of Cthulhu*. The concept of the sublime serves as a perpetual reminder of the inherent fragility of the human condition. Given that human knowledge of the cosmos and the natural world is inherently restricted, human dominion over these forces will inevitably encounter some degree of negation and opposition. It is the mortal limit of comprehending the endless that initially renders the sublime feasible as evidenced by Burke: "In reality, a great clearness helps but little towards affecting the passions, as it is in some sort of an enemy to all enthusiasms whatsoever" (Burke 102). The inability to fully comprehend the sublime is what drives its dread and achieves its effect on the characters.

The Lovecraftian sublime is that of pure terror. According to Ralickas, the "subject's imagination [participating] in the rising movement of the occurrence in issue" achieves Burke's definition of the sublime and acts as a "life-affirming notion of the absolute" (364). This perspective presupposes an engagement with the sublime that is advantageous, in which any "subjective crisis would be resolved through an affirmative move towards culture, reason, an organized world, and a unified, autonomous sense of self" (386). That same "subjective dilemma" cannot be addressed in Lovecraft's atheistic, deterministic, materialistic, and apathetic cosmological reality if it is restricted to a "[u]niverse [that] erodes culture, subverts reason, glorifies chaos, and destroys the integrity of the human subject" (386). Ralickas' reasoning makes it appear incorrect to use the word sublime in its humanist connotation in regard to Lovecraft's works. However, Ralickas agrees that "cosmic horror" comes from "the same source as the sublime, nonetheless" (Ralickas 367). This phenomenon results from a complex interplay of awe, fear, intrigue, and magnificence. Nonetheless, Lovecraft's interpretation of the sublime adopts a counter-humanistic perspective, subverting the hopeful aspects generally linked to the sublime as defined by Burke and Kant.

The manifestation of madness serves as a compelling testament to the vast and formidable influence of the universe. Even a mere fraction of the cosmos possesses the capacity to pose a grave threat to the human psyche in its entirety. It is apparent that within Lovecraft's realm, the faculty of logic is incapable of withstanding the overwhelming

deluge of existential terror. This state can be deemed as a manifestation of the sublime, as is evident from the state of being immobilized. Understanding the concept of the Lovecraftian sublime is crucial as it contextualizes Lovecraft's oeuvre within the broader debate on the sublime, which typically includes awe, beauty, and the boundaries of human comprehension. Through the examination of the Lovecraftian sublime, readers can more effectively comprehend how Lovecraft subverts these motifs, converting sensations of wonder into dread and underscoring humanity's insignificance in the presence of the cosmic unknown. This understanding enhances our analysis of his narratives and underscores the philosophical ramifications of experiencing the sublime, especially concerning dread, identity, and the vulnerability of human reason. The Lovecraftian sublime has the capacity to displace, disable, and estrange the human psyche. The aforementioned negations offer alternative perspectives of self-perception that are comparatively less self-centered than the conventional human-centered outlook.

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04

Lara Braun

The Influence of the Male Gaze on Women in Prison Movies: A Case Study of *Chained Heat* (1983) and *Orange Is the New Black* (2013)

Introduction

"She's what we call a 'stud,' which is very confusing for a nice girl like you, because, let's be honest, she looks like a man. . . My advice? Let her down easy. Lesbians can be very dangerous. It's the testosterone" ("Lesbian Request Denied" 35:20). This advice by the inmate counselor Sam Healy to the protagonist Piper Chapman in the third episode of season one of the show *Orange Is the New Black* represents the attitude of many people concerning women in prison. Lesbians especially have had a particularly bad reputation in movies about female prisoners and many movies still support those obsolete views. However, it is indisputable that the representation of women in prison in US popular culture has changed massively between the 1950s and the twenty-first century. One of the most dominant influences on movies about imprisoned females is the male gaze. The heterosexual male perspective combines the views of both the person behind the camera and of the audience. This specific way of looking at female bodies with the aim of male pleasure, especially in an environment without men, has largely shaped the portrayal of women in general and, more particularly, of lesbians inside prisons.

The movie *Chained Heat* by Paul Nicholas is a typical women in prison (WIP) film from 1983. The recurring plot elements of the genre are employed, including pictures of violent abuse, lesbian sex and male dominance. It is incontrovertible that the depiction of incarcerated girls and women has improved immensely since then. Sexual relations are shown to be more realistic and less tailored to male desire. While the sole purpose of WIP movies, a sub-genre of exploitation films, between the 1950s

and 1980s was the objectification of the female body, today the portrayal of WIP focuses far less on heterosexual categories and more on sexual diversity.

