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A SMOL PERSPECTIVE: INTERNET SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND THE BORDER BETWEEN WRITTEN AND SPOKEN WORD

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Written language and spoken language have often been thought of as two separate entities that exist on either end of a continuum. In Western society in particular, the written word has often been given the most weight out of the two oppositions, with its creation being the place where we demarcate the end of the prehistoric era. The written word is lauded as a more perfect and idealized version of the spoken word. One is not able to stumble over their own words when they can simply rewrite a sentence. However, since what is written is but a physical reincarnation of what is uttered aloud, it is not hard to imagine that one would influence the other. This assumption makes the idea of a separation between written and spoken language not as clear cut as originally suggested. The internet, in its relatively recent creation, and its users complicate this idea even further, and demonstrate how the line between these two means of communication are more muddled than previously understood. I will be using the term "*smol*," a memetic word that was created on solely the internet, as a lens to further explore this concept.

I will also be discussing *smol* in terms of a framework similarly used by Dürscheid and Frehner to analyze aspects of computer mediated communication in emails.[1] This framework is broken down into a two dimensional mode, the first of these being the medial dimension. This dimension is the literal way in which language exists, broken down into a dichotomy of language that is graphic (written) and phonic (spoken). The other aspect of this framework is the conceptual dimension that is independent of the medial dimension. This second dimension lies on a continuum of whether a text is conceptually oral or conceptually written. Conceptually oral text is that which is more unplanned and is associated with a degree of privacy and high emotional familiarity between the writer and their audience. An example of this being an active text string someone may have with their friend. Conceptually written text, on the other hand, is quite the opposite. This kind of text is planned, public, and has a low degree of emotional familiarity between the writer and their audience. An example being a work email that is sent out to every employee in a company.

As stated previously, the conceptual dimension is more of a continuum than a strict divide between two characteristics, which implies the possibility of a text having characteristics of being both conceptually oral and conceptually written. Research that highlights this concept was conducted by Wikström in regards to Twitter users and how people often describe themselves as tweeting in similar ways to their regular speech. In his research, Wikström analyzed how orthographic and typographic conventions were used to convey how Twitter users 'talked' online, and how they employed

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[1] Christa Dürscheid & Carmen Frehner, "2. Email communication." *Pragmatics of Computer-Mediated Communication* (2013): 47, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214468.35.

particular orthographic patterns to imply a specific way of pronunciation.[2]

Similar research has been done that focused on WhatsApp messages of university students in Kenya by Miriti. Like Wikström, Miriti found that the students would spell words how they would pronounce them, regardless of whether that was the correct pronunciation or not. This was often done to the point of exaggeration if they wished to show emphasis.[3] Miriti noted that these text-based interactions also reflected several observable phonological speech processes.

While these different analyses of conceptually oral written interactions are very illuminating on the various practices and processes found within this form of communication, they do not encounter a situation wherein a conceptually oral word is created in text before it has the possibility to be spoken. This is what sets the stage for the focal word of my own research and what that means in relation to the proposed framework.

In conjunction with this, I will talk in depth about the particular environment that created *smol*, the microblogging website Tumblr (https://www.tumblr.com), since I posit it as essential to its creation and as a way of answering the call for more diverse and qualitative research done in relation to this website.

History of Smol

Smol itself lies on the conceptually oral dimension of the previously introduced framework. This fact of the matter is part of what has allowed for it to be so easily used beyond

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[2] Peter Wikström "I tweet like I talk: Aspects of speech and writing on Twitter." (PhD diss., Karlstads universitet, 2017), 87.

[3] Gervasio Miriti, "Social Media Discourse of Chuka University Students on Whatsapp Platforms," (PhD diss., Chuka University, 2019), 70.

the original context in which it was created and even enter some vernacular speech. Throughout this research, I curated a definition of *smol* as follows:

/smɔl/
1. Adj. small and cute, used to refer to a living being/representation of a living being in a cutesy, almost babying, kind of way, particularly if they are comparatively smaller than others or have some kind of endearing quality to them.
   a. "That puppy is so *smol*!"
   b. "He's such a *smol* boi"
2. N. *a smol* - someone or something that has the characteristics of being *smol* or referring to someone or something when it was rather young.
   a. "Is this a *smol*?"
   b. "When I was a *smol*"

The origins of *smol* reside in a Tumblr post from January of 2015 that describes the main character of BBC's *Sherlock* series, Sherlock Holmes himself, as "very smoll".[4] The short line of text that comprises the entirety of the text-post, a post type on Tumblr that is primarily written text, includes what is the patient zero of this word. This small typo soon reached far beyond the original context of referring to this specific character into a much wider frame of referents and becoming its own meme. While this is not the first instance that a meme has been created from a typo (Vásquez, 2019), nor will it be the last, few have had as large of a ripple effect as *smol*.

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[4] Frougpepe. Tumblr, "*looks at sherlock* it's very smoll," January 5, 2015 (6:01 PM), https://frougpepe.tumblr.com/post/107254602188/looks-at-sherlock-its-very-smoll.

