Body Text

How We Remember Now: Personal Memorials and the Democratization of Commemoration, by **DAN FRIES**. The Modern and Postmodern in Sofia Coppola's *Lost In Translation*, by **MERAL KOCAK**. Reconciling Language, Categorization, and Authority in *The British Government and Jihad*, by **ALISON MARQUSEE**. Slavery and Pokémon, by **CRUZ ARROYO III**. Like Son Like Father: The Transference of Disabled Identities from Children to Their Parents, by **JESS LIBOW**.

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Editors' Introduction

Dear *Body Text* reader,

We are excited to present the 2014–15 edition of *Body Text*, which contains a variety of invitations to adapt: to alternative histories of the present, to virtual topographies of commemoration, and to more reparative syllabi.

The *Body Text* Editorial Board has had a busy year putting together this issue. And we experienced some turnover: Sydney Jones, our former editor-in-chief, graduated in May, as did fellow senior Connor Odekirk, while juniors Carolyn Woodruff and Hannah Zigler and sophomore Madison Arnold-Scerbo joined the board.

Guided by Jones's insight, we read, discussed, and selected what we hope you will find to be a robust collection of essays. The essays were chosen for their efficacy, command of comparison, and breadth of scope. The authors engage a variety of tones and voices: polemical, educative, satirical, and frank. In the following pages, you will encounter Jynx and Ludicolo of Pokémon, online monuments, transferred identities, "liquid love," and reconciliation. Although the essays range across disciplines and vary in subject matter, they share an interest in adaptation.

Dan Fries explores the evolution of the memorial for the digital age in his piece, "How We Remember Now: Personal Memorials and the Democratization of Commemoration."

Through examples that range from the roadside to the desert to the virtual world, Fries suggests that as we have access to new spaces, our systems of memorial shift as well. As Fries himself puts it, in this new world, "people carve out the spaces they need for their specific kind of mourning...people can use new tools to carry out old rituals."

"That is what the postmodern world is all about. Many people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative," reads the epigraph—an excerpt from Jean-François Lyotard—to Meral Kocak's "The Modern and Postmodern in Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*." The essay itself suggests that the ambivalent "lost-ness" Lyotard describes as fundamental to the postmodern condition and the adrift, foreign wanderings of the film's characters are importantly related. Guiding us through the theories of Georg Simmel and Zygmunt Bauman, including concepts like "liquid love," the "stranger," and "dyadic friendship," Meral offers a compelling reading of both *Lost in Translation* and (post)modern sociality.

In "Reconciling Language, Categorization, and Authority in *The British Government and Jihad*," Alison Marqusee traces the fascinating life of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a Punjabi Muslim who claimed to be a reincarnation of Jesus Christ. Marqusee analyzes Ahmad's deft and inherently political writings and provides a look into the complex dynamics of nineteenth-century India, a national landscape shaped by colonial rule and diverse religious affiliations. Ultimately, Marqusee argues that the politico-theological ideas advanced by Ahmad (both explicitly and subtextually) continue to influence millions, and

play an important role in modern understandings of government, religion, and jihad's significance.

In "Slavery and Pokémon," a creative response paper to an English course on the representation of American slavery in literature and film, Cruz Arroyo III uses Pokémon examples as jumping off points for his critique of race at Haverford and the English Department's lack of courses on people of color.

In her piece "Like Son, Like Father," Jess Libow explores disability and family dynamics; specifically, she conceives of how disability can be "transferred" from a child with disabilities to a non-disabled parent. Using stories from Andrew Solomon's book *Far From the Tree*, she demonstrates how parents of children with disabilities undergo identity transformations as they interact with their children and the new environments they have to enter as parents of a child with disabilities.

We hope you enjoy these essays as much as we have.

Sincerely,

Sydney Jones '15
Leila Braun '16
Emma Lumeij '16
Courtney Carter '17
Carolyn Woodruff '17
Hannah Zigler '17
Madison Arnold-Scerbo '18

How We Remember Now: Personal Memorials and the Democratization of Commemoration

DAN FRIES

For the majority of history, memorials have been carved from stone. Memorials convey through their size and material the importance of the thing they commemorate; they catch the eyes of passersby, and remind them to pay attention and remember. Since memorials are historically state-sanctioned, it has been up to our leaders to decide what we value enough to hold in our collective memories. However, people have found ways to create their own memorials alongside such systems: more frequently, memorials are popping up that are smaller, that are less physical and less permanent, and as we have entered the digital age, these spaces have moved from the physical to the virtual, as memorials move from the side of the road, to Google Maps, to Facebook, to video games.

Roadside memorials are something of a folk tradition—they seem to have their origins in Spanish funerary tradition, but when they spread to America, they were first adopted by the police. Eventually the tradition spread to civilians across the country. While all are easily identifiable as "roadside memorials," they differ widely from region to region. Some are

crosses, some are wreaths, and some are official road signs. Some feature photos, while others don't even have names. In Holly Everett's book *Roadside Crosses in Contemporary Memorial Culture*, she writes about their history and significance: "When I first became conscious of them, as a teenage driver, I thought of them as grim warnings. I did not know then that the crosses had a long history in Mexico and the southwestern United States, nor that they had analogues in several other countries." For Everett, these crosses are "a unique form of public, belief-centered material culture, ... [occupying] a rare place not only in the realm of roadside attractions, but in the cognitive map of the individual, a uniqueness that renders them extra-legal, or 'outlaw'" (1). She discusses sites of disaster that were commemorated by individuals before they could be commemorated by the state—Ground Zero in New York in September 2001, the site of the car crash that killed Princess Diana in 1997, and the deaths of other celebrities—suggesting that these collectively commemorated sites are not just particularly tragic disasters, but that they capture the beliefs of the public; they carry not only sadness, but also a sort of "pop-culture intrigue." They are also not independent of officially commemorated sites—many memorials to those killed in war are supplemented with wreaths or crosses or offerings of other types. But, as Everett points out, "There are...an increasing number of sanctified spaces created in memory of individuals who were neither well known, nor martyrs...across North America" (7). At the same time though, these memorials are somewhat out of the way—

they are, or can become, difficult to visit, and sometimes are abandoned after some period of time.

Much further out of the way, where it will not be discovered by a passing motorist, the monument constructed by the organization Les Familles de l'Attentat du DC10 d'UTA (The Families of the Terrorist Attack on UTA DC-10) lies about 280 miles from the nearest town in the southern Sahara Desert (Google Maps). As seen in Figure 1, the sand-swept monument is fashioned out of pieces from the plane, which crashed a few miles away and is in the shape of a large black compass rose with an outline of the DC-10 aircraft left empty in the middle to symbolize the loss of the plane and those on board (Google Maps). Like the roadside memorials, this one is at the site of the disaster and memorializes people who were neither celebrities nor martyrs (although some might argue that civilians who die in terrorist attacks can have a lot in common with martyrs). While they did have financial support, the families and the locals built the memorial with their own efforts, without the physical aid of any state. A documentary was made as well, detailing the crash and subsequent construction (Carret). Demonstrating a high degree of technological familiarity, the organization set up by the families also has a website that contains links to these media, as well as to news reports, pictures, and contact details. They outline the successes of the project:

> "Having succeeded at making the media and public powers aware of our living pain and our expectations.

> Having encouraged the numerous relatives of the victims to express themselves and make themselves heard directly, participating as well in their work of mourning. Having obtained the engagement of Libya in taking account of the rights that were omitted from the civil process in 1999. Having obtained January 9th 2004 a supplementary indemnity of 170 million US dollars, or $1 million for the family of each victim."[1]

The website sells the documentary, accepts donations, and provides links to the many mentions of itself on the wider Internet, among them lists of "interesting things on Google Maps." The memorial also resembles a work of "land art." In that way, the memorial (or art piece, if you will) is linked to the folk art style that also effects the aesthetic of the roadside crosses and street art.

The desert memorial and the roadside memorials are linked in another significant way as well: both face or faced censure from governments. The families of the UTA DC-10 attack had to spend more than fifteen years fighting their case against the Libyan government, while in the case of the roadside memorials, some are legal and state-sanctioned, while others seem to be more semi-accidental guerrilla efforts. They are ubiquitous enough that those who might want to erect a roadside memorial might not be aware of any legal issues surrounding them, although such legislation exists in many states. In 2006, Ian Urbina reported for the *New York Times*, "Roadside memorials... have become so numerous and so

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[1] My translation from French.

distracting and dangerous, highway officials say, that more and more states are trying to regulate them. Some, like Montana and California, allow the memorials, but only if alcohol was a factor in the crash. Others, like Wisconsin and New Jersey, limit how long the memorials can stay in place." The subject of the article was a new initiative by Delaware to set up a park designed for memorials like these, but, as he quotes Arthur Jipson, professor of law at the University of Dayton, Ohio, "Governments are reluctant to tell people how to mourn...at the same time, it's their job to keep these spaces public." The article goes into some depth on contemporary perspectives of the memorials—arguments for them as tools in grieving processes, and arguments against them in their drama and religious imagery. In New Mexico, however, "the memorials are protected...as 'traditional cultural properties' by the state's Historic Preservation Division," because of their connection to an old Spanish tradition involving the marking of intermittent resting places.

The Internet is an interesting alternative to these kinds of folk art memorials, because it represents a different kind of personal and individually created space for mourning. On Wikipedia, pages are updated when people die, and on Facebook, there are ways to commemorate the dead through the same pages they used while living. There are also websites specifically designed to provide such virtual spaces, some of which save obituaries, but others, like gonetoosoon.org allow for much more involved pages, with sections for "Cause of Death" and "Light a Candle." I find something very off-putting

about these websites. Perhaps it is the same aversion to death one might feel in a cemetery, but the atypical or new form of these tributes makes those emotions fresher and less familiar. I have a family member who has a very empty page on tributes.com—I do not know who set it up, and there are no pictures of anyone on it, but there are identifying details. The strangest detail is the section of the page marked "More... Funeral Home Obituaries... See More" and lists three people from different towns who died in the same hospice. The combination of social media and death is maybe an effort toward a more personal remembering than a gravestone, but there's also an aspect of the uncanny in it. The page feels like a representation of the deceased and yet is completely alien from him or her.