One prominent example of a less fetishized WIP film work is the TV show *Orange Is the New Black.* It was released in 2013 and tells the story of Piper Chapman, a seemingly innocent woman finding herself in prison. The audience follows the protagonist on her journey to freedom, not just literally but also sexually and personally. Yet, despite the happy ending with her prison wife Alex Vause, some WIP movie stereotypes are used to satisfy the erotic cultural fantasy of hyper-sexualized female prisoners. The male gaze's dominance over the portrayal of women in movies playing within women's prisons remains remarkable. Nevertheless, *Orange Is the New Black* (*OITNB*) manages to break several clichés surrounding women in prison movies. In contrast to *Chained Heat*, *OITNB* is no longer solely defined by the male gaze. A female perspective that has other functions than to please a male audience is included to portray lesbianism.

The aim of this paper is to critically analyze the influence of the male gaze on the representation of incarcerated women, with a specific focus on the depiction of lesbianism. Through a comparative analysis of *Chained Heat* (1983) and *Orange Is the New Black* (2013), the progress of modern WIP film works in terms of subverting conventional tropes of sexualized female prisoners is exemplified. In order to grasp the significance of the change that *OITNB* has brought, the male gaze needs to be inspected more closely. This gaze can be detected in the majority of WIP movies, among them *Chained Heat*. After comparing the exemplary WIP movie to *OITNB*, a clear distinction

between the two becomes apparent. Despite *OITNB* using some WIP movie elements, it has a different message. The stereotype of the prison lesbian, as pictured in original WIP movies, is broken to show lesbians with very different appearances and attitudes. The TV show is not scared of portraying diverse love that transcends the homo-and heterosexual binary system. From a feminist point of view, progress is evident.

The Male Gaze in Cinema

The term “male gaze” was first coined by the British film critic Laura Mulvey. In her seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" from 1975, she describes this particular view on females in literature and movies as the aesthetic pleasure of the male viewer. According to Mulvey, there is a fusion of the male camera perspective and the male audience (17). The relationship between the camera and the viewer relies on the voyeuristic pleasure of a heterosexual male audience and the display of women, often nude, on screen. Women are seen as sex objects instead of active subjects, unlike the men in movies. The male gaze perceives the female body as an object of desire with the purpose of providing pleasure.

The whole theory is based on the studies of the psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan who were both engaged in the concept of scopophilia, or in other words, the concept of deriving sexual pleasure from looking at something aesthetically pleasing. Mulvey profoundly criticizes the traditional representation of females in cinema because the male gaze perpetuates hetero-patriarchal norms. The reason behind the male need for hyper-sexualized women seems to be a fear of castration, at least as stated in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (Mulvey 6). Since a woman’s

lack of a penis threatens men's masculinity, the male species tries to compensate for this anxiety through voyeurism-sadism and fetishization (Mulvey 7). Either women need to be punished for their guilt caused by being phallus-free or certain parts of their bodies are oversexualized in order to reduce the male fear of castration. Therefore, in cinema, the camera tends to show multiple close-ups of women's bodies for longer periods. This shows the desire of not only a character within the movie but also that of the male spectator. Women who want to enjoy cinema are forced to identify with this male gaze of the male character as there is no alternative. Thus, the dominance of men over women is established. Women are dehumanized and only noticed because of their appearance. They are supposed to be objects of desire, not making any decisions or influencing the story in other ways than by showing their bodies: "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female." (Mulvey 16). A man limited to this role would be unthinkable: "The male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" (Mulvey 17).

This representation of the male and female gender is anything but equal and, therefore, partly causes the patriarchal hierarchy of dominant men and submissive women. Mulvey's study has severely been criticized as it disregards the representation of Black women, transwomen and queer forms of female spectatorship. Yet, for the purposes of this paper, Laura Mulvey's definition is adequate and the cinematic techniques of portraying the male gaze are vital for a successful analysis of *Chained Heat* and *Orange Is the New Black*. Typical examples of the male gaze include medium close-up shots of women from a man's perspective. A male character observes a

female from a distance. Usually, the women wear revealing outfits. Shots that fixate on a woman's body or fractions of it are encountered frequently. Common camera angles are the worms-eye perspective from beneath, high angles looking down on a woman or hip-level shots. Their main function is mirroring sexual gratification for the heterosexual male. This reaction is enhanced by many actresses being stereotypically attractive. A recurring character is the naive woman that makes up for her lack of intellect by being pretty. In the majority of movies with a noticeable male gaze, the actresses' careers in acting are secondary to their modeling careers. All of these reasons make it obvious that the movie industry is still male-dominated and the male gaze perpetuates patriarchy.