With the height of its use being between the years of 2016 and 2017, it is speculated in part to have been kick-started by a *Buzzfeed* article titled "20 Baby Animals Who Are Too Smol."[5] *Smol* also garnered a large following with those who used it adhering to the pattern set by the original context, using the term to refer to specific characters and also celebrities. These people, primarily those who were male or male presenting, were very popular among specific fanbases and the fans would use *smol* like a term of endearment. It was a way of calling them/their character well-loved or adorable in a rather 'cutesy' manner. That specific characteristic was concentrated in the word itself, so that some people would adopt the use of *smol* instead of 'small' as part of their curated internet presence. It was a user's way of making themselves look cute and somewhat desirable, although this use was not as common as what was previously mentioned.

In its observed use, there are several different collocates commonly associated with *smol*. The most popular preceding collocates were various kinds of intensifiers meant to exaggerate how *smol* something was, such as 'very,' 'too,' and 'so.' A preceding collocate that does not follow this pattern is actually demonstrative of how characteristics of the word *smol* are easily disseminated and applied to other words. This word is *tol*, which can be found both before and after *smol* in the group phrase '*tol* and *smol*.' *Tol* is a deliberate misspelling of the word 'tall' made to mimic *smol*, and has similar connotations to *smol* where the one given this label is seen as cute and tall instead of cute and small. It is essentially an alternative phrasing to calling someone a 'gentle giant.' The group phrase '*tol* and *smol*' relates to a popular character dynamic, wherein two characters have a noticeable height difference that makes the pairing more appealing to fans.

[5] Tanner Greenring, "20 Baby Animals Who Are Too Smol," Buzzfeed. May 8, 2015, https://www.buzzfeed.com/awesomer/send-them-back.

The most popular collocates that follow after *smol* were also the most popular collocates for the word overall, 'boi' and 'bean.' 'Boi' is an alternative spelling to the word 'boy' and is used similarly to the overall use of *smol*, but is very specific to male people and characters. While 'bean' has similar connotations, it has a more extensive history as the most popular and well recognized collocate of *smol*. It grew popular a few months after *smol*'s inception and was cemented when a popular music artist of the time, Tyler Joseph, posted on his Twitter "i am a bean."[6] This acted as a public acceptance of the nickname that his fanbase had given him, and many comments of the Tweet attested to the fact that he was, in fact, a *smol* bean.

The use of *smol* bean followed this pattern of being a term that was given to others, as a way of saying that the speaker found them cute or endearing in some way. It was still used predominantly towards male/male leaning people and characters. This collocate pairing had more of an implied sense of infantilization than the others previously discussed. In that same vein, there were more instances of this collocate pair being used in a self-referential way than the other collocates. Those who used this term for themselves wanted to appear more cute and infantilized themselves to do so. Interestingly enough, some of the people who used this term for themselves appeared to be more feminine leaning sex workers who leaned into that 'cuter' presentation to be more appealing to a wider range of clientele.

Part of the way in which I collected these definitions and various collocates was through an anonymous survey that I sent with the intent for the responders to be people who had or currently have Tumblr blogs. This was so that those who took the survey would be people who were able to ob-

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[6] Tyler Joseph (@tylerrjoseph), "i am a bean," Twitter Post, June 26, 2015, 1:25 PM, https://twitter.com/tylerrjoseph/status/614484662241624064?lang=en.

serve *smol* in its original environment, since it is such an essential part as to how *smol* was created. This would also give a sense as to how the definition might have changed over its current seven years of existence.

I received a total of 109 responses, the majority of which responded between September 27th through 29th of 2021. The major demographics of the survey were cis-women between the ages of 18-25 (each compromising around 45% of the total responses). All but two of the responders still actively use Tumblr, and around 41% of them have had their account for seven or more years. This would mean that a large percentage of the responders would have seen *smol* being used in its beginning, peak, and modern usage.

The definitions that they all gave could be summarized into two distinct categories, those having to do with the physical characteristics of the referent and those that describe behavioral characteristics. The most common of the physical characteristics was that whatever was being described as *smol* was "small but in a cute way" (all quotations in the remainder of this section were taken directly from the survey). Similarly, many of the responders noted a sense of roundness when *smol* was used, one in particular described the word itself as being "rounder than small." A sense of youthfulness in the subject was also something commonly found. These characteristics are not entirely limited to the actual physical nature of the subject, but can relate to the more behavioral definitions in that they can give off a certain 'energy.' One of my favorite responses described the energy as being "that of a tiny woodland creature."

The other behavioral traits described in the responses saw the subject as cute, vulnerable, or innocent, demonstrating how endeared the speaker was to the subject. In relation to these traits, many responders also cited how there was often an innate desire to protect the thing that was given this description and saw it similar to affectionate diminutives, like the Spanish suffix '-ita/ito.' In this sense, there is often a

degree of decontextualization in order to make the subject fit the idea of *smol* in the speaker's mind, so that the use of the word "refers more to the speaker's view of the subject rather than the subject's actual size or temperament." Showing an example of this decontextualization, one of the responders even used the actor who plays BBC's Sherlock, Benedict Cumberbatch, as he is not physically small and, according to the respondent, "not a great person." While many of the responders saw *smol* as this positive diminutive, they also noted its use in a more sarcastic light that instead pokes fun at the addressee and mocks the aura of naïvete they have about them.