While separate websites exist, a more common solution—especially when younger people pass away—appears to be the use of Facebook to remember them. In 2009, Facebook introduced "memorial pages," which would freeze the page of the deceased, and make it visible only to that person's Facebook friends (Moore). This page would not be able to make posts or have updates, but interestingly, this isn't always the most appealing option for friends or family members. If someone has the password to the account, it can be used to let friends leave notes on the page—thank yous, condolences, memories—for years afterward. One of the peculiarities of this option is that according to Facebook's internal logic, nothing has changed—the site will still remind users of the birthday of the deceased, suggest them as a friend to people with mutual

friends, and perform various other functions that it performs for living users. One of my friends passed away in 2012, and her sister created a "group" page in her name. The page has "Events" associated with it, as well as "Photos" of her and her family. The group page is full of the sort of notes one might leave at a gravesite, as well as people announcing that they'll be running in such-and-such a race in memory of her. Occasionally her sister will post a reminder for a memorial service or event from her page, which can be striking and uncomfortable. I acknowledge the highly anecdotal quality of this evidence, but I think it speaks to the personal nature of this issue. Facebook hasn't done much more than offer the "memorial" option, but it can be fascinating and moving to see people carve out the spaces they need for their specific kind of mourning, and the ways they can use new tools to carry out old rituals.

These rituals become pervasive not only in the movement from real-world to online performance, but also in the duplication of the ritual in other contexts online. If an individual spent time in life in a particular setting or with particular individuals, one would expect that setting or group to acknowledge the person's passing in some way, whether through a funeral, a memorial service, or something less formal. This applies to work locations and educational locations, but if one of those spaces is a virtual space, does this still apply?

The answer, often, is yes—those people who spend a substantial amount of time in *World of Warcraft* are very often memorialized by their teammates in some kind of service

moment, and there are a number of these videos on YouTube. Martin Gibbs writes, "It is unsurprising to find that these games become vehicles for expression grief and for memorializing the dead...[they] provided a social context in life, and they also provide a social context for people's attention to death." In many cases, teammates in *World of Warcraft* do not share a physical location, and often never meet one another face-to-face, so they would rarely be able to attend the real-world funeral of another player.

Gibbs goes on to describe in-game memorials designed by the game's developers to memorialize those who worked on the project. One of these "is a memorial to Michel Koiter, an artist who died suddenly at the age of 19 from heart failure while working as part of the [development team]. This site is often used by players as the location for in-game memorials and services." He describes a trend in which memorials to people became less commonly static objects and more frequently interactive quests involving avatars based on them, as if they are in some way living on in the game. But players who aren't memorialized by the designers can still be celebrated by funeral-like services in the game.

One of the most famous of these became well-known specifically for its failure. After a young player died of a stroke, a large number of her teammates gathered together in a line and removed their in-game armor to wear black robes. The girl's character was logged in and the team paid its respects. During the ceremony, another team charged the area and killed as many of these player-characters as possible (Jon01). It was

within the bounds of the game—no official rules were broken—but the player community was angry at the social code that had clearly been violated, and made its displeasure clear.

Another famous memorial service comes from a different game. *Eve Online* is an incredibly involved space economic simulator; players fill roles as miners and fighter pilots and run their own banks that handle in-game currency for which there is an exchange rate to real-world cash. A recent battle in Eve cost more than $200,000 in damages, although many of the individual players who lost ships were insured by the factions they belong to. The game is incredibly complex, meaning that anyone who is talented enough and devotes enough time to become significant within the game world really becomes important to the other players. Whether a player has contact with a high-ranking in-game diplomat or not, they will tend to know that character's handle. All this is to say that when Sean Smith was killed in the attack on the consulate in Benghazi in 2012, it was not long before those he had played next to and those who had played under him knew what had happened. Smith played as a character named Vile Rat, and was very well-regarded by fellow players, having been instrumental in winning one of the game's largest wars (Totilo). Soon after his death, players gathered in a specified area and lit direction markers to spell out "RIP Vile Rat" in space, as shown in Figure 2 (Giocovier). It's difficult to convey the magnitude of this particular tribute, but from the images it is clear that the beacon is so bright it covers a large amount of the game's massive universe. It was a tribute that was impossible to ignore, as

everyone's map would have looked like Figure 3 (Giocovier). The enormous blue light on the right-hand side is the vigil. In a way, this is the online equivalent of a roadside memorial dedicated to a celebrity—in *Eve*, Vile Rat was absolutely that (Feldman). The first anniversary of the attack saw a similar light. The second vigil was not the same size—significantly smaller, in fact—but it was still an obvious and substantial reminder of Smith's passing, an important thing for many players. I suspect that when the second anniversary comes later this year, a similar small vigil will be held.

Personal accounts meld with memorials in the modern era. From roadside crosses and desert land art to semi-vacated Facebook pages and video game funerals, people find their own ways to remember and commemorate the deaths of those who are in some way close to them. The highway crosses come from old tradition and filter through recent roadway regulations. In the Sahara Desert, there's a giant memorial to 170 victims of a terrorist attack that the vast majority of people will see only on Google Earth. Similarly, Facebook pages have become a kind of digital gravesite, where notes and photos and other remembrances are welcome, but the carved-out nature of these pages leads to the deceased inhabiting a confusing, maybe haunted space, where the server believes them to be alive. Artist Zach Gage created a work called *If Search Is Our Memory*, which, according to Gage,

> "is a robot that once a day remembers a name from its list of names. It does this by Googling that name,

browsing around in the results, and saving the information it found temporarily to its own memory as a file. This file is then replaced with a new memory the following day. It never shares what it has found with anyone, only briefly retaining the information for its own pondering."

The robot has 33 names on its list right now, although these names are not visible to the visitor of the website. Gage is speaking to the bizarre fact of being remembered by a machine, and whether or not that's different in a substantive way from being remembered by a person. I think the more interesting idea that one might draw from the piece is that the Internet is a sort of memorial ground in and of itself that invites fragments of lives to impress themselves upon it. Obituaries, photos, and even tweets or Facebook statuses become part of the record of a person now. After that person and everyone they know have died, these things will still be there, semipermanent impressions in the network.
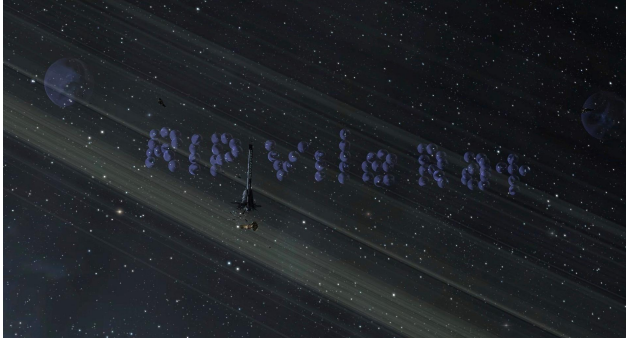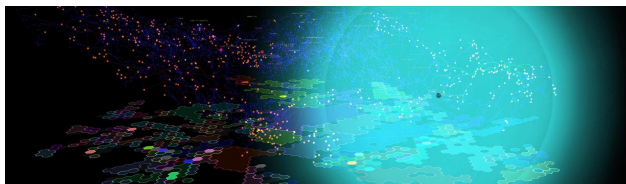
Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

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The Modern and Postmodern in Sofia Coppola's *Lost In Translation*

MERAL KOCAK

That is what the postmodern world is all about. Many people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative.

> —*Jean-François Lyotard (1985)*

Despite modernity's emphasis on order and reason, the postmodern condition is marked by a tendency of ambiguity, as well as impersonal and chaotic social interactions. Employing these lenses, broadly defined, this essay will analyze the 2004 film *Lost in Translation* through the sociological theories of both Georg Simmel and Zygmunt Bauman. A brief overview of the film's plot will be provided, in addition to an introduction to modernity through the ideas of Simmel and postmodernity through Bauman. Both theorists' characterization of the metropolis's effects on mental life will be applied to the film, via Simmel's "blasé attitude" and Bauman's conceptions of assimilation and ambivalence. Bauman's notion of "liquid love" and Simmel's problem of the triadic group will be used to analyze the fragmented nature of the characters' romantic relationships. Lastly, the characters'

experience of the "stranger," a staple figure of both Simmel and Bauman's sociology, will be explored and linked to Simmel's social form of the dyadic (paired) friendship.

Lost in Translation is a 2004 film directed by Sofia Coppola. Its plot is based on a "series of serendipitous meetings" (Ott & Keeling 368) between the two main characters, the aging Hollywood film actor Bob Harris and the young Yale philosophy graduate and recent newlywed Charlotte. Bob, visiting Tokyo for the shooting of an advertisement for Suntory Whisky, becomes separated from his wife and children—a family that has grown increasingly distant from him as his marriage nears collapse and the pressures of his work force him to be away from home for long periods. In contrast to his aging character is the youthful Charlotte, who is in Tokyo with her new husband, a Hollywood photographer. Her marriage is portrayed as rocky, and she embodies a certain "modern lonesomeness" and detachment from her husband throughout the film (Iwabuchi 543). The characters meet as strangers and stay as friends, connecting over their "separate but similar life crisis" (Armstrong 138) and from their boredom and isolation from the dominant Japanese culture (Wong 136).

The events depicted in *Lost in Translation* implicate modernity on a fundamental level. Modernity is a period of history without a distinctively defined beginning and end, "defined" by the French poet Baudelaire in 1863 as "the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent" (quoted in Harrington 17). Simmel has been described by critic David Frisby (1985) as the first sociologist of modernity due to his insightful

descriptions of modern culture. Rather than developing a complete methodological school of sociology along the lines of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, Simmel is more interested in analyzing isolated fragments of modern life to reveal the deep interconnections between social forms (Law 129). He characterizes modernity as the triumph of "objective culture" over the subjective, partly due to the development of the money economy, which "reduces things to one [...] standard value" (Simmel 1907, 495). Furthermore, modern relationships are subject to the "dissolution of substance into functions" (Simmel, quoted in Pyyhtinen 6); as the various groups to which individuals belong begin to overlap, personal distinctiveness emerges from the combinations of these groups (Poggi 80).

These abrupt changes to sociability posited by theorists of modernity have encountered resistance in the current postmodern social state. Bauman describes postmodern life as an experience of contingency and emancipation from the meticulously constructed ideal "order" of modernity that claimed to have a "design for certainty" (Bauman 1991, 232–33). In contrast to this worldview, Bauman's postmodernity allows for the acceptance of the idea that other people of other times and places may prefer their lives to ours (ibid.). This "existence devoid of certainty" (ibid.) invokes individuals living in a highly "liquid modernity" (Bauman 2000) who find "shelter" in other individuals through "community, ideological brotherhood [...] fate or mission" (Bauman 1991, 245). But although Bauman paints a picture of postmodernity as a call

for tolerance and "focus on pluralism" (Jones et al. 179), he asserts that postmodern existence may prove traumatic for individuals wishing to create their identity, and who cannot depend on traditionally stable aspects of social life like kinship systems to construct their selves; these people are drowned in the liquid, fleeting nature of postmodern life.