Women in Prison Movies and the Prison Lesbian

The Women in Prison movie is a subgenre of the exploitation movie. All WIP films tell stories of abuse, particularly sexual and physical exploitation. Their main goal is to show vulnerable women having a hard time inside a tough prison. These usually very attractive women have to endure abuse by fellow inmates, often the prison lesbian, as well as guards. Certain characteristics of WIP films are rarely missing. Those recurring plot elements include the protagonist, an innocent girl, being sent to prison. The criminal offense she has committed tends to be nonviolent. Once inside, she is immediately confronted with the forced exposure of her body. Through strip searches, group showers and cruel guards, the protagonist is forced into excessive nudity. Rape by prison guards or forced prostitution are also common features of WIP movies. In addition to that, the suicide of a fellow inmate, hard labor and revealing uniforms are

often included. This image of hyper-sexualized women is additionally reinforced by the forced sight of lesbian sex, several catfights and the unwanted attention of the prison lesbian who has already been mentioned. This character is significant for most WIP movies. More often than not the prison lesbian attempts to seduce the innocent new convict.

In her essay "Containing 'Deviant' Desire: Lesbianism, Heterosexuality, and the Women-in-Prison Narrative", Ann Ciasullo explains the importance of this specific character by describing the difference between a "true" lesbian, thus the prison lesbian, and the "pseudo" lesbian, often the protagonist. The prison lesbian enables the categorization of resolved sexual identities (Ciasullo 212). She massively differs from the "pseudo" lesbian, who only engages in homosexual activities because of her lack of choice. These differences become clear through her appearance and attitude. Generally, her name is short and very masculine, she dresses in traditionally male clothes and her body resembles that of a male person. She tends to have narrow hips and a flat chest (Ciasullo 209). The prison lesbian is often considered to take the place of men and threaten the "pseudo" lesbian's heterosexuality. Yet she is also the female character that men can identify with the most, especially during lesbian sex scenes.

In contrast to Mulvey's essay, the spectator does not adopt a male position as there are no men around in those scenes. Hence, cross-gender identification is made possible and male viewers imagine themselves in the prison lesbian's position. The producers of WIP movies have to lessen this threat of masculinity being replaced by homosexuals accordingly. It is a situation that the majority of male WIP viewers would

not approve of. Ciasullo offers two solutions. Firstly, many women reunite with important men in their life upon being released from prison. This can be their husbands, fathers or priests. All of these men are possible characters with whom the male spectators can identify. Often, they save the innocent women from the philandering of the prison lesbian (Ciasullo 217). Secondly, prison lesbians tend to remain in prison. Through that, the male fear of the contagion of homosexuality among women is diminished. It can certainly be observed that there is a tremendous influence of the male gaze on the entire genre of WIP movies. Often there are explicit scenes of pornography. Their function is to fuel the male pleasure of the spectator. Through the eyes of a male prison guard or the prison lesbian, their sexual fantasies can be lived out. Desires such as voyeurism, fetishism and sadism can be experienced in a second-hand manner. Strip searches, whippings, spraying with water hoses, bondage and beatings are performed on the women. The initiator of these actions is usually a prison guard. This character is, most of the time, either male or a lesbian. This person in a position of power fortifies the strict hierarchies within the prison walls and lets the typically male audience enjoy the sensation of power.

This feeling is achieved through the degradation of attractive women who have no possibility of refusing the actions that are forced upon them. The patriarchal dynamics between men and women are manifested. Women have few options for escaping the abuse they have to endure since they are imprisoned. The institution, whether penitentiary or reform school, offers people in power, especially male guards, the chance to act out their most sadistic fantasies without any fear of repercussions.

Few other environments provide less protection for their inhabitants. Prison, at least the way it is pictured in WIP films, is the epitome of patriarchy. The whole concept of the movies is to create a space that allows men to disparage women. Almost all characters in charge are male, whether the typically cruel warden or the guards. The others, including the prison lesbian, possess at least some characteristics associated with masculinity. This can be their gamine appearance, dominant attitude or aggressive sexual behavior. Concerning perceptions this explains the most common camera angles in WIP movies. They tend to linger on nude women's bodies from a distance. This is the point of view of a prison guard. Explicit lesbian sex scenes, contrariwise, are often zoomed in. Now the spectator takes up the role of the prison lesbian. The protagonist's perspective is rarely shown since the characters of identification are supposed to be men or at least characters with male attributes.

Undoubtedly, prison is portrayed as an anti-feminist space with the sole purpose of pleasing men. One might think that this attitude ended when WIP movies became less popular after the 1990s, but new productions have not become more emancipated.

Chained Heat as a Typical Example of WIP Movies

Chained Heat is an R-rated movie from 1983 directed by Paul Nicholas. It is a representative example of an American WIP film. Not only are most of the recurring plot elements of WIP narratives included, but the camera angles also comply with most WIP films. Already the poster stresses the male gaze's impact on the movie. The silhouette of a woman in a tight shirt and a skirt that flares out at the hips can be seen.