       One of the questions that I included in the survey asked the responders when and where they first saw *smol* being used. Since this word has been in circulation for a good number of years, it is understandable that not everyone who answered was able to accurately recall when they first encountered this word. Those who did, however, placed it into a time range between the years of 2015 and 2017, which reflects the research I did previously on the initial appearance of *smol* and its peak usage. While some could not recall *when* they first encountered *smol*, they could recall *where* and *how*. A majority of the responders noted that *smol* was often used to describe young and/or small animals, particularly birds, dogs, and cats. As speculated before, it was also used in reference to characters from various forms of media (anime, *Star Wars*, cartoons, comics, and characters from a trifecta fandom known as SuperWhoLock). Celebrities also compromised a large portion of *smol's* encountered use, some responses noting the particular use of '*smol* bean' relating to Tyler Joseph and the band Twenty One Pilots.

       The responders were also asked to select the most popular collocates of *smol* that I had gathered from my previous research on the matter, with the option to put in other collocates that they had seen that I was unaware of. Their responses to this question was how I truly concluded what the

most popular collocates of *smol* were and gave me an idea of which ones I should still look into.

Methodology

Before getting a collective definition from the survey, my first method of research surrounding *smol* was laying the grounds for the timeframe in which it was made. I did this through a specialized Google search that allowed me to get results from specific sites and within a specific timeframe. This allowed me to observe that *smol* first appeared on the internet between December of 2014 and December of 2015. I also used this method when researching specific collocates and group phrases related to *smol*. I was primarily focused on its appearance in relation to Tumblr, as that is where the word originated and the site I would use as most of my focus for this research. I did, however, look into *smol's* use on different sites, such as Twitter and Pinterest. This method did not prove to be useful in relation to these sites, with unreliably dated material or material with no dates at all. I thus elected to not to include the Pinterest or Twitter results of this particular method.

The second method I used was looking at Tumblr itself and using its own tagging system to see how *smol* and its collocates are used in the present day, showing the full extent of how it has grown beyond its original use through the interplay of various voices using and readapting *smol*.

Tagging itself is "the practice of creating and adding usergenerated labels for the purposes of annotating an online resource."[7] The search system on Tumblr utilizes this by first showing results of the specific keyword tagged in the post. As one further scrolls through the search tag, one may find

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[7] Elli E. Bourlai, "'Comments in Tags, Please!': Tagging Practices on Tumblr," *Discourse, Context & Media* 22 (April 2018): 46, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.08.003.

more examples of only the text in a post containing the keyword, rather than any of the tags. When I put *smol* in the search bar, the usual rotation of animals and primarily male characters showed up. Looking further down, this is where I encountered the use of *smol* in relation to female leaning sexworkers.

A primary issue with this method is that it is very difficult to look back through years of posts in this search feature, especially if it is a regularly used tag. The closest one can get with this method is looking at a tag on a specific user's blog and seeing how that individual has used it over time. I did something similar with the blog that made the first *smol* post by looking at what is called a blog archive, which shows every post that a blog has made and dates when they were posted. I did this in order to check that the original post was legitimate and in character for what the user was posting around the time of its creation, as it is possible for Tumblr users to edit their previously made posts.

I also heavily utilized the IWeb digital corpus once I had a firmer understanding of *smol* and the various collocates that accompany it. Most of the results that showed up in this research were between the years of 2016 and 2017, and showed users from various different sites using this word. They were primarily from forum sites where the users used the word to describe themselves or as part of their writing style and as a descriptive adjective for original characters they had made for collaborative roleplaying purposes. This shows how *smol* managed to grow beyond its original environment (Tumblr) until it became commonplace on other websites through the users mimicking and adopting the word into their own vernacular, much like in spoken English.

I later used the IWeb corpus to look at the context of specific collocates based on their popularity from the survey I had created. One main issue with this method was that I was unsure as to how to regulate my results so I only received them from a specific website. Another was that I could not hide results where 'Smol' was listed as someone's

last name, as I received many results that included a Dr. Smol and mentions of their own research.

One of the bigger contributions to my research was the anonymous survey that I created through the use of Google Forms. The survey itself was eight questions long, taking less than two minutes to fill out, and included 5 demographic based questions and 3 questions pertaining to the responder's view and understanding of *smol*. The demographic based questions asked the responder's age (put into specific ranges of years), gender, if they have a Tumblr, and how long they have had it. The *smol* related questions asked them how they defined the word, when and how they first observed it, and a multiple selection question that asked them to pick which collocates they most often saw with it.

Since I wanted my responders to primarily be people who have had a Tumblr account within the last seven years or so, one of the ways that I attempted to 'spread the word' about it was posting the link to the survey on my own Tumblr account. I soon realized that this method would not benefit me well in the long run, as the following I did have on the website was very small and not very active. In an attempt to better market my survey, I decided to send it in an ask to several blogs that I knew were more popular than my own. Only one gave me the most success, which was an anthropology themed blog that I had only started following recently before starting my research. Since linguistics itself is a subfield of anthropology, I suspected that there may be those who followed the blog or other blogs that the user was in contact with who might be interested in my research.

The second way in which I distributed my survey was posting the link in a server on Discord, "a voice, video and text communication service."[8] The specific server I am a part of, associated with a primarily educational YouTube

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[8] "Our Story," Discord, Accessed August 8, 2022, https://discord.com/company.

channel, had a discussion channel dedicated to language and linguistics. I received permission from one of the server moderators to post my survey and then waited for people to respond. I sent the survey to both the Discord server and the anthropology Tumblr blog on Monday September 27, 2021. I certainly was not expecting to get as many responses as I did, but I am extremely grateful to all who took my survey.