The sociological theories of both Simmel and Bauman provide incredibly useful frameworks of analysis to dissect *Lost in Translation* and the global and disoriented experience of postmodernity that the film portrays. Simmel's (1903) famous essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life* offers an apt starting point for a modernist interpretation of the film. Simmel's own experience of modernity was deeply situated in Berlin, where he spent most of his life, which was, in his time, the most rapidly expanding city in Europe (Poggi 82). He describes modern life in the metropolis as "the locus of reason" (Simmel 1903, 325) in contrast to the small town, which "rests on feelings and emotional relationships" (ibid.). Thus, the metropolis becomes the center and embodiment of modernity at its highest point: a place of rationality, reason, and activity. It is interesting, then, to wonder how Simmel would react to the "alienating megalopolis" of Tokyo (Smith 15), which is like the third main character in *Lost in Translation* (Filippo, quoted in Ott & Keeling 372).

The film repeatedly emphasizes the characters' emotional responses to the excitement and vigor of Tokyo's metropolitan lifestyle. The cab scene in which Bill arrives in the city displays his melancholic reaction to the neon lights of Tokyo's nightlife

through the window of his taxi. This scene is repeated throughout the film after significant events, like Bob and Charlotte's night of karaoke and partying and Bob's leaving of the city in his ride to the airport. Coppola's shots of Tokyo are often filmed from a distance—from behind Charlotte's high-rise hotel window, for example—and in blurry focus, such as the scenes filmed through a handheld mirror as the cabs travel throughout the city (Ott & Keeling 372). These mirrors highlight the sense of disorientation the characters feel in response to what Simmel (1903) calls the "swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli" (325). This phenomena forces individuals to adopt a "blasé attitude" (Simmel 1903, 330) in order to achieve self-preservation in the face of overstimulation —a constant stream of sensory information involved in every new location and interaction. Charlotte and Bob certainly seem to adopt this formal, reserved attitude throughout their experiences of the metropolis, and especially in their constant interactions with strangers. They simply ignore the people around them. This phenomenon is highlighted in the scene where Charlotte sees a Japanese man reading an obscene comic book in public but exhibits no response. This point is further emphasized through the many shots of Charlotte's "blonde head in a sea of brunettes" (Smith 15), a barely distinguishable presence in a sea of anonymity, alone in a crowd.

According to the theorists studied in this essay, the blasé attitude adopted in the face of the metropolis also appears in the face of postmodernity. Bauman's idea of ambivalence stems from his view of modernity, which he describes as a

modern "unilinear" process of assimilation—the tendency of modern societies to absorb and eradicate difference—that has been viewed as "perpetual and universal" despite it being historically framed (Bauman 1991, 102–3). Assimilation promoted "the novel drive to [...] similarity and uniformity" through the modern ideals of human equality, state authority, and artificially designed order (Bauman 1991, 104–5). These combined forces present subjects of modernity with an ideal image of personality and success to aspire to and a clear-cut image of what not to be; this assimilatory procedure could be seen as one of the reasons Charlotte claimed to be "stuck." Despite having a successful husband and a degree from a prestigious university, she was lonely and alienated from everything around her. Assimilation forces individuals to "build their own selves out of glimpses of somebody else's selves" (Bauman 1991, 157) and Charlotte attempts to fight against this homogenizing effect of modern culture—for instance, by refusing to be like the image of the happy, oblivious (and obnoxious) Hollywood starlet represented by the character of Kelly—left her bleak and searching for meaning. This despondency is demonstrated through her choice of song in the karaoke scene, where she sings "Cause I'm gonna make you see, there's nobody else here, no one like me. I'm special, so special." She's already accepted her own contingency (that is, her recognition that her Western identity is made up of cultural, non-universal, and ultimately somewhat arbitrary constituents) (Bauman 1991, 233) through her searches for meaning in Buddhist shrines, self-help CDs,

and ikebana, which display her dissatisfaction with Western philosophy, and is now searching for individuality. Bauman contends that postmodern individuals search for selves through their consumption, a phenomenon that Charlotte and Bob display through their attraction to traditional Japanese food and sake (Jones et al. 178).

Both Bob's and Charlotte's postmodern experiences of alienation and loneliness stem from their dissatisfaction with their loved ones. Bob's twenty-five year marriage is stagnant and his interaction with his wife, Lydia, is portrayed as habitual and impersonal. Lydia showcases her passive-aggressiveness through her sarcastic faxes about Bob forgetting their son's birthday and her comments about their children "getting used to being without their father." Bob tries to reconnect with Lydia and share the excitement of his time in Tokyo with Charlotte but she responds with her usual sarcasm and dismisses his experience. The dysfunction in their relationship is epitomized by Bob's affair with the lounge singer, an encounter he approaches with indifference, signaling to the viewer that it has happened before. His relationship epitomizes what Bauman (2003) deems "liquid love." Bauman contends that postmodernity is not characterized by *desire*, but by *wishes* (9) because it takes time to "sow, cultivate, and feed desire" (11)—time the postmodern subject does not care to commit. Instead, as the postmodern world creates "liquid time" (Bauman 2007) and demands "instant satisfaction" (Bauman 2003, 11), desire is constructed through wishes that occur spontaneously as one gazes upon objects and

people. The antithesis of this type of fleeting craving is love: "the wish to care, and to preserve the object of that care" (Bauman 2003, 9). Love adds to the world, as, paradoxically, "the loving self expands through giving away to the loved object" (ibid.). In this theory, the wish/desire dialectic is crucial to constructing meaning of *Lost in Translation*. Bob's failed marriage is no longer one of love and he seeks to reclaim this love in Charlotte. His love for her, however, is obstructed by the postmodern condition's tendency toward "liquid love"; in the face of postmodernity, he wants to care for Charlotte and give himself to her, not simply to wish for her. But he is not completely immune to the sway of postmodern consumption, as his one-night stand with the lounge singer confirms. But perhaps one can read his relationship with the lounge singer as a distinctly postmodern coping mechanism. He fulfills his *wish* through the consumption of her, and leaves room for *love,* or desire, with Charlotte.

These interpretations are further complicated with Simmel's idea of the money economy and value. He contends that the modern person, due to a blasé attitude and deeply ingrained habituation to the concept of money, places value on things in accordance to the time and effort it takes to acquire them (Tester 1998, 90). Both of the main characters in the film, having acquired their spouses, invest little time in them. As a result, the relative value of the spouses seems to decrease and the pairs grow even more estranged. In fact, Simmel's (1984) definition of love as "the yearning of one who lacks something for what he does not have" (133) perfectly explicates Charlotte's

love for Bob. Her new marriage to John is unsatisfying and she seeks something that she does not have: certainty. Her marriage is not wrought with personal problems; rather, the problems are due to her own search for meaning and clarity in her life. Her husband does not aid her in this quest for self-actualization and views her as "snobby." This leads her to feel neglected and inspires her to search for someone else who can give her attention and help her construct meaning. Her inability to find certainty in her life and her disappointment with her husband become fundamentally entwined, fusing into a gulf of yearning which, ultimately, fixes on Bob. And because her relationship with Bob is never consummated sexually, they never get to the stage *beyond* love that Simmel's definition provides, namely, a place where the yearning is satiated, and thus, lost to consumption.

Simmel presents "wandering" as a state of detachment from every point in space (Simmel 1908, 184). When this detachment is synthesized with its antithesis—attachment—the Simmelian concept of the "stranger" is created. Simmel's definition of the stranger as "the man who comes today and stays tomorrow—the potential wanderer" (ibid.) is useful in interpreting *Lost in Translation*. Until Bob and Charlotte's meeting and friendship, Charlotte is shown as a perpetual wanderer in the city, exploring shrines, temples, gardens, and the chaotic, yet rationally calculated subways system by herself. Though she is wandering, she is emotionally attached to these places as she searches for meaning in her environment. Thus, she represents the image of the stranger,

surrounded by more strangers, both "remote and near" (ibid.) in a strange environment. When she and Bob meet and overcome the boundaries of strangerhood, emerging as friends, Charlotte's wanderings retroactively acquire the sense of purposeful and exciting navigations throughout a foreign landscape. Bauman expands on Simmel's ideas in his characterization of the stranger as one who rebels against the friend/enemy dichotomy of sociation (Bauman 1991, 54). Bauman contends that the stranger is "more horrifying" than the enemy because he "threatens sociation itself" (ibid.). As the two main characters are in a foreign land, surrounded by strangers who are neither friends nor enemies and are alienated from their loved ones and "friends," they look for comfort in their own ways, attempting to re-enter the normative friend/enemy schema. The scene of Bob talking to the waiter in the bar and telling him personal stories about his day is a forlorn image of an aging man trying to overcome strangerhood and establish friendship with a stranger. Despite these efforts, detachment and strangeness, the indeterminate markers of postmodern sociality, remain.

The theme of friendship (and subsequent romance) is recurrent in the film. Simmel's account of social forms as "abstract consistent patterns of social interaction" (Law 181) offers a lens through which to view Charlotte and Bob's budding relationship. Simmel is especially interested in the number of social actors within a relationship. A dyadic group "eliminates the possibility of a superindividual structure" (that is, of a group or corporation above the individual) and introduces the

potential for intimacy (Wolff 1959, 26). The secession of either member of the dyad instantly dissolves the group and thus, due to the "mortality" of the group, it is viewed by the two members as "unique and irreplaceable" (ibid.). Furthermore, as the two personalities are not influenced by a third person, the dyad also allows maximum room for individuality (ibid.). Simmel attaches a "romantic spirit" to friendship (Wolff 1950, 325), a characteristic that certainly applies to the dynamic of Bob and Charlotte's friendship/romance. Alienated from both their romantic partners and their surroundings, they look to each other for solidarity and understanding. Their dyadic group allows them to develop a certain intimacy and closeness rarely found in other social forms. The fleeting nature of their relationship is encapsulated by Charlotte's plea of "let's never come here [Tokyo] again because it would never be as much fun." Their relationship is mortal; they know it and have prepared themselves for the consequence of separation. This gives it more value in their eyes, and they see each other as a means of self-actualization and as soul mates. The romantic sentiment—as well as the pure, private, nature of the dyad—is present in their first and final kiss, as Bob departs and whispers an inaudible sentence in her ear, to which she responds by nodding tearfully.