This straightforwardly puts a focus on her narrow waist and wide hips. She has long blonde hair and stands in a voluptuous pose behind bars. Despite not seeing her face, most viewers would consider her attractive. Her anonymity, caused by the lack of visible facial features, reveals the male gaze. She is already interchangeable, a mere object. In addition to the convict behind bars, two women fighting can be spotted at the bottom of the poster. They are solely black shadows but again certain traits associated with femininity can be detected. Both have long hair, detailed breasts and well-shaped legs. All women are situated in the background of the poster compared to the correctional officer on the top right. He is the only person pictured in color. His fingers are visible in full detail, as is the gun in his hand and his strong biceps. In this case, his hidden face is not a symbol of exchangeability but a way of letting male spectators identify with him more easily. Everything about the man signifies power. Of course, his extraordinarily strong arm is one factor. Besides that, he also carries a gun in his hand, although not the way one would expect a prison guard to hold it. Instead of carrying it around over his shoulder or actively attempting to shoot, he just lets it lie in his hand without his fingers being close to the trigger. It is pointing towards the woman behind bars. The combination of the man's tense arm and his gun pointed at the thighs of the woman reminds the viewer of a phallus. This act symbolizes sexual dominance over the attractive blonde and is supposed to make male viewers want to watch the movie. The specific pose could also be explained by Mulvey's theory of male castration fear. The male spectator is reassured of the superiority of the male genitalia over female prisoners. Hyper-sexualized women and punishment are promised. Not

only the man in color symbolizes power but also another guard who is standing some feet away from the fighting women. He stands with his feet wide apart and a gun in his hands. Because of the dark, it is unclear whether he enjoys watching the women or whether he is simply a passive bystander, just like the audience.

All in all, this poster can be seen as a taste of what is to come. The movie itself is the prototype of a WIP movie. Accordingly, the plot is rather simplistic. Carol Henderson, a young woman who accidentally killed a man in a car accident, has to serve 18 months in prison. Inside she is confronted with a prostitution ring led by guards, an intrusive warden, the aggressive top dog Ericka and physical abuse. All of this fits perfectly into the genre of exploitation movies. Prison is the embodiment of hell for the naïve protagonist in *Chained Heat*. Henderson almost immediately turns into Warden Backman's new object of desire and he eventually takes sexual advantage of her. The prison lesbian Ericka violates Carol's privacy again and again. Several minor characters are murdered. Abuse of prisoners by guards, regardless of their gender, seems to be common practice. Unsurprisingly, there is neither much diversity regarding the cast nor is there noteworthy character development. Just like one would expect from a classic WIP film, the goal of this movie is to generate male pleasure through archaic sex scenes and violence. In general, a lot of nudity can be observed. Female bodies are exposed almost constantly. Moreover, voyeurism is portrayed in various ways, often using film techniques that play a vital role in the WIP genre. An example of such film techniques and how they coincide with the impact of the male gaze on *Chained Heat* is the very first scene. A beautiful blonde prisoner suffers abuse

at the hands of a prison guard. The scene (00:20) starts with a close-up of the man's hand. The perspective is around waist height and the audience watches Stone, the prison guard, walking aggressively towards a cell while dangling his keys. While this could be a sign of impatience or sexual appetite, the gesture certainly symbolizes power over the young woman, in terms of sexual dominance but of course also her freedom. During the officer's confident walk toward the cell, the movie seems almost without color. Everything is set in grey and blue. Stone is visible as just the silhouette of a man. He could be any self-confident individual. This immediately offers spectators the possibility to identify with him. Inside the cell, there is an attractive blonde in handcuffs. The camera frontally zooms in on her extremely scared face. It expresses fear and defeat. She is the complete opposite of the guard. It is a predator and prey situation. The contrast between the two people could not be clearer. He promises danger. She, on the other hand, not only lacks all radiance of confidence but also cannot hide anywhere. This impression is further strengthened by the dark lighting in the corridor of the prison. By contrast, the room is lit up, her dress is light and her hair is blonde: the prisoner shines bright like a saint. Her childlike facial features add to the image of a virgin. In the next cut, the imprisoned girl can be seen from slightly above (00:43). This high angle leads to the spectator watching her from the abuser's point of view. The guard is standing in front of her while she is hiding in the corner of her bed. Reverse shots are used to picture the abuser and his victim successively in fast sequences. Next, there is a close-up of Guard Stone (00:45). His face glows fanatically, which is achieved by his pupils reflecting the neon prison lamps. The look on his face is

obviously one of lust. This very first scene already promises the fulfillment of one classic male fantasy. A beautiful and seemingly innocent young woman in handcuffs lies defenselessly at the feet of a powerful man. This image offers a first glimpse at *Chained Heat*.