Now, keeping in mind the specifics of where I sent my survey, I do see the possibility of how this affected my results. The two places that I sent it to had people who were familiar with linguistic terminology, and that was reflected in several of the responses I received. Some used the term 'diminutive' specifically in how they defined *smol*, while others structured their response in a similar format to a dictionary definition, giving one way to define it and then listing another. But, even in those with less formal responses, the definitions that all of my respondents gave were fairly similar across the board.

Formation and Tumblr

As I mentioned in my methodology, I myself have had a Tumblr account for a considerable amount of time. Because of this, the stance of my research is something that can be described along the lines of emic as opposed to etic. The nature and culture of Tumblr is something that I am familiar with and that has in part been a boon to my research, as it is a culture that I understand more so than the other academics who have conducted the previous, albeit limited, research on this website.

Tumblr itself is known as a micro-blogging platform, wherein each user has their own blog and personalized feed or 'dashboard.' It is primarily driven as a website based on user generated content, as the dashboard only has content in it when a user decides to follow another blog or a tag. In this sense, the user sees the content that they in particular want to see. Content that one regularly encounters, or a 'post,' can

come in a variety of different formats. One that I mentioned earlier is a textpost, another potential style of formatting is a photo or photoset, as well as videos, and sections of audio. All of these formats are able to be 'reblogged' so that a user can share it with the other accounts who follow them and include it as a part of their own blog. One is able to add onto or comment on another post, but users more often forgo this method of interaction by instead putting such comments in the tags of their reblog.

I previously mentioned tags in terms of their technological function as a way to associate certain keywords with a post. However, there is also a more discourse related function of tags that was created by the users. To avoid making posts seem 'cluttered,' users instead put their comments in the tags of a post since there are no tag limits and this action does not change the appearance of the original post.[9] This created two distinct categories of tags; keywords and comments, comments being further subdivided into opinions, reactions, and asides.[10]

With the nature of commentary based tags, I sought to use this to my advantage when I was first conducting my research in regards to the first *smol* textpost. To my disappointment, there had been no additional tags on the first post including *smol* that might have given additional context or expressed more of the author's opinion at the time. I also noticed that the early days of *smol* showed it as being more of a reactionary-comment tag. People were expressing their excitement or disbelief over how *smol* something was. It has since shifted to function more as a keyword tag, but there are those who still use it in a reactionary manner.

Part of the appeal of Tumblr that works in conjunction with the way its user interface is constructed is how it al-

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[9] Bourlai, "Tags," 47.

[10] Ibid., 47.

lows users to have pseudonymity. Pseudonymity, as described by Vásquez in *Language, Creativity and Humour Online*, is when someone is only known by a pseudonym or, in this instance, a username.[11] Part of how Tumblr functions is that, unless you choose to release information about yourself, no other users on the website will know who you are outside of the space you have constructed for yourself, seemingly counterproductive for what is technically a social media site. This selected anonymity is inviting to people,[12] as it can allow someone to indulge in interests or activities that one may not normally feel comfortable sharing with others. It is the unique freedom to make any kind of post you like before sending it out into the aether in the hopes that someone sharing a similar mindset will respond to it. Naomi Baron further described this kind of communication in *Alphabet to email* as a "broadcast dialogue," since it is a way of communication that implies multiple recipients and can allow others to freely respond. It is "broadcasting that invites conversation."[13]

This conversation is often initiated through the creation of memes, which is an integral characteristic of the micro-blogging platform. Properly defined by Richard Dawkins as a unit of cultural transmission through recreation and mimicry,[14] two traits also common in the spread of new linguistic patterns,[15] modern memes are somewhat understood

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[11] Camilla Vásquez, *Language, Creativity and Humour Online* (1st ed.), (Routledge, 2019), 88,
https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315159027.

[12] Naomi S. Baron, *Alphabet to email: How written English evolved and where it's heading*, (Routledge, 2002), 233-234.

[13] Ibid., 230.

[14] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford University Press, 1989).

[15] Laura J. Batterink & Ken Paller, "Picking up patterns in language: Implicit learning helps guide the acquisition of linguistic rules and regularities," *Psychological Science Agenda* (2016).

as a widespread inside joke that exists on the internet. Many memes in past years can be traced back to originating on Tumblr, *smol* being one of them, which has led to Tumblr being described as a "meme hub."[16] Memes can quickly become popular throughout the site itself before they spread onto different platforms, creating intertextuality between different websites.

A second facet of Tumblr content is that which comes from the unique subculture of various fanbases or 'fandoms' that have flocked to the site, which can be attributed to the alluring pseudonymity associated with it. A user is able to indulge in a broadcast that is raving about a favorite character or actor of theirs and receive affirmations from others who share similar opinions. It creates a positive feedback loop, as the user's own excitement about something can be amplified by another who shares the same sentiments.

This fact in turn relates to the context in which the original *smol* post was made and its association with a unique fandom, briefly mentioned with the environment in which people associated the word. The era of 2015 Tumblr was at the peak of a fanbase involving three separate shows called SuperWhoLock. This was comprised of the CW show *Supernatural* and the BBC shows *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock*. The subculture surrounding this fanbase is something that could become its own point of research, but the most important aspect of this fanbase for my own research is how people viewed the characters. Those who were fans of any or all of these shows adored the main characters and their respective actors. The fans hoped for their continued wellbeing in their respective stories, especially when emotionally trying situations happened to them. The fan response to this was often with a point of sympathy or pity towards the characters that ultimately culminated in wanting to protect them and *ensure* that emotional wellbeing. This emotional investment is what

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[16] Vásquez, *Language, Creativity and Humour Online*, 89.

leads to the iconic decontextualization of a subject described as *smol*.