Although Simmel, a figure of classical modern social theory and Bauman, a postmodern social theorist, are separated by time and era, their ideas on sociability are inexorably linked and provide useful frameworks of analyses to understand postmodern Hollywood film narratives. *Lost in*

Translation explores the response by its main characters, Bob and Charlotte, to the modern metropolis, which Simmel situates as representative of modernity. They display a blasé attitude toward their surroundings and interactions, and experience ambivalence in the face of modernist social pressures of assimilation. Their feelings of insecurity are heightened by the problems they both encounter in their marriages, a phenomenon all too familiar to postmodern subjects trapped in a cycle of what Bauman terms "liquid love" and problems of value that, as Simmel charts, arise due to the emphasis on the value-annihilating concept of the money economy. They are presented as Simmelian strangers, yet overcome these social forms to engage in a dyadic friendship, seeking self-affirmation and meaning. Situated in a world of changing social forms and interactions, their friendship begins to ameliorate the effects of ambiguous, frightening, and alienating postmodern condition. In the midst of a disorienting and impermanent flux, the film provides a note of solace, a flickering vision of permanence and creation: "Stay here with me. We'll start a jazz band."

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Reconciling Language, Categorization, and Authority in *The British Government and Jihad*

ALISON MARQUSEE

"I am [the] Messiah: let him who will, accept me"—so declared Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a Punjabi Muslim who in nineteenth-century British India publically proclaimed himself the Islamic *mahdi* and the returned incarnation of Jesus Christ. Beginning with the 1880 publication of *Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya*, in which he laid out his identity as an Islamic reformer, Ahmad spent three decades building a faithful following around his messianic aspirations; by the time of his death in 1908, his teachings had given rise to a new religious community, which would grow to encompass over 10 million followers in the next century. During his lifetime, however, Ahmad waged a continual effort to clarify, defend, and assert his beliefs about order and society. As both a messianic claimant and an ardent supporter of the British government, Ahmad faced a constant balancing act in his attempts to garner religious authority for himself while leaving political authority in the hands of the British. The challenge of his task was only intensified by the fundamental intertwining of religious and political power in the context of the Punjab, a province that had at various times been ruled by

Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and Christians. Ahmad's language in his works and treatises reflects his struggle to separate the religious and political realms in order to claim authority in one but not the other, all in a society in which the two were inextricably connected. In this paper, I will explore Ghulam Ahmad's use of language and categorization in *The British Government and Jihad* to demonstrate how Ahmad's efforts to disentangle the political and the religious manifested themselves in his rhetoric and modes of argument.

Political Background

Before delving into the text, it will be useful to explore the sociopolitical context out of which the Ahmadi movement emerged, for North India at the turn of the century was a region of contentious religious divides and diverse opinions on issues of theological and political importance. The British had recently conquered India, gaining control of the Punjab when Ahmad was a child. Previously, the Punjab had been under the control of a Sikh empire. Meanwhile, most of the rest of the subcontinent had been dominated by the Mughals, a Muslim empire that ruled over a mainly Hindu populace. Thus, colonial Punjab played host to a wide array of religious groups with intricately entangled histories. While under Sikh rule, which lasted from 1799 until 1849, Muslims in the Punjab had not been permitted to sound their prayer call or participate in other common religious rituals (Ahmad 15). As a result, a strong sense of persecution sprung up within the North Indian Muslim community. However, while the seizure of power by

the British ended Sikh control, it did not alleviate the feelings of marginalization and powerlessness that abounded during the period of Sikh rule—many Muslims, as well as Sikhs and Hindus, felt the sting of living under a foreign power, and a Christian one at that. British economic exploitation and political abuse gave rise to rebellious sentiments that transcended religious divisions and led to the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, in which Indian soldiers staged a failed rebellion against their British commanders. Although the British suppressed the rebellion, tensions continued to simmer, and it was into this milieu that Ahmad came of age.

A modern map of the Punjab, Ahmad's homeland.

Ahmad was born to a high-status family that had fallen from favor during the reign of the Sikh empire. The family had been forced to leave their home and had sunk into what they, at

least, deemed "utter destitution" (Friedmann 2). The arrival of British colonialism restored some of the Ahmads' former prestige, and they were able to return to their ancestral home. After receiving a traditional Shi'a education, Ahmad became a lawyer at his father's behest, but later abandoned the occupation to pursue a more spiritual path (Friedmann 3). In 1880, Ahmad first published the claim that would become most associated with his name: he announced, in a book called *Barahin-i Ahmadiyya*, that he was the *mahdi* and the messiah whose arrival prophecies had long predicted (Friedmann 4). Over the next three decades, Ahmad would engage in frequent religious debates and publish over 80 additional books and treatises explaining his philosophies and messianic claim (Friedmann 10).

While most readers will be familiar with the messianic figure of Jesus Christ, Muslim prophecies concerning the *mahdi* are lesser known. According to *hadith* dating back hundreds of years, the *mahdi* is an apocalyptic, redemptive figure who is sent by God and whose arrival coincides with the end of time. Though interpretations of the *mahdi* vary, he is usually a spiritual leader who divides good from evil, brings with him a great revolution, and ushers in a new world to replace the corrupted one of old. The role of the *mahdi* is a crucial one whose mantle has been assumed by many figures over the years. Among these claimants, Ahmad stands out for his oratorical and literary skill, as well as the longevity and success of the movement he founded.

Today, the Ahmadi movement claims over ten million followers around the world. Though concentrated in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Ahmadis have also settled in the diaspora in Europe, North America, and other areas. Ahmadis face persistent persecution in Sunni Muslim countries, however, due to accusations that their veneration of Ahmad precludes their being considered real members of Islam, with its emphasis on the finality of the prophet Muhammad. In Pakistan in 1974, Ordinance XX declared Ahmadis legally non-Muslims, limiting their access to privileges such as claiming membership in Islam or proselytizing (Saeed 145). Meanwhile, Bangladeshi Ahmadi communities have seen their mosques vandalized and their members attacked (Hasan 2). However, a global Ahmadi movement has thrived, and the official Ahmadi Islam website posts weekly sermons in a variety of languages for followers around the world.

The Prophet Speaks: *The British Government and Jihad*

In 1900, the Ahmadi movement was still young. Ahmad had declared his messiahship two decades earlier, and faced opposition from various corners. Violence was a fact of life in the Afghan Frontier Province of Northern India, and was much on the minds of the subcontinent's elites. Against the backdrop of war on the Frontier, Ahmad wrote *The British Government and Jihad* to counter what he felt were incorrect narratives prevailing about the meaning of jihad and its role in Islam. In the short work, originally published in Urdu, Ahmad argues that Christian and Muslim authorities alike have misrepresented the

Quranic ideal of jihad, construing it as an Islamic mandate to wage war on anyone with different beliefs. Contrary to this "blood-spattered doctrine," Ahmad argues that jihad is a tool to be employed only at the command of God and in the face of existential threats against a religious community (8). As Ahmad highlights repeatedly, Muhammad and his followers, faced with persecution during the early days of Islam's formation, did nothing to fight back against their aggressors, enduring barbarism and torture at the hands of polytheists in the surrounding society. Only after thirteen years of such suffering did God grant Muhammad permission to retaliate against the nonbelievers who threatened his followers' survival. Based on this anecdote, Ahmad concludes that jihad is a commandment applicable only in specific times and places, with the approval of the divine and under threat of extinction—conditions that did not apply to Muslims in turn-of-the-century Punjab.

Ahmad considers several parties culpable for what he sees as the un-Islamic violence that has overtaken North India. First, the Christian clerics are to blame, for they propagate the lie that Islam is a warlike religion, leading common Muslims to accept this view as truth and greatly increasing "the people's penchant for violence" (11). Second, Muslim *maulavis* (priests) share responsibility for Frontier violence, as they leap to demonize other groups even over minor theological disputes and perpetuate the idea that violent jihad is a Muslim commandment (21). In doing so, they have "misled the populace" and tempted otherwise calm people to "sheer madness" (14, 15). Lastly, the perpetrators of

the violence themselves (mainly, in Ahmad's view, Frontier Afghans) deserve blame for their un-Islamic and reprehensible conduct. All in all, however, Ahmad spends significantly more time discussing the culpability of priests and clerics for violent jihad than he does blaming the fighters on the ground, whom he sees as easily influenced by sermons and inflammatory preaching; he claims, among other things, that "the people of the Frontier Region were not even aware of this doctrine [of Islam as a violent religion] until the Christian priests embedded it in their minds" (24).

But Ahmad is not simply one of many scholars engaged in religious debate. He is, as he announces, the *mahdi* and the messiah. Ahmad's messianic claims provide scaffolding for his argument and allow him to place his views of jihad in a broad metaphysical framework. But to use his status as messiah to lead credence to his ideas about jihad, Ahmad must intertwine his arguments with constant reaffirmations of his prophetic status and the apocalyptic vision it represents. In a move common to *mahdi* claimants, he does so by dividing the world. Like other *mahdis* who divide humanity into those who are righteous and will be saved, and those who are wrong and will face divine wrath, Ahmad works to construct specific dichotomies in the minds of his readers. But in the process, he must balance his desire to make a bid for (Muslim) religious authority with the need to skirt the fact that, as a British loyalist, he wishes political authority to remain the hands of the (Christian) Raj.

The Politics of "Inside-Out" Language

It is perhaps in service of this goal that Ahmad's use of language appears, on some level, "inside-out." That is to say, Ahmad represents certain dichotomies by speaking about each half through its opposite: he talks about the present by referencing the past, and vice-versa; he represents the secular in religious language and the religious in the tone of the secular; and he discusses the radical in the tone of the mundane while portraying the mundane as if it is radical. This inside-out discourse reflects the balancing act that Ahmad attempts as he seeks to claim authority in the religious sphere, but not the political, while embedded in a context in which the two are inextricably linked.