Another scene emphasizes the voyeurism of most movies of this genre even more. In this scene (08:24), an attractive woman is doing a striptease. She is visible in a medium shot, showing most of her body including her face. Again the technique of reverse shots is used to switch back and forth between the inmate Debby and Warden Backman. The point of view changes between the warden's perspective of the woman from his lowered position in a Jacuzzi and her view of him. He lies in the hot tub in his office. Holding a camera, Backman films the prisoner undressing, clearly enjoying himself. In the next scene, the spectator sees explicitly what Backman films. Now Debby's face is partly cut off and the distinct focus is on her breasts. The camera zooms in. This same scene (08:07) shows a double case of voyeurism. On the right side of the screen, the naked warden films the pretty inmate with his camera and on the left side, Debby can be seen from behind. It is an over-the-shoulder shot since her body can be seen as well as his reaction of pure lust to it. In this way, the spectator somewhat mirrors the warden's behavior. As viewers, we simply watch Debby from the other side. Once again the woman is the object of desire and portrayed in completely different ways than Backman. He is not sexualized at all. The warden is hardly seen shirtless while Debby's breasts and buttocks are constantly brought into focus. Mulvey's theory clearly applies.

In the following scene, Backman pulls Debby into the hot tub with him. While he puts the camera away, there is even more attention on voyeurism. Instead of showing an explicit sex scene, the camera zooms in on a hidden camera on top of the chandelier (09:40). The new camera perspective is from a high angle. Now the camera setup, especially the medium shots, resembles that of an actual pornographic video. With his professional equipment, Warden Backman's scopophilic traits become evident. He enjoys watching erotic videos at least as much as the act of sex itself since he does not give all of his attention to Debby. In this way, many viewers can further identify with him. Even if they are unable to physically please the appealing woman on screen, they can eyeball her body from behind the camera and imagine themselves in Backman's position. The film technique of using a camera within a movie enables the movie to explicitly portray the male gaze in cinema through Backman's way of filming. However, the purpose of this method is not a criticism of the objectification of women but rather the opposite. Male viewers are double-pleased in a way, since they see Debby through the movie's lens and that of Backman which focuses even more on her feminine curves than the WIP movie camera. Besides, they are reassured of the human delight in watching erotic videos. Just like Laura Mulvey's theory states, Debby is merely a sex object used by the character in *Chained Heat* and the viewer to serve their needs.

Quite predictably though, there is another scene (20:02) that perhaps takes Warden Backman's voyeurism further. *Chained Heat*'s protagonist Carol Henderson arrives at the prison and has to endure the hardships of most WIP film characters. She

is visibly scared to enter the facility and has to go through standard procedures before staying for good. When having her fingerprints taken, she is surreptitiously watched by the warden and his colleague Captain Taylor. They intensely stare at the new inmates through one-way glass in a wall. Already this short scene demonstrates the warden's view of Henderson as nothing more than a sex object he wants to possess. He observes her secretly and asks Captain Taylor for more information about her. Long sequences of watching a woman without her noticing are common elements of WIP movies. The use of one-way glass is a film aid to properly portray this lust stemming from watching without Carol knowing that she is an object of lechery. In this scene (20:20) she seems to directly return his look. Then she begins to cry. At this moment it is not clear whether this happens due to her fear of prison or her defenselessness at being exposed like this. However, in the next cut it becomes apparent that from her point of view, there is only a mirror on the wall. For the viewer, this stresses the different perspectives regarding voyeurism. This is achieved through two contrasting filming methods. The first shot is from inside the spying room. It is an over-the-shoulder shot, seemingly from a person standing behind Backman. Again, the spectator adopts the voyeuristic view of all events. The next shot is from the regular hallway of the prison. Carol's reflection can be seen from the mirror and this secondhand view is all that the audience learns about her true feelings. What becomes evident in this scene is that women are not always aware of being sexualized. In another movie, this might have been a way of illustrating the creepiness of lusting men but in *Chained Heat,* scopophilia is used to portray Backman's power. He has full control over Carol Henderson. In his patriarchal eyes, her

freedom and her body belong to him. Throughout the movie, he turns more aggressive in his behavior toward Carol and eventually rapes her. There are countless scenes of violent exploitation, mostly between guards and inmates. Yet, even without a closer analysis of these, the general anti-feminist attitude of the movie leaves no space for doubt.