One cannot deny the large influence that this has had on the well known or perceived definitions of *smol*, which have stuck with it far beyond a discussion of BBC's Sherlock Holmes. People far beyond this original audience adopted *smol* into their regular vernacular, both on and offline. This cultural phenomenon of the decontextualization of characters alongside Tumblr's position on the framework is a key part of how *smol* was created in the first place.

In terms of the framework, Tumblr rests on the graphic, conceptually oral end of the spectrum. This is due to the fact that the users of the site, and bloggers in general as stated by Puschmann, commonly use a personal voice for their posts.[17] The way that they write can be assumed to reflect the way that they speak, so that text can thus be emulated in spoken vernacular. This characteristic, as well as the understood culture of Tumblr itself, was not only able to create a unique environment in which *smol could* be created, but one where it *thrived*. It became such a widespread term that *smol* is somewhat of a trademark of Tumblr vernacular. Part of why *smol* was able to spread so virally was due to the nature of it being considered a 'meme word.' *Smol* and its collocates were mimicked and reimagined as it spread throughout the internet, as is the usual pattern for memes. As well as the word itself, a specific characteristic of *smol* was reproduced in other words in a similar manner. This characteristic being the central vowel changing to an 'o.'

The Ablaut

This vowel change, known as an ablaut, from an 'a' to an 'o' is the attribute that demarcated *smol* as a special

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[17] Cornelius Puschmann, "4. Blogging," *Pragmatics of Computer Mediated Communication* (2013), 86, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214468.83.

form of small. The various definitions and associations of the word that were discussed previously, primarily the roundness of it, became attached to that specific vowel change as it began to spread beyond *smol*. The association with roundness is also reflected in the vowel itself. The letter 'o' is graphically represented as being rounded in the form of a small circle. 'O' is also described as phonetically round due to the shape that one's lips make when forming the sound. The coinciding of these specifically rounded aspects helps to carry the inherently round aspect of *smol* to other words that adopt this ablaut.

One of the first examples of another word adopting this aspect of *smol* was its subsequent antithesis, *tol*. Other imitations are similarly in an adjectival manner, such as 'chonk' (chunk) and 'lorge' (large), to show an exaggerated roundness of the subject existing in tandem with the original meaning of the adjective. The o-ablaut has also been used for nouns to employ this sense, such as 'shork' (shark) and 'borb' ('birb,' a memetic diminutive of bird).

This association of meaning through the o-ablaut is due to known characteristics of English orthography, namely the way in which people learn to associate sound with particular letters.[18] In the instance of *smol*, the sentiment of the original meaning of the word is also attached to this letter. The uncommonness of the o-ablaut was one of the reasons why those who first saw it were able to make the implicit connection with *smol*, especially after *tol* was created in complement to it. This fed into the ease at which this ablaut has spread across the internet until it became an "unspoken rule of internet dialect that rounding a word intensifies the

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[18] Richard L. Venezky, "English Orthography: Its Graphical Structure and Its Relation to Sound." *Reading Research Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1967): 75–105. https://doi.org/10.2307/747031.

implicit fatness of a subject."[19] The phonetic association of the letter was still present in the words that were created with it. In the instance of *smol*, since it was first created in text, this allowed it to be transferred to spoken vernacular on the basis of the previously existing 'o' sound. As the ablaut spread with the associated meaning remaining unchanged, it grew into what could be called a new English diminutive.

The memetic style of its diffusion is reflective of how spoken English linguistic trends and words spread. Primarily they are demonstrative of how these new patterns are encountered in specific contexts and the speaker makes informed observations on how and when they occur until it is adopted into their own vernacular through adoption and readaptation.[20] Their own mastery of the pattern leads to further spread and dissemination, until more and more people adopt it into their own vernacular in a similar manner.

In an internet context, this process was accomplished through the creation of text and photo based memes that utilized *smol* before it was adopted as part of regular internet vernacular and users' personal typing styles. Memes were the perfect medium for the first step of mimicry as memes and meme phrases are easily transferred to other memes.[21] The internet was the perfect sandbox for users to experiment and play with *smol* before it led to the creation of the o-ablaut. This experimental play-style of language dissemination then created a specific in-group comprised of those who knew this pattern and found it humorous.

The evolution of *smol* being used in individuals' regular, text-based speech patterns was reflective of this same process happening in spoken English. It is essentially a text

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[19] Asher Elbein, "What's the Difference Between a 'Borb' and a 'Floof'?" *Audubon*, March 10, 2020, https://www.audubon.org/news/whats-difference-between-borb-and-floof.

[20] Batterink & Paller, "Picking up patterns in language."

[21] Vásquez, *Language, Creativity and Humour Online*, 28.

focused variation of something spreading by word of mouth, or in this case word of post. Through this process, *smol* eventually bled over into these same individuals' spoken vernaculars as well. *Smol* had the ability to spread across both kinds of communication, where it would go through the same process of observation and mimicry in phonetic speech.