The notion of temporality is extremely present in *The British Government and Jihad*, as befits a work by a person claiming to be a manifestation of the end of time. The present and the past interact in several ways in the work. First of all, Ahmad frequently uses the past as a thin veil to discuss the present, describing Muhammadan times in terms that are thinly disguised references to his own context. Describing the early days of Islam, for example, he says, "when a Prophet or Messenger comes from God, his followers are perceived to be a promising...group. Pre-existing communities and religious sects...develop a certain kind of anger and jealousy towards them" (4). Nominally a description of Muhammad and his followers, it is no accident that this text could plausibly apply to Ahmad as well, given his claim to messiahship and the persecution faced by his followers. Similarly, when Ahmad

discusses the errors of early Christians (mainly, that they grant Jesus divine status out of excessive love), he explains, "those whom God love are very close to Him and have a special relationship with Him. If, on account of this relationship, they sometimes...claim that God speaks through them or manifests himself in them, then these claims are true in a sense and from a perspective" (33). On the surface this passage examines the folly of early Christians, and it goes on to claim that "present-day Christian scholars are also trapped in this mistake" (33). But the excerpt also contains a deeper subtext, legitimizing Ahmad's bid for prophethood in the modern era by dismissing criticisms regarding the special connection he claims with God (33). If certain individuals can have a "special relationship" with God and even claim that God speaks through them, and this assertion can be "true in a sense," then there is nothing inherently blasphemous about Ahmad's identification as a non-legislative prophet (33). Ahmad thus uses coded language to make arguments about the present while speaking about the past.

Conversely, Ahmad draws connections between the present and the *recent* (as opposed to distant) past by using the present as justification for discussing his understandings of the past. Discussions of the contemporary era are used to make points about the past, namely about the Sikh rule in Northern India that ended in the mid-nineteenth century. Ahmad feels that the British Raj is a highly favorable time period in which to live (citing mainly the examples of freedom of religion and speech), but he uses this opinion to make an argument, not

about the benefits of British rule, but about the horrors of the period directly preceding it. His claim that the present is on a political level "good" is used as a stepping-stone to expound his ideas about earlier times.

The mechanism by which Ahmad does this involves using discussion of British colonialism to evoke the indignities and horrors Punjabi Muslims faced under Sikh rule. As Ahmad puts it, by deposing the Sikhs, the British "granted [Muslims] their faith anew," whereas only a short time ago, merely sounding the *adhan* [call to prayer] meant facing "the hatchets and spears of the Sikhs" (15). Ahmad uses denunciations of groups like Frontier fighters as an opportunity to raise the specter of these and other horrors under Sikh rule:

> Every other day the Frontier Region's violent tribes kill the British officers who are protecting their lives and property...This is manifest cruelty...Do they not recall the time of the Sikhs, who were ready to kill those who merely raised the *adhan*? (Ahmad 30)

Though making a point about the present (that Muslims should not fight against British rulers), Ahmad is far more passionate about memories of the past. His attempts to persuade his fellow Muslims of his viewpoints about contemporary times act mainly as waypoints on his journey through memory, as he vividly evokes religious oppression from another era. According to Ahmad, "Muslims lived like slaves in the time of the Sikhs, but their dignity has been

restored by the British administration" (30). Hearing such rhetoric, one could easily conclude that Sikh rule had ended shortly prior to Ahmad's writing, while in fact, the empire had collapsed more than 50 years previously, when Ahmad was just a child. Yet Ahmad uses the veneer of his opinions about the present to discuss cultural and personal memories of Sikh rule, and so elides the differences and distance between these two time periods. Even as his understanding of Muhammadan times function mainly to construct arguments about the present, Ahmad's explicit views about the present operate as windows into the Sikh rule of the past. In *The British Government and Jihad,* Ahmad thus opens discourse both past and present, but analyzes each through the lens and metaphor of the other, twisting his readers' notions of temporality and offering a new model linked to Ahmadi paradigms.

Ahmad's inside-out approach to temporal relations also extends to the dichotomy between the secular and the sacred. Frequently, he suggests that secular problems (political violence, for example) be approached from a religious angle; meanwhile, he suggests secular solutions to disputes rooted in religion. The former case is best illustrated by Ahmad's repeated assumption that all violence in the Punjab is based on religious jihad, and a misunderstanding of jihad at that. Ahmad uses theological arguments to assert that those who fight on the Frontier and rebel against the British are in the wrong; but while disputes in these areas certainly corresponded with religious conflict, the specific problems that Ahmad attacks are primarily secular and

political in nature, based as they are in the economic and political history of North India.

Ahmad, though, asserts that he "believe[s] with absolute conviction" that violence and murder on the Afghan Frontier is caused by those "for whom it is an article of faith that

killing people of other religions...opens doors of heavenly reward that cannot be achieved through obligatory *salat* [Prayers], *hajj* [Pilgrimage], *zakat* [obligatory charity], or any other good deed" (23). Yet Ahmad provides little evidence for the idea that theology is the cause of, rather than a result of or a parallel to, the violence facing the Frontier province; instead, he proposes a religious basis for the attacks on British officers and others in the same breath as he refutes that basis, mainly through his claims to *mahdi*-ship and messianic status. As the messiah, he knows that "the Word of God in no way commands us to spill the blood of innocent people," providing a religious justification for why Frontier Muslims should cease their political violence.

The reverse phenomenon, of suggesting secular solutions for religious problems, is best illustrated by the instances in which Ahmad suggests that the British government involve itself in religious affairs to create harmony. As he attempts to use his own religious authority to solve political problems, he hopes that British political authority can solve theological disputes. He proposes, for example, that "our government prohibit...the dangerous lies of the Christian clerics" who misrepresent Islam (11). Later, he suggests that "His Excellency the Viceroy...suspend debates" between religious groups to

preserve harmony, and he repeatedly petitions the British government for a moratorium on such debates (40). Ahmad even appeals to "His Majesty, the *Amir* of Kabul" (or leader of Afghanistan) to "convene a discussion on the true nature of jihad" and thereby leverage his political power to solve a religious debate (21).

In themselves, these ideas are not so surprising: given his peace-loving philosophy, and his interpretation of Islam, it makes sense that Ahmad would want an end to what he sees as slander and bickering. But what is unusual is the authority that Ahmad hopes to draw on in accomplishing this goal—namely, political authority, and particularly British authority. While Ahmad does rely on his status as the messiah to proclaim an end to violent jihad, nowhere does he use his prophetic identity to back up his desires in the religio-political realm. For example, Ahmad never proclaims anything along the lines of "I am the *mahdi* and I order an end to religious debate." Rather, for the goal of ending this form of religious strife, he relies strictly on British laws and proclamations. Despite the religious nature of the conflicts he describes (Christians lying about Islam and arguments between faiths), he places them squarely under the purview of secular authority and does not assert any power in that sphere for himself. This pattern, combined with his adamant certainty that his religious authority can solve political problems such as border violence, reveals Ahmad's inside-out approach to the division between the secular and the religious in his writing.

Lastly, Ahmad uses inside-out language by swapping the vocabulary of the radical and the uncontroversial, using subdued tones for inflammatory ideas and vice-versa. The most notable example of this is perhaps Ahmad's approach to the Christian view of Jesus. Speaking of Christians, he says, as mentioned above, that although they "fail to appreciate the essence of spiritual issues," their views of Jesus "are true in a sense and from a perspective" (33). In the context of fierce conflict between Muslims and Christians in India (recall, for example, the bloody rebellion of 1857), and against the background of meticulous theological debate between the two groups, it is on some level extremely shocking that a major Muslim leader such as Ahmad would so casually dismiss one of the major doctrinal differences that distinguishes Christianity from Islam. The divinity of Jesus and the acceptance of Muhammad are, after all, far and away the largest points about which Christian and Muslim orthodoxies disagree. For Ahmad, then, to assert that the first of these is simply a difference in "perspective," and that, approached differently, the Christian understanding of Jesus could in fact be "true," is a radical departure from the dominant discourse among South Asian Muslims.

Yet despite the extremely controversial nature of this claim, Ahmad does not convey his views about Christianity in particularly noteworthy language. Even as he departs from a major point of Muslim orthodoxy in the battle against Christianity, his rhetoric is calm and subdued. He simply points out that Christian claims about Jesus are "true in a sense

and from a perspective which must be explained" without elaborating much further on what that perspective is (33). Ahmad's gentle language in regard to Christianity continues as he describes how they committed "human errors" and "compromised" their devotion to God through their beliefs (36, 7). He compares Christianity to Islam by saying that Christianity, like Islam, "was also from God but, unfortunately, it is no longer established on those teachings" and has gone astray (Ahmad 38). All of this is certainly criticism, but none of it is the harsh condemnation we might expect from a Muslim leader in the Punjab were we unaware of Ahmad's connections to and personal investment in the success of the British Raj, and how this has influenced his language and rhetoric.

Meanwhile, Ahmad's use of incendiary and passionate language generally coincides with the commands of his that are *least* controversial. One of the instances in which Ahmad leans most heavily on his status as messiah and *mahdi* is when he states, "God has sent me as the Promised Messiah and has clothed me with the garment of the Messiah, son of Mary" (16). But the order that follows this monumental qualification is not a concrete or divisive command, but an "admonish[ment]" to "refrain from evil and be truly compassionate towards mankind. Cleanse your hearts of malice and spite, for...polluted is the path riddled with the thorns of a rancour based on selfish desires" (16). The order to avoid evil and embrace compassion, though admirable in spirit, is hardly a controversial one in any religious tradition. Whatever its noble sentiments, the statement that someone should "refrain from

evil" hardly requires a messiah to convince its audience. Despite drawing on richer imagery and stronger religious sentiments here than nearly anywhere else in the work, this part of *The British Government and Jihad* contains, at least explicitly, very little that is objectionable at all.

Navigating a Religio-Political Dilemma

The inside-out language that Ahmad uses here becomes comprehensible when seen in the light of the sociopolitical context within which the would-be savior operated. As a supporter of British political power, it's unsurprising that Ahmad hesitates to condemn Christianity too harshly; yet as a self-proclaimed messiah, Ahmad needs to lead the Indian Muslim community and establish himself as a spiritual paragon. Ahmad's use of inside-out language is, then, an attempt to bypass the conflicts that arise in his attempt to separate political and religious spheres of life while delicately navigating his divergent stances as an ardent Muslim and a supporter of Christian rulers. To balance these two aspects of society and himself, Ahmad needed to, in the fashion of a true *mahdi*, create a new world—in his case, not in the physical plane, but in the minds of his readers. He needed to manipulate past and present, secular and religious, and messianic and mundane, undermining the distinctions between these dichotomies in his audiences' understandings in order to build in their place categories of his own devising, which would allow him to claim the status of a spiritual *mahdi* taking leadership of the community without toppling any of

the supports on which British rule of the Punjab so tenuously rested. Through his careful creation of categories, both implicit and explicit, Ahmad opens the way for him to claim religious, but not political, authority in his North Indian context.