Nonetheless, there are some rare exceptions, one of them being the portrayal of the prison lesbian. The top dog Ericka is a beautiful and feminine woman. Her aggressive manners bear a strong resemblance to the stereotypical prison lesbian described above but her appearance is completely different. She has full breasts, long blonde hair and wears the same clothes as any other woman inside the prison. Even her name has nothing masculine about it. This femininity is true for all women pictured engaging in lesbian sex. None of them have short hair or androgynous bodies. Perhaps this is to make the male viewers less jealous of rivals, which a masculine looking lesbian would count as, and more erotically excited about homosexual sensuality that does not threaten traditional gender boundaries. However, Ericka fulfills the expectation of a "true" prison lesbian in terms of her unwanted attention towards Carol. In their very first scene together (24:28), the top dog violently jerks Carol's face towards her and forces a kiss upon her lips. When Carol shakes her off, one can clearly see the disgust on her face (24:31). While sexual abusers are certainly not always men, Ericka's behavior corresponds exactly to that of all men in this movie. Throughout the story, she continues to pester Henderson but, in the end, they wind up joining forces against common enemies. Ericka stops her erotic advances and eventually, if Ciasullo's

definition of a prison lesbian is used, does not depict a "true" lesbian anymore. Only in this way is a platonic relationship between the women possible. Although the classic prison lesbian does not appear in this WIP movie, there are still more than enough examples of why this movie is representative of the whole genre. Sexual exploitation is omnipresent, lesbian sex scenes are shown in full detail, the male pleasure of watching women is pictured in the character of Warden Backman and the plot around Carol Henderson could not be more in line with the WIP film guidelines.

Orange Is the New Black as Modern WIP Representation

Orange Is the New Black is an American TV show created by Jenji Kohan in 2013 and one of Netflix's most-watched original series. After six years the show ended, leaving its fans with seven seasons of drama revolving around the protagonist Piper Chapman. Unlike *Chained Heat,* it can definitely be classified as mainstream film work. At first sight, its plot resembles *Chained Heat*. Piper Chapman is blonde, pretty and seemingly innocent, thus matching the appearance of a classic WIP movie protagonist. For a crime she committed in her youth she is sentenced to 15 months in prison. Hence, most of the show plays inside Litchfield Penitentiary. Multiple prisoners' struggles with corruption, guards brutalizing prisoners, sexual abuse and rivalry among the inmates are depicted. However, *OITNB* by far exceeds older WIP movies, including *Chained Heat,* in terms of illustrating sexual diversity, racial inequality and class-related issues. There is a clear focus on intersectionality, which is already visible on the cover of the first season. It is a long shot of a group of inmates and guards in a prison bathroom. In the middle, there is the protagonist, Piper Chapman. She looks directly at the camera.

Her body language seems rather scared. Her shoulders are slouched, her hands are hidden between her knees and the look on her face is full of worries. With her shoulder-long hair and her generally feminine appearance Piper seems like a typical WIP movie character. The other women and guards on the poster highlight *OITNB*'s more progressive portrayal of prison. In the bathroom stalls next to Chapman, there is a diverse group of inmates. They are Black, Latinas and some are older than fifty, a rarity in WIP narratives. Of course, some familiar prison stereotypes are picked up. George Mendez, the male guard on the left, stands straight and with his legs apart. One hand lays on his belt buckle and the other partly holds on to his handcuffs and partly rests on his crotch. This pose once again demonstrates power, sexually and physically. What makes him somewhat similar to Warden Backman is his intense gaze. Shamelessly and full of lust he stares at two lesbians in the stall next to him. His face is turned to the side so the viewer can see him giving the women his full attention. The two women, Nicky Nichols and Lorna Morello, are queer in accordance with the male desire. Even on this poster, their bodies are intertwined. In the two stalls on Piper's left, there are three inmates. Here, in contrast to Mendez and the LGBTQIA+ couple, diversity that was nonexistent in former WIP movies can be seen. Especially the character of Poussey Washington, standing between Chapman's girlfriend Alex Vause and Tiffany Doggett, breaks the image of a prison lesbian. Her appearance may appear androgynous but throughout the show, she is not pictured as an aggressor at all. Despite of her short hair and narrow hips, she does not show any harsh behavior towards women she is interested in. By creating a lesbian that does not fulfill any

negative homosexual prisoner clichés, like a tendency towards sexual harassment that can be seen in *Chained Heat*, *OITNB* has gained an extremely likable character. Alex Vause, right next to Piper, is another lesbian who does not fit Ciasullo's categorization of a prison lesbian. Neither she nor Piper look masculine in any way even if Alex is initially depicted as the "true" lesbian. On the contrary, out of the two, Alex is the one with the curvier body. The possible relationship between the two women, however, is not hinted at yet.