The way that *smol* was able to spread in a similar pattern on both fronts further highlights how thin the boundary between written and spoken word actually is, as it rests on the conceptually oral end of the graphic dimension within the proposed framework. The spoken based process of how linguistic patterns spread translated well into the realm of written word. *Smol* and the o-ablaut are representative of that process reflecting back on itself as written becomes spoken.

Conclusion

The nature of *smol* is that it was created in an environment that emphasizes conceptually oral writing. As opposed to being two separate entities, spoken and written concepts worked in tandem to create this word and further still to cause the phenomenon of the o-ablaut spreading, an internet linguistic characteristic that is still in use today. The phonetic and typographic roundness of the letter culminates together into the associated meaning of the original word that was subsequently able to escape far beyond its original environment. The spread was through a process of adoption and readaptation of the o-ablaut into different words, something that is quintessential to memes and new spoken linguistic pattern formation. *Smol,* and the words that came after it, were not restricted to an *only* written existence in this sense. It was essentially able to spread on two fronts, first through the written and then in spoken by those who had encountered it in the written. The aspects of the spoken and written dichotomy are not diametrically opposed to each other, but are instead able to build and feed off of each other. This feedback loop is

what leads to conceptually written aspects applying to spoken word, and conceptually spoken aspects applying to written word.

The creation of *smol* was further encouraged by the polyvocality that was involved in its creation. The author of the original Tumblr post had a specific audience in mind during its creation and employed socially acceptable behaviors in terms of discussing well loved actors and characters. Those who were part of that original audience and the specific in-group that was intended to receive meaning from the post were the initial launch point that caused for *smol* to spread and imitate those spoken linguistic patterns. The interplay between the multiple voices of the original post and its audience laid the initial basis for written and spoken aspects to have their own dialogue through *smol* and the o-ablaut.

This is a truly unique example of a more recently researched phenomenon that demonstrates how spoken language is a constant influence on how language is written. It is a fundamental part of its formation and shows how these are not two inherently separate aspects of language. Future avenues of research that I would propose based on this, firstly, would be further looking into the early form of *smol* and seeing when/where the second 'l' initially dropped out and what spurred this change.

Secondly, based off of how *smol* bled over from written to spoken word, I also believe that it would be beneficial to this field if research was undertaken to look into how people pronounce words that have been created purely in text, and what previously known patterns they are basing their pronunciations off of. It would be rather interesting to follow how people may pronounce these words differently and what conclusions can be drawn to explain why the word in question is pronounced in various ways.

And lastly, the incorporation of the bimodal, continuum based framework used in this research is something that I believe should be included in further research that covers similar topics of computer mediated communication. This

framework, also, should be used with the sentiment that the written and spoken word are not separate entities. This is essential to any future research endeavor that uses computer mediated communication as its main focus, as I believe this proposed thought process can lead to more insightful understandings of this and similar topics, as I have demonstrated here.

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ON THE NATURE OF POSSIBLE WORLDS

John Bayne

      In this paper, I will develop a theory of the ontology of possible worlds, with the aim of showing how possible worlds derive from the actual world. Ontology is the study of what is and the type of existence things have. Possible worlds semantics is an indispensable tool for modern logic, and an important methodology for contemporary ethics, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind. For deontic logic, the logic of obligation and permission, states of affairs are usually evaluated as obligatory if true in all morally acceptable (or morally ideal) worlds, and permissible if true in at least one such world. For epistemic logic, knowledge is generally modeled as what is true for an agent in all worlds which the agent epistemically accesses. Thus, the language of possible worlds is a default for clarifying formalized notions of possibility and necessity, permissibility and obligation, etc.

      Even apart from formal logical systems, possible world semantics is crucial in contemporary philosophy. Saul Kripke, for example, argues that possible worlds correct a long-standing error in philosophy, which equates analytic and necessary statements.[22] He argues that some *a posteriori* statements (whose truth values are learned from experience) are necessary. One such statement is that a certain table is necessarily made of wood (made of wood in all possible worlds), if it is made out of wood at all (an *a posteriori* discovery). Likewise, David Lewis argues that the notion of an

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[22] Kripke, Saul A. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 100-123.

essential property is only intelligible in a framework of possible worlds, claiming that a statement is essentially true of an individual if and only if it is true of all the individual's counterparts (individuals sufficiently similar to the individual in question) in all possible worlds similar to our own.[23] Finally, Alvin Plantinga argues that possible world methodologies are useful for proving the existence of God. For Plantinga, if God exists in one possible world (if God possibly exists), then God exists in them all.[24] My point here is not to argue that one or more of these views is true (or false), but to point out that possible worlds are an indispensable tool for contemporary philosophical discussions, both formal and informal.

The origin of possible worlds theory was probably developed by Leibniz, who viewed possible worlds as ideas in the mind of God, necessarily and eternally existing conceptually but not in actuality.[25] From this infinite set of worlds, God chooses the one that is the best morally and metaphysically. For Leibniz, states of affairs in possible worlds are maximal and compossible, where two states are compossible if they are both mutually possible. For example, one cannot explain the possibility of a match lighting when struck except for it being in the presence of oxygen, lack of moisture, sufficient force to strike the match, congruence with the laws of physics, etc. In other words, possibility is global, relating to mutually possible combinations of events, laws, causal relations, etc.