In a striking example of his circumvention of traditional categories, Ahmad transcends the dichotomy between the political and religious realms by drawing from both to cement his claims to *mahdism* and messianic stature. In the context of the colonial Punjab, it is impossible for Ahmad to disregard entirely the fact that he is Muhammad, is Jesus, and is simultaneously a staunch supporter of British rule in India. But rather than ignore the problematic intersections between colonialism and his claims of messianism, Ahmad subverts expectations to leverage his support for the British as *evidence* of, not a cause of doubt for, his messianic claims.

Ahmad does this primarily by reinterpreting Western technologies as signs of a coming messiah. According to Ahmad, not only is Christian rule in India not in opposition to the arrival of the *mahdi*, it is actually a harbinger of it. As he explains, prophecy states that the age of the messiah will come "when camels are rendered useless"; the arrival of rail travel ("trains that outrun horses"), a British innovation, are thus proof positive that the time is ripe for the emergence of a *mahdi* (19, 17). Rapid travel, instant communication, a modern postal service, and fruits available out of season—to Ahmad, all of these are proof that a revolution is occurring on earth, in line with the coming of the *mahdi* (19).

Following in this vein later in *The British Government and Jihad*, Ahmad strikingly exhorts his followers, "You are witnessing an ease in travel and movement that was not known to your parents and grandparents. It is as if this is *a new world*" (emphasis added) (19). The ushering in of a new age is here connected to two factors: the religious power of the *mahdi*, Ahmad, and the political power of the British Raj. If the introduction of technologies such as telegraphs and railways to India is fundamentally linked to British rule over India, and furthermore fundamentally linked to the arrival of the *mahdi*, then supporting a Christian government alongside an Islamic messiah is no longer contradictory, but in fact is required. By appropriating Western technology as an apocalyptic symbol, Ahmad actually transmutes Christian political authority into religious authority for himself, eliminating the potential conflict of a *mahdi* who does not conquer lands and bring them under his power (as is often foretold). Ahmad's statement that "just as there is an astounding upheaval on earth, God also wills that an astounding upheaval take place in the heavens" aptly summarizes his view that the British Raj and his arrival as messiah/*mahdi* are intricately linked (20). The two are also mutually reinforcing, of course, as if Western technology signals the arrival of the *mahdi*, belief in Ahmad's status as the *mahdi* must vice-versa constitute evidence for the opinion that British rule is both natural and necessary. If British technology has recreated the material world for citizens of the Punjab, Ahmad's theology seeks to reshape their minds by fundamentally altering

their perceptions of the connections between messianism and the political order.

Conclusion

Ahmad, operating in the fraught religio-political environment of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Punjab, faced complex challenges in asserting his messianic claims while simultaneously supporting, for personal and theological reasons, the political status quo. In some sense, Ahmad represents the paradoxical, anti-revolutionary *mahdi*: the man who is supposed to overturn established order instead supports complete loyalty to a foreign government, and a Christian one at that. But such a summary smooths over the complexities that emerge in Ahmad's writings as a result of his conflicted identity, and elides Ahmad's masterful use of language, logic, and rhetoric in pursuit of his political and theological aspirations. Ahmad, though staunchly pro-British and thus anti-revolutionary, sought to foment a revolution of another kind: a sea change in the hearts, minds, and actions of his followers and audience. In undermining typical, religion-based categories in his work, Ahmad hoped to undermine them in the real world, too, erasing strife between Christians and Muslims just as he erased the boundary between Jesus and Muhammad within his own person.

As his unorthodox political and religious beliefs manifested themselves in inside-out language and a new system of societal categorization, Ahmad emerged as a profoundly ambiguous figure in colonial Punjab. But

regardless of his success in reframing the world for his listeners, Ahmad's efforts to disentangle the knotty threads of politics and religion within the diverse tapestry of the Punjab did fundamentally alter perceptions on all sides about issues of faith, government, and the meaning of jihad. The millions of Ahmadi followers alive today, though living in a radically different world than that of their founder, thus continue to perpetuate both the negative and positive influences of the leader and scholar who sought to revolutionize India in a way quintessentially his own.

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Slavery and Pokémon

CRUZ ARROYO III

This is Ludicolo, the Carefree Pokémon who can't help but dance whenever he hears music. In fact, dancing makes him stronger, faster, and an even more formidable opponent. Pay no attention to the fact that the lotus pad on his head represents a sombrero. And that his fur resembles a Mexican poncho. Part duck, part palm tree, part Hispanic, this Pokémon enjoys dancing in the rain and, of course, is *never* unhappy. He is carefree and it is his nature. Do not attempt to view Ludicolo like this:

If you view Ludicolo as a person, you might begin to see that he wears his palm tree to remind himself of the island homeland that he was removed from. You might realize that his carefree attitude is but a defense mechanism to ward off sadness. Ludicolo couldn't possibly be a slave. (Though he was captured in a Poké Ball and now has to fight other Pokémon at his "trainers'" whim). He couldn't possibly have depth beyond the smile and dancing that makes him easier to view.

Ludicolo is what white people wish Hispanics were all like: None of the complicated hybridity that resulted from the British imperialist project in the Caribbean. No desire or need to look beyond the smile that hides his pain. No need to study him. No need.

Meet Jynx, the Human-Shape Pokémon. This blonde hair, black-faced, big-lipped Pokémon is essentially what Japanese people think black people are like. Even her name suggests foul play, as if her fictional black body is a curse upon the Pokémon universe, as if her presence is dangerous, as if her oversized features are some punishment for her color. Jynx can speak—almost. Pokédex entries claim that "it speaks using a language that sounds human. Research is under way to determine what is being said." How nice— research. I have to question whether or not "it" speaks in Ebonics, or maybe Spanglish. Who knows? I doubt it would be a problem if she spoke like George Eliot wrote.

It makes me wonder. Pokémon are fictional beings in tiny handheld games given to children to pass the time. Yet, within something as mundane as a child's plaything, two-dimensional stereotypes regarding people of color appear in blatant and unapologetic ways. These Pokémon embody almost everything

that I feel is wrong with this place. They have no voice but rather have a single story attached to them, a single feature that will come to define every action they take and every word they utter. How many Ludicolos and Jynxs exist in books? On this campus? In the world? They put on a mask of contentment in order to merely survive, to refuse to carry the white person's ignorance as a cross on their back. People like Ludicolo and Jynx certainly never enter the classroom. They are put on TV to be laughed at, humiliated, and misunderstood. If someone dares to be colored, cheerful, and complex—too bad. There is no space within these figures for nuance or intelligence. They produce no literature. They have no culture worth studying.

Jynx was created in 1998 when Pokémon first came to America. Ludicolo made his debut in 2003. The Gym Leader (a powerful trainer) named Lenora was introduced to children in 2011.

This Aunt Jemima look alike was Japan's best attempt to create a fictional person of color. Disregard her apron, hair tie, and massive hair: she runs a library and museum. See? They are trying. Though, I really don't see how running a library requires a maid costume. It was almost as if the makers thought, "We'll give her some redeeming qualities, but she'll dress like she knows her place."

I am tired of this. I'm sick of searching for people like me in literature or television only to find caricatures like these created by people who have zero conception of race. And I was supposed to move to Japan? Nah, I'm good. These images arise because there's no one to counter them. No Dr. Freeman Hrabowskis in the classrooms to inspire. No Maya Angelous to teach and to guide. Instead what do we get? *Ulysses*? The text that is excessively vulgar, anti-Catholic, and racist? Seriously? That is the text we hold up in the department as the Bible of literature? I refuse. I object. I daresay that I am done studying white people. And then they wanna have the nerve to make the "Whiteness Project"? This course is the right direction. These texts are an answer. They're more stories. They are a chance to understand race. And for that I am grateful.

Like Son Like Father: The Transference of Disabled Identities from Children to Their Parents

JESS LIBOW

The continual navigation and intensive strategies that characterize life with a disability stretch far beyond the parameters of any single individual life; it reroutes the circuitry of partners and children, friends and family, in ways that can be described as anything but individual.

—David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*

In *Far from the Tree*, Andrew Solomon documents the experiences of parents with children whose identities differ from their own. Throughout the book, Solomon underscores the importance of recognizing the difference between "vertical identities" and "horizontal identities." The terms, coined by Solomon, refer to the traits and identifiers that are and are not inherited from an individual's parents. Solomon defines vertical identities as those traits one typically shares with one's parents, and classifies race, ethnicity, religion, and social class as such. The focus of *Far from the Tree*, however, is the

experiences of raising children with identities and traits not necessarily inherited from their parents. The book's subjects include, among others, individuals who are transgender, criminals, and prodigies. These traits Solomon defines as horizontal. Disability, he claims, is another such horizontal identity, as it is not necessarily inherited from one's parents. Even in the cases of children with disabilities born of able-bodied parents, this definition lacks sensitivity to the fluidity and malleability of parental identity. Solomon defines and understands vertical identities as traveling from parent to child. What Solomon fails to address, however, is that many supposedly horizontal identities, disability in particular, possess a vertical quality as well, in that they are in some form passed from child to parent, inverting the conventional notion of inheritance.

Parents often view their children as proxies—extensions of themselves through whom they might embody certain identities or live or relive certain experiences. Therefore, when children are unable to fulfill those desires, their role as proxies allows their new, countering identities to be upwardly transmitted, reshaping the identity of the parents. Solomon's theory that vertical identities are transferred solely from parent to child is too simple even for his own evidence. A number of the stories and anecdotes included in *Far from the Tree* highlight, and often revolve around, the reformation of parental identity in the process of raising a child with a disability. Many personal essays and memoirs also demonstrate how the interactions between child rearing and disability transform

parental identity. Although *Far from the Tree* considers a variety of differences through the lens of vertical and horizontal identities, disability is especially likely to be transferred from child to parent because of the distinct and all-encompassing nature of disability culture and identity.