Besides Alex and Poussey, the other characters on Piper's right portray diversity. The African American community, on the poster represented through Suzanne Warren and Tasha Jefferson, is visible. This is a big step compared to WIP movies that usually just feature one character of color, if any. Often the Black lesbian served as an aggressor threatening the white protagonist. Suzanne Warren stares at Piper Chapman in this obsessive manner while Jefferson happily smiles at the camera. As mentioned at the beginning of this essay, the prison counselor Mister Healy describes Warren's appearance as that of a man in an extremely derogatory way. Her gaze certainly resembles Mendez'. However, during the first season, her mental illness and likable character are underlined. Eventually, her initial obsession with Chapman turns into friendship. Next to Jefferson, there is Galina Reznikov. She is an inmate older than forty and therefore unthinkable in any WIP film. The genre solely features young women without natural signs of aging. Additionally, a transwoman is standing next to Reznikov. With Sophia Burset, there is probably more representation of gender diversity in *OITNB* than in all WIP movies from the last decade combined. Rigid gender

divisions are disassembled one by one. Through all seasons, the show depicts homosexual men and women, pansexuality, bisexuality, inmates of androgynous appearance and transwomen. While the two Latinas in the poster, Gloria Mendoza and Dayanara Diaz, add to the racial variety in the show, the way Officer Bennet holds Diaz in the far right stall is reminiscent of the guards in *Chained Heat*. From their pose, it cannot be said if their obvious sexual relationship is consensual.

All in all, the analysis of the poster of the first season of *Orange Is the New Black* leaves many open questions. On the one hand, it is considerably more progressive than other movies playing within women's prisons. The characters are all shown to be memorable individuals worth a second glance and not purely charming women with the purpose of pleasing heterosexual male viewers. Different ethnicities are shown, there is not just hetero-and homosexuality and inmates of all ages are represented. This is the main difference to the poster of *Chained Heat.* On the other hand, the male gaze has not completely disappeared. Guard Mendez enjoys watching lesbians, the vulnerable protagonist is stared at by an androgynous-looking prisoner and Officer Bennet seems to have an illegal relationship with an imprisoned woman. Just as the poster of *OITNB* offers a myriad of impressions, the show continues to observe the prison system from multiple perspectives. Although some scenes conform to the archaic elements of WIP movies from the 1970s and 1980s, the actual aim of the show is to show both a variety of stories and also the collective trauma of women in prison caused by the extremely flawed system of incarceration. However, all this is not clear in *OITNB*'s first episode.

Perhaps the beginning of the show leads people to think that the show is merely a comedy following the guidelines of most WIP film works. At least the start resembles *Chained Heat* in some ways. *OITNB* too expresses the cultural erotic fantasy that has been around for decades and leads to the production of new WIP movies. In the very first minute of the first episode, Piper Chapman is already fully exposed during her shower in prison. She looks up to the ceiling with a pained facial expression (Trailer 00:12). The camera slowly shifts downwards along with the water stream. It is a close shot and the spectator can clearly see the desperation in her face. This leads to the audience feeling pity for Piper. Unlike classic WIP movies, *OITNB* has a large percentage of females among its viewers. Thus, parts of the show are experienced through Piper's perspective and the spectator identifies with Piper. This was never the case with Carol Henderson in *Chained Heat.* For one thing, Piper presents a female perspective not known hitherto, then again, the viewer experiences prison from Chapman's biased point of view. As a white upper-middle-class Christian, she is certainly prejudiced against other income classes, ethnicities and religions. A similarity between the TV show and most WIP films is the rest of the plot of the first episode. When she arrives at Litchfield Penitentiary, Piper Chapman is immediately stripped naked, which makes her extremely uncomfortable. Next to that, there are rude guards like Mendez, other inmates staring at her intensely and first glimpses of lesbian sex. Last but not least, her fiancé Larry is introduced. He seems like a good guy, another classic WIP movie character. So far, *OITNB* does not differ much from a WIP movie.

However, in the third episode of season one, the topic of homosexuality is addressed in the show. As already mentioned, the prison counselor Sam Healy fully represents the male fear of being replaced by lesbians. The reason for their conversation is Piper being stalked by Suzanne Warren. The mentally ill woman thinks of Chapman as her wife without actually making sexual advances. Officer Healy severely dislikes Warren due to her masculine appearance and her behavior. Since he, as a character within the story, cannot identify with her, he perceives Warren as a threat. This is why he warns the seemingly straight protagonist to stay away from her. Healy even labels lesbians as dangerous, which fits perfectly into the cliché of a prison lesbian. The scene, starting at 35:05 minutes into the third episode, is shown in reverse shots, changing between Healy's and Chapman's perspectives. This allows the viewers to see both of their reactions to the conversation. Angry at the thought of Warren and Chapman sharing a cell, Healy says the title-giving words: "Lesbian Request Denied" (35:18). This statement shows his homophobic attitude towards Warren and his discontent with Piper, a woman with a boyfriend waiting for her, adopting her homosexuality in his eyes. When Piper explains that she dislikes Warren just as much as he does, Healy's voice and facial expression immediately turn softer. He supports the division of "real" and "pseudo" lesbians and believes Chapman to be a victim of a prison lesbian, in this case, Warren. Chapman is not impressed by his warning, which is visible in several close-ups (e.g., 36:08). Her attitude clearly illustrates the modern society's opinion of trivial statements like that.