While most philosophers agree with Leibniz's insight that possibility is by its nature compossibility, grounded in a global network of facts and laws, the nature of possible worlds itself is highly contentious. Some philosophers, such

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[23] Lewis, David K. 2008. *Counterfactuals*. Malden, Mass. Blackwell. 55.
[24] Plantinga, Alvin. 1974. *The Nature of Necessity.* Oxford, Clarendon Press. 22-24.
[25] Rescher, Nicholas. 1996. "Leibniz on Possible Worlds." *Studia Leibnitiana* 28 (2): 129–62.

as Edward Feser, agree with Leibniz's original theistic inter-
pretation, and argue that possible worlds are ideas in the
mind of God, ultimately identical with the divine essence.[26]
In contrast, David Lewis argues that possible worlds are
maximal spatiotemporal systems, which like our own world
according to Lewis, are purely material systems. Although
similar to our world, Lewisian worlds are causally and spa-
tially unrelated. Lewis thus interprets "actual" as an indexical
predicate (similar to "here" and "now") whose truth value is
relative to the context in which it is uttered. For example, for
speakers in another world W, the "actual world" refers to W,
not to our world. Other philosophers accept the reality of
possible worlds, but not their literal existence. For example,
Robert Stalnaker holds that possible worlds are a type of ab-
stract object: maximally consistent sets of propositions.
These sets are maximal in that for every proposition p in
every set S, either p or its negation is contained in S.[27] Some
philosophers, such as Nelson Goodman, in contrast, argue
that possible worlds are not real at all, bearing no empirical
grounding or genuine intelligibility.[28]

Many theories of possible worlds, such as Stal-
naker's, tend to analyze them as abstract objects, existing un-
related to our world. I call this approach, broadly, the abstract
approach. Others, such as Lewis, interpret possible worlds as
independent physical systems that literally exist. I call this
the literal approach. Before developing my own theory, I will
attempt to show how the abstract and literal approaches fail
to adequately explain possible worlds.

There are several issues with Lewis's account of pos-
sible worlds. First is the issue of metapossibilities, or possi-

[26] Feser, Edward. 2014. *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary
Introduction.* Editiones Scholasticae. 44-47.
[27] Stalnaker, Robert C. 1976. "Possible Worlds." *Noûs* 10 (1).
[28] Goodman, Nelson. 1978. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis,
Ind.: Hackett. 10-15.

bilities involving multiple worlds. There are several statements covering multiple possible worlds that seem to be true, but that Lewis's account has difficulty in addressing. Take the statement "it is possible that no possible worlds exist." If possible worlds are concrete entities, this statement seems true. Translated, however, the statement turns out to be "there is at least one possible world such that no possible worlds exist," which is contradictory. Lewis could respond that the original statement is false, that it is not true to say of maximal spatiotemporal systems that they need not exist; the truth of possibility statements must be analyzed in terms of possible worlds, rather than being about possible worlds themselves. This is improbable. If maximal spatiotemporal systems exist, then they are surely contingent entities. Possible worlds, despite their size, are like other physical beings, such as chairs and telephone poles, capable of existence and nonexistence.

Lewis can retort that contingency is a modal property that only exists *within* a framework of possible worlds, and that to question the framework *itself* leads to incoherencies. While it may be useful, says Lewis, to speak of a contingent entity as one that exists in some but not all possible worlds, it makes no sense to speak of possible worlds themselves as contingent. Lewis, however, only makes this move by a special pleading. If possible worlds are material systems, composed of other material things, then there is no reason they would lack a common property physical entities naturally possess, such as contingency. It also seems obvious that we *clearly can* imagine a state of affairs without any existing maximal spatiotemporal system. If the nonexistence of a possible world is so conceivable, then there is no reason to assume its lack of contingency.[29]

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[29] While I do not assume a necessary and direct overlap between conceivability and genuine possibility, conceivability counts as an important factor in determining possibility. If I can easily conceive

Additionally, Lewis does not seem able to get away from his possible worlds having modal properties (properties having to do with possibility) such as contingency, for logical reasons. The negation of our statement "it is possible that no possible world exists" is "it is necessary that at least one possible world exists. This entails that at least once possible world, W, exists in all possible worlds (by definition of necessity.) What could the latter proposition mean? It is not cogent to speak of a possible world existing within another, as they are both maximal under any Lewis's interpretation of possible worlds. Thus, by reductio, it is possible that no possible worlds exist.

Another category of metapossibility statements that is problematic for Lewis's view are sentences of the form "it is possible that unicorns do not exist in any possible worlds." This states that a contingent entity, such as a table, need not concretely exist in any spatiotemporal system whatsoever. While implausible when interpreted in other versions of possible worlds theory, this statement seems true when applied to Lewis's conception of possible worlds. Why would a physical entity, such as a unicorn, *need* to exist in any possible world? In the same way that no unicorns exist in any forest on planet earth, the same *could* be true of all forests in any spatiotemporal system. This would imply, problematically, that unicorns are metaphysically impossible. This seems straightforwardly false. While it is possible that no unicorns concretely exist in any maximal-spatiotemporal system whatsoever, this should not entail that unicorns are not *possible* in any spatio-temporal system whatsoever.