This paper defines disability as the social exclusion or marginalization of individuals with unusual impairments. This framework diverges from the medical model of disability that focuses on impairments, or the actual physical, sensory, emotional, or mental characteristics that denote an individual as different. The use of the term *disability* in this paper refers to the social model, which argues that impairments should remain distinct from disability and that disability can be understood as a social construct. Because of the organization of society's physical and temporal structure, people with certain impairments are denied access and inclusion in various contexts and are thus considered disabled. It is this social model of disability that is transferred from child to parent. This transference of identity from child to parent hinges on the identity of the child as both a product of and proxy for the parent. Assuming these roles, a child's identity as disabled has the capacity to challenge familial identity and threaten family legacy. Parents enter into a distinct culture upon their children's diagnosis, whether voluntarily or not. Additionally, the parents of a disabled child may experience a shift in external identity and feel increasingly isolated from non-disabled culture, while identifying with and immersing themselves in communities united by shared experiences with disability.

As Mitchell and Snyder point out, this reconfiguration of identity, or "rerouting" as they put it, can occur in "partners and children, friends, and family" of disabled individuals (Mitchell xiii). In this essay, I focus closely on the particular effect on the parent-child relationship when disability is involved. The child's status as a proxy as well as the all-consuming nature of the experience of parenting any child makes the transference of socially constructed disability onto a non-disabled person especially prevalent as well as significant in this context. When exploring issues of identity, lived experiences and personal reflection must be examined closely due to the extremely personal nature of one's identity. In this essay I turn not to my own lived experiences, but to those of others. I draw on numerous personal accounts in memoirs, personal essays, and Solomon's *Far from the Tree*. Demonstrated in these stories and reflections are the ways in which raising a child with a disability reshapes personal and family histories, restructures the physical and temporal landscape of family life, alters an individual and family's status within the non-disabled community, and prompts the formation and exploration of new horizontal communities, or groups of individuals united by shared traits not inherited vertically. By collecting these anecdotes and finding common threads between the varying experiences of parents, I argue that this socially constructed model of disability is passed from child to parent in a number of ways.

Rewritten Medical and Personal Narratives

A child's disability can dramatically undermine a well-established family history or legacy, prompting parents to question their own medical status in relation to disability as well as their identity as parents. This challenge to parental identity can be posed by an actual impairment or a set of symptomatic behaviors as well as by the implications of diagnosis. As Kate Movius, mother of an autistic child, explains: "It is I who have been revealed, rebuilt, and given a new way of not just seeing Aidan for who he is, but of seeing myself" (Solomon 284). The parental identity that is reconfigured here is both internal and external because acknowledgment of a child's disability reshapes the lens through which parents view themselves and because societal reactions to unconventional children tend to focus on the parents.

In the memoir *Girl, Interrupted* Susanna Kaysen addresses the role of an institutionalized child as a proxy for his or her family. "Often an entire family is crazy, but since an entire family can't go into the hospital, one person is designated as crazy and goes inside," she explains, highlighting the diagnosed individual's proxy status (95). "Then," she continues, "depending on how the rest of the family is feeling, that person is kept inside or snatched out, to prove something about the family's mental health" (95). Kaysen demonstrates how an individual's diagnosis can be perceived as reflective of a parent's or family's health. Here, it is the family members' concern that they may in fact share an actual impairment that causes them to question their own

relationship to the label of disabled and subsequently impose disabled status on their relative.

Despite her rejection of diagnosis, Julia Miele Rodas articulates a similar relationship in "Diagnosable: Mothering at the Threshold of Disability." Rodas describes how, when raising a daughter with a disability, she began "to notice that my own behavior was also somewhat atypical and to see reflected in myself the unusual affect, contact, and sociability I had already observed in other family members" (122). She cites her daughter as particularly influential in this regard, claiming that "through my daughter's play, her personality, her habits, I slowly gained insight into my own" (122). Here Rodas reiterates Kaysen's identification of the role of disabled children as proxies. Because her daughter is an extension or reflection of her self, Rodas is able to identify her own behavior as symptomatic of disability only after recognizing it as a shared quality with her daughter. In both Kaysen's and Rodas's descriptions, the status of children as proxies causes their identity as disabled to reflect back onto their families.

The ability of a child's behavior or diagnosis to shape the way parents perceive their own specific behaviors is emphasized by Rachel Robertson in "Sharing Stories: Motherhood, Autism, and Culture." "Six or seven times a day for two years I would ask Ben, 'are you okay?'" recalls Robertson of raising her autistic son (143). "Even though he always answered 'nyes,'" she continues, "I kept asking the question" (143). While this may appear to be a typical exchange between an overprotective parent and her young child, her son's diagnosis reshapes the lens through

which Robertson herself views the interaction. She explains that if she "witnessed an autistic person repeating a question like that to another person and getting the same answer, regardless of the true situation, and continuing to repeat the question for months," the behavior might be described as "'obsessive repetition' or 'perseveration'" (143–144). The symptomatic description of the interaction demonstrates how Robertson projects her son's diagnosis onto her own behavior. By viewing herself through the lens of disability, she subsequently acquires the social aspects of disability associated with diagnosis.

In addition to threatening or challenging a parent's own status as a non-disabled person, a child's diagnosis can provoke skepticism about the parents' competency in raising their children. The criticism to which parents of disabled children are vulnerable plays a critical role in reshaping their identity. In David E. Simpson's film *Refrigerator Mothers,* mothers of children with autism diagnosed in the 1950s and '60s reflect on their experiences of being blamed for their children's disabilities. The film's title borrows a phrase coined by psychiatrist Leo Kanner (and the theory later made popular by Bruno Bettelheim) that autism was caused by "parental coldness" or the mother's failure to adequately nurture and care for her child. June Francis, one of the mothers featured in the film recalls "being amazed that it wasn't that the child that was the patient so much as it was the parents" upon her son Paul's diagnosis of autism. "I was told," she goes on, "that I had not connected or bonded with the child because of inability to properly relate to the child and that this caused autism. I

couldn't quite see how that could happen but here's someone of authority saying that it had happened." Such medicalization of the mother's competency as a parent exemplifies disability's capacity to restructure and rewrite personal narratives or legacies. While the "refrigerator mother" theory's scientific legitimacy has since been discarded, such attitudes of blame toward mothers of children with disabilities still have the potential to generate the same prejudice and alienation from society often faced by children with disabilities.

Restructured Physical and Temporal Home Lives

In addition to rewriting one's personal or family narrative, raising a child with a disability requires reconfiguration of the structure of one's home and family life. Accompanying disability is the necessity of an alternate physical landscape or temporal structure that accommodates the disabled body. Because much of the social model of disability revolves around issues of access and inclusion, parents are challenged to make the necessary adjustments in order to eradicate these issues for their child. As a result, adjustments made to a family's physical home, daily routine, and life trajectory are one way in which parents themselves acquire socially constructed disabilities from their children.

In *Far from the Tree,* Solomon provides evidence of parents of disabled children altering the actual physical landscape of their homes. For example, in an effort to accommodate her daughter Sam, who is a dwarf, Mary Boggs and her husband "got step stools and put them all over the

house; they purchased light-switch extenders; they moved the faucet on the kitchen sink" (Solomon 117). Their daughter's disability required the Boggses to live in an alternative environment, an unconventional home that was accessible to all members of their family.

Similarly, because of their autistic daughter's symptomatic behaviors, Jeff Hansen and Betsy Burns "had to arrange their house around Cece's behavior. The shelves were six feet high so that she couldn't reach them; the refrigerator was padlocked because Cece would do strange things with the food" (Solomon 226). Because the Hansen-Burnses required these alterations in order to competently parent their daughter, Cece's family, like Sam Boggs's parents, actually required these accommodations themselves. Thus, both sets of parents implicitly share their daughters' experiences of disability by living, and needing to live, in a modified household.

This need for reconfiguration also applies to the temporal aspects of family life. Certain disabilities may require adjustments made to daily routines, and it is not only disabled children, but their parents as well, who must make these adjustments. "Even the most hectic routine can become routine," explains Michael Berube in *Life As We Know It: A Father, a Family, and an Exceptional Child* (145), in which he describes his family's life with a child with Down syndrome. For example, Berube and his wife knew that their son Jamie's "airways were so tiny and fragile that they could be obstructed by even the slightest infection" and consequently they "washed [their] hands dozens of times a day" (95). Because of

the Berubes' concern for their son's health, they themselves took on the behaviors of an individual whose health is in jeopardy.

This is only one example of the ways in which parents' daily lives are restructured by the presence of disability. Robertson similarly recalls "the four years" she "got out of bed nine or ten times every night to resettle Ben" (148). Because parents are, by nature, often unable to ignore the ways in which disability interrupts their children's daily lives, their lives are similarly disrupted. Of the effects of these disruptions, Berube writes that he and his wife, both academics, "had some of the best excuses we know of—no less valuable for being real—for fatigue, tardiness, or general discombobulation" (145). Thus, they adopt the social model of disability in that they, like their children, require accommodation for the unconventional aspects of their daily lives that stem from disability.

The typical trajectory of parenthood can also be dramatically disrupted by the presence of disability in a way that completely defines an individual's relationship to parenting as well as one's identity as a parent. Typical markers by which parents might track their child's progress are rendered irrelevant. "Anyone with any kind of 'delayed' child knows how irrelevant and how indispensable are the standard charts of 'normal' child development," explains Berube (116). As a result, parents are forced to reconfigure their own notions of progress and success.

Similarly, the presence of disability can drastically alter the lifetime trajectory of the parent-child relationship. As

Linnea E. Frantis explains in "Mothers as Storytellers," "Caregiving for children with disabilities often extends beyond typical timelines" and "can be a lifelong commitment" (137). Frantis recalls how, in raising her intellectually disabled sister, her mother "had someone at home who depended on her in a childlike way for forty years" (137). "My mother's identity," she explains, "was indeed formed by my sister's needs, which in turn became my mother's need to be needed" (137). In this case, the unexpected and unconventional extension of the parent-child binary reconstructed the mother's own identity in relation to her daughter. This extension of her role as caretaker indicates a reconfigured life trajectory that remains parallel to her daughter's, denoting them both as disabled.

These experiences of reshaping a family narrative and restructuring one's home, routine, and life trajectory all stem from raising a child with a disability. As a result, internal identity is reshaped dramatically, as the parents' day-to-day lives as well as understandings of their own individual and collective familial identities are threatened and restructured. As a result, a parent can assume an identity based on experiences that can be equated to those of the disabled child. Because of this shift, parents' cultural and social worlds are completely redefined as their exclusion and inclusion from the disabled and non-disabled spheres becomes essential to their lives.