The show basically makes fun of outdated lesbian clichés used in WIP movies. None of the inmates in *OITNB* completely comply with the rigid standards of prison lesbians listed by Ciasullo. The most important couple in the show, Alex and Piper, does not fit into the category of "true" and "pseudo" lesbians at all. The show may start with Piper being engaged to a man and allegedly being over her former lesbian lover Alex but there is a considerable shift in her sexual identity. Throughout the story, they resume their relationship and it becomes apparent that it is more than an adventure for Piper. Their dynamics change considerably. While Alex starts their relationship by being more dominant, this shifts throughout the seasons. Piper turns into the more aggressive initiator, thereby completely losing the image of the straight woman wanting to experiment. Even though it takes seven seasons for the word *bisexual* to be mentioned, Piper's bisexuality is omnipresent from the beginning. In the first minute of the show, Chapman can first be seen showering with Alex (00:22) and bathing with Larry (00:34). In this manner, *OITNB* finally breaks the idea of straight women in prison experimenting with lesbians and then, after having served their time, resuming their heterosexual relationships. On the one hand, she is released from prison, which provides an easy solution to the problem of the male fear of being replaced by lesbian lovers. On the other hand, she stays with her wife even after finishing her sentence instead of going back to Larry. This ending is almost revolutionary, especially compared to older representations of imprisoned females. Furthermore, Chapman is not the only *OITNB* character who refuses to label their sexuality. Lorna Morello, who is also portrayed on the cover of season one, has relationships with more than one gender as

well. All of this shows *OITNB*'s successful attempt to change the typically male-dominated perspective on women's prisons to a female one. Additionally, not only a female point of view is pictured but also a Black, Jewish, Asian American, Christian, bisexual, transgender and Latina perspective. This degree of variety is unprecedented among WIP narratives and could not distance itself further from misogynistic movies like *Chained Heat.*

Conclusion

Movies about women's prisons have changed a lot in the last decades. Generally, they are far less focused on nude females controlled by men and instead include a feminist perspective on the prison. This change is visible through the two examples *Chained Heat* from 1983 and the contemporary TV show *Orange Is the New Black.* While the former is altogether dominated by the male gaze, *OITNB* fights outdated stereotypes about women of all sexualities within prison walls. *Chained Heat* has only one single aim: male pleasure. This is achieved through close-ups of attractive women in revealing clothes or completely nude, the specific depiction of voyeurism, camera angles that force the viewer to adopt a male perspective, and a myriad of sex scenes. *Orange Is the New Black* is radically different. For one thing, it also uses some classic WIP movie elements, including a naïve protagonist with a male fiancé waiting for her on the outside. Then again, the show from 2013 exceeds all expectations set in the first episode. The male gaze, which always aims for the satisfaction of its male-dominated audience, is disregarded to make room for other perspectives. These stories include women of color, transwomen, and women of various ages. Different

sexualities are portrayed as well. The old binary system of homo- and heterosexuality is broken through the openly bisexual protagonist Piper Chapman who eventually chooses a relationship with her lesbian lover over her former fiancé Larry. This romantic development stands in contrast to the outdated view on prison lesbians that movies like *Chained Heat* largely support. Even if *OITNB* at first seems to illustrate certain characters, for example, Suzanne Warren, as predatory lesbians, it becomes obvious that all those clichés are eventually replaced. This insight simply demands another close watching of the show. Admittedly, the show focuses on Piper Chapman and her biased point of view on many characters seems to follow some WIP guidelines. Yet it does not cater to the audience of typical WIP movies, which is more interested in seeing steamy lesbian shower sex and guards having a good time with pretty inmates. Instead, the show pictures Piper's character development that goes hand in hand with her coming to terms with her own sexuality. This way women can be portrayed in a less superficial way than in classic WIP movies. Just how different those two films are can already be seen in the analysis of the two posters. *Chained Heat* is bound to demonstrate male power over beautiful women. They are replaceable and their only function is to please men inside the prison as well as the ones watching. The cover of *OITNB*'s first season shows a group of individual women of all sizes and ages. Not all of them conform to society's strict beauty standards and this variety surely does not delight all male viewers. *Orange Is the New Black*, unlike most WIP movies, thus functions as an inclusive space for a myriad of women and its worldwide success leaves

hope for more representation of sexual and general diversity in movies about women's prisons.

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