Apart from issues of metapossbility, there are epistemological issues with Lewis's theory. According to Lewis, maximal spatio-temporal systems are discrete, neither interacting nor overlapping with other worlds. This follows

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of a world without unicorns, this counts heavily in favor that unicorns are, in fact, possible.

straightforwardly from the property of maximalness that possible worlds possess, as interaction implies that worlds are part of a common whole, or larger system. Unfortunately, accessing possibilities within such a context is problematic. Unicorns are possible if there is a maximal spatio-temporal system, W, such that unicorns exist in W. The existence of W, however, seems to be an *a posteriori* claim we need to access via experience. Of course, once we have already decided that unicorns are possible, Lewis's theory simply states that W exists, and likewise for any possible world. This ignores the important issue, however, of how we ever come to grasp which states of affairs are possible or impossible. We can never empirically observe the truth makers of possibility statements (existence within a possible world) so we can never ascertain the truth of possibility statements themselves

In addition to problems of metapossibilities and epistemic access, there is the issue of theoretical simplicity. According to Lewis's theory, every possible state of affairs concretely exists in some world, including unicorns, orcs, blue tomatoes, etc. This reifies every possible entity into real entities, which violates ontological simplicity. Lewis himself responds that there are two types of simplicity, qualitative and quantitative, and only the violation of the former is problematic. Lewis states "I subscribe to the general view that quantitative parsimony is good in a philosophical or empirical hypothesis; but I recognize no presumption whatever in favor of quantitative parsimony."[30]

Although Lewis may be right to prioritize qualitative over quantitative possibility, his assertion that no presumption of quantitative parsimony can be made whatsoever is problematic. Consider a counterexample: Upon discovery of a bank robbery, one detective holds that the robbery was committed by over a thousand individuals working together.

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[30] Lewis, David K. *Counterfactuals*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Another detective claims that it was committed by one individual with a gun. It seems that while they are both equally qualitatively parsimonious (neither believes that a ghost or alien robbed the bank), the second detective has a more plausible claim. If two theories explain the facts equally well, good epistemic practice greatly prefers the more quantitatively simple of the two theories. This, of course, does not form a knockdown objection to Lewis's theory, but it does constitute nontrivial *probabilistic* evidence against it.

In contrast to the literal interpretation of possible worlds, the abstract interpretation views possible worlds as real, but not concrete, entities. An example of such a view is that of Robert Stalnaker. According to Stalnaker, possible worlds are maximal consistent sets of propositions. A set is maximal if, for any proposition p, the set contains either p or its negation, -p. This, for Stalnaker, ensures that the possible world describes a *complete* way that reality could be.[31] Likewise, two propositions p and q are consistent if it is possible that p and q.[32] Accordingly, a maximal set is consistent if it contains either p or not p, but not both. Thus, Stalnaker's account takes possibility among propositions as a given, making his account, like mine, a modal primitivist position. This account has the advantage of not making possible worlds an entirely new type of abstract object. Rather, if sets and propositions are coherent and genuine features of reality, then so are possible worlds. Likewise, this allows Stalnaker to avoid Lewis's radical realism. Stalnaker does not have to admit that possible worlds *concretely* exist.

An objection to this theory comes from Lewis himself. According to Lewis, while possible worlds may certainly be *modeled* as sets of propositions, it seems they cannot be *reduced* to them.[33] This is because the actual world,

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[31] Stalnaker, Robert C. "Possible Worlds." *Noûs* 10 (1976).

[32] Ibid.

[33] Lewis, *Counterfactuals*.

while itself a possible world, is not merely a set of propositions. If I wake up at seven this morning, it is possible that I woke up at seven this morning. This entails that, in at least one possible world (this one), I woke up at seven this morning. Then, surely Lewis is right that the actual world is a possible world and yet is not a set of propositions. A related argument is that Stalnaker's approach merely changes the subject. When one makes a possibility statement regarding a concrete individual, they are making a statement *about* the concrete individual, not about sets of propositions. Propositions seem to be secondary to the facts they describe. The fact that I went to the store today seems to be ontologically prior to the proposition, "I went to the store today," even if the statement is true.

Thus, both Stalnaker and Lewis's accounts fall short. Lewis, by viewing possible worlds as concrete entities, makes them both ontologically contingent and epistemically inaccessible. Likewise, by accounting for possible worlds as concrete entities, he fails to achieve epistemic simplicity. Stalnaker, in contrast, by holding that possible worlds are merely sets of propositions, fails to account for possibilities in the actual world. Likewise, clear statements of possibility about concrete entities are interpreted as being about propositions, which seems to be a problematic change of subject.

My account balances aspects of Lewis and Stalnaker's theories. Similar to Stalnaker, I take possible worlds to be certain collections of descriptions. Unlike Stalnaker's propositions, however, descriptions must have a nonempty domain. This is the actual world. Thus, possible worlds are not purely abstract, rather, they are a function of the actual world. Like Lewis, therefore, my theory holds that possible worlds are not *merely* sets of propositions. Unlike Lewis, however, I hold that certain notions of possibility, such as the modal exclusion principle explained below, are primitive. Also unlike Lewis, I hold that the actual world is ontologically prior to any other possible worlds. "Actual", therefore, is not an indexical, but an absolute predicate.

My theory of possible worlds relies on a primitive relation, which I call modal exclusion. This two-part relation occurs when certain ways of describing the world are ruled out given other ways of describing the world. For example, the description "the ground is soaking wet" rules out the description "the ground is dry." Likewise, it also excludes the future-tense description "the ground will immediately set fire if a lit match