Shifting Status in the Non-Disabled Community

The effects of the experience of raising a disabled child, including the acquired disability perspective on oneself or one's

family as well as the reconfigured physical and temporal world in which one operates, can create a degree of alienation from and disassociation with non-disabled culture. Additionally, the status attributed to being the parent of a child with a disability can have a profound effect on one's external identity and engagement with the world. This is different from the actual experience of child rearing that takes place. As Solomon puts it, "If you have a child with a disability, you are forever the parent of a disabled child; it is one of the primary facts about you, fundamental to the way other people perceive and decipher you" (Solomon 6). In this way, the child's disability is further transferred onto the able-bodied parent, as the relationship dramatically redefines the parent's position within society.

Julie E. Maybee comments on the effect of her child's disability on public perception of her in "The Political Is Personal: Mothering at the Intersection of Acquired Disability, Gender, and Race." Recalling her experience as the mother of a previously healthy biracial daughter, Maybee explains of herself and her African American husband, "So long as we could present or embody a successful marriage with beautiful and exotic children we could mitigate the costs of our devalued marriage" she writes, explaining also how her daughter's beauty "made her especially valuable in an attempt to present/ embody a successful interracial marriage—I suppose you could say that we 'wore' Leyna as a symbol of the value of our relationship" (258). However, after Leyna suffered an aneurysm, her "status as disabled has undercut our ability to use her to compensate for our devalued bodily capital as an

interracial relationship" (258). Maybee demonstrates how her daughter's identity as physically beautiful is overwhelmed by her disabled status. She explains how this shift from a socially embraced identity to a more ostracizing label has had significant impact on the value of her marriage and on whether or not it is considered "successful." Her marriage's newly acquired quality of producing disability further devalues it.

Maybee also highlights the extent to which the symptoms of her daughter's disability threaten her own self-perceived identities as a feminist and member of the feminist community. "Leyna's aneurysm has left her emotionally clingy and physically and cognitively dependent in ways that rub against both my definitions of myself as a woman and the kind of life I had envisioned for her as a woman," she writes (252). Her frustration with Leyna's dependency exemplifies the effects of the perception of children as proxies for their parents. In this case, Maybee's idealized version of her daughter included the continuation of a legacy and tradition informed by a feminist sense of independence. However, Leyna's disability has undermined her ability to fulfill her mother's desires for her. This conflict ultimately challenges her mother's conceptualization of her own identity and what it means to be both a woman and a feminist.

Chris Gabbard, an academic whose son August is severely disabled, elaborates on the threat disability poses for pre-established parental identity. "Especially in an academic environment that rewards being smart, how do I broach the idea that people with intellectual disabilities are fully equal?"

His son's disability launches him into the cultural realm of intellectual disability, where pervading values conflict with those of the institution, where "so much depends on flaunting intelligence." As a result, it is difficult "to steer clear of prejudice" against the intellectually disabled, a cultural attitude that alienates Gabbard from his academic community. By "teaching literature and disability-studies courses," however, Gabbard attempts to reconcile and integrate his newly acquired identity with his previous one.

This disconnect between the parent's previously established horizontal community and the vertically transmitted effects of their child's disability can manifest itself in failure to recognize oneself as non-disabled. "I turn on the television. All of a sudden, there's nobody who looks like me. Everybody is so perfect!" reflects Emily Kingsley of her experience after finding out that her son, Jason, has Down syndrome (Solomon 172). Here Kingsley highlights the effect that her son's diagnosis has not only on his identity, but also on hers. She seems to have assumed the othering effects of her son's diagnosis. She is excluded from the culturally perpetuated version of what is "perfect," and feels underrepresented by the media. The fact that this shift occurs "all of a sudden" highlights both the immediate impact of her child's condition and the contrast between her past and present sense of self in the context of non-disabled culture. Her newfound alienation stems from her recently altered identification of herself as "the parent of a disabled child."

As Lisa Hedley, whose daughter Rose is a dwarf, explains in her article for the *New York Times*, "The way other people react to a child of difference becomes integral to your experience of the world" (Solomon 121). These reactions, positive or negative, can cause parents to dissociate from the non-disabled community. Louis Winthrop describes this alienation, claiming of being in public with his severely disabled daughter, Maisie, "You go into Central Park with a special-needs child, and the other parents look straight through you" (Solomon 365). Winthrop's own status as an able-bodied person is completely eradicated by his identity as the parent of a disabled child.

Positive responses to parents and their disabled children can have the same effect. In her blog "Love That Max," Ellen Seidman chronicles her experience raising a son with cerebral palsy. She recounts an encounter at a public pool, in which a stranger told her and her husband that they were "excellent parents." "Exalting us can make us feel even more alienated from other parents than we already do," she explains, citing her "desire for our family to fit in." This unjustly positive perception of Seidman and her husband by others is dependent on their identity as parents of a disabled child. As a result, they, like Winthrop, share their child's status as different and the accompanying alienation.

In addition to feeling excluded from non-disabled culture, parents of disabled children may also experience pressure from the non-disabled community to represent their child in a particular way. In *Far from the Tree,* Solomon cites the pressure

felt by parents of disabled children to "display their families as emblems of diversity" (128). This expectation is extremely problematic, as it tokenizes both disabled children and their parents, devaluing the unique, individualized nature of family structures and dynamics. Dan Kennedy cites this pressure, explaining that he sometimes feels that his daughter Becky, a dwarf, "is public property," and that he, as her father, is obliged to "explain her to the world" (Solomon 128). Berube reiterates this frustration, claiming to "sometimes feel cornered by talking about Jamie's intelligence, as if the burden of proof is on me, official spokesman on his behalf" (180). This experience of explaining or justifying a child's existence has an extremely disabling effect on parents in that they are unable to participate fully and authentically in the non-disabled community.

Formation of New Horizontal Communities

These feelings of alienation stem both from the actual experience of raising a child with a disability and from the accompanying status attributed to parents of disabled children. As a result, able-bodied parents may feel increasingly disconnected from the horizontal communities of which they have previously been a part, just as Maybee and Gabbard articulate their dissociation with feminism and academia, respectively. Often, parents' newly acquired, socially constructed disabled identities may make it difficult to identify with non-disabled culture. In an effort to combat these feelings

of isolation, parents of disabled children will often seek out their own horizontal communities.

The formation of horizontal communities is a common practice of disabled individuals, particularly those born of non-disabled parents. By connecting and interacting with others who share certain identities, disabled children who differ from their parents can better establish their own disabled identity. As Susan Wendell puts it in *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*, "Identifying with other people who are disabled and learning about their experiences" can help individuals recognize "that you are not alone with the problems that you have believed were unique to you" (12).

This desire to find one's horizontal community is a trait transferred to parents of disabled children by their offspring. Like their children, "The parents of people with any given challenge can find their horizontal community as well" (Solomon 25). Through this experience, parents also adopt a new community and group identity that dramatically reshapes their social and cultural world. The direct connection between the disabled status of one's child and the shifts in the parent's social sphere is articulated by Maybee when she explains of her disabled daughter, "'the problem' was that Leyna was my ticket—nay sentence—into a social club of which I did not want to be a member" (249). Maybee expresses a lack of choice in finding her horizontal community. In fact she feels "sentenced" to membership within the social and cultural world that her daughter has been thrust into as a result of her disability. Hedley echoes this sentiment, claiming that

with "one word" (dwarf), "My husband and I became unwitting members of a community" (Solomon 121). The extent to which Hedley's cultural world was consequentially shifted is expressed by her claim that this new community of which she is part shares "a skewed sense of reality" (Solomon 121). Indeed, immersion in disability culture can dramatically alter one's "reality" as it challenges pre-established notions of normalcy.

In addition to alleviating their own sense of isolation in their newfound identities, parents may seek out new horizontal communities in the hope of enriching their understanding of their disabled child's experiences so as to better their lives. After finding out that their son Jacob was deaf, Megan Shamberg and Michael Williams "began hunting down deaf adults. 'We would have them over for brunch and say, 'How were you raised, what did you like, what didn't you like?'" (Solomon 75). Jacob's parents' desires to connect with deaf people stem from an inability to accurately imagine their son's experience as a deaf child. Many parents' approach to raising their child is shaped in some way by their own experience of growing up a certain way. Because of Jacob's disability, his parents feel unable to draw on their own experiences, and therefore must seek outside sources. In the process of doing so, they begin to engage with the Deaf community on their own.

In finding these horizontal communities, parents may seek out individuals who share the disabilities their children have, or other parents of similarly disabled children. Jack Barr, Jr., writes of the experience of adjusting to his infant daughter

Marley's Down syndrome diagnosis. After nearly leaving his wife and daughter, Barr looked up other parents of children with Down syndrome in an online support group and "ended up spending the next two hours talking on the phone about my daughter and family with a man I had never met. He had a 2-year-old with Down syndrome." "I cannot explain it," he continues, "but after talking to him for two hours I had the strength to go home and face another day." By connecting with other parents who shared in his experience, Barr was able to contextualize his new identity as a parent of a disabled child and liberate himself from the crisis of identity triggered by his daughter's diagnosis.

Kingsley advocates for the formation of such networks, advising parents of disabled children to "find support in friends, family, and other parents who have been there and know the ropes. Find a parent support group. Go to meetings." The benefits of "commiserating with other parents and sharing experiences, helpful hints, playgroups, support" are invaluable. Horizontal communities like these provide a positive venue in which they have the full capacity to embrace the new disabled identity they have acquired as parents. Ultimately, parental participation in (or, as Maybee would say, "sentencing" to) horizontal communities comprising other parents of disabled children has a similarly positive effect as engaging with people who share one's child's disability. Both allow for a deeper understanding of the disabled experience that enables parents to improve their disabled children's life experiences as well as their own.

The effects of disability on the family as an organism are undeniable, as many of the same processes experienced by parents also extend to the family as a unit. The rewritten family histories, reconfigured home lives, and unsettled relationship with the non-disabled world can all be experienced by family members as individuals, as well as by the family itself. Additionally, the involvement of disabled children and their parents in horizontal communities and the social worlds they now inhabit can include an entire family. The transferability of disability lends itself inherently to the creation of either a cohesive, or disjointed model of a "disabled family." It is the far-reaching parameters of the culture created by disability, as well as the cultural emphasis on interdependency and community that can make the disabled experience a collective process in which parents and families are implicitly incorporated.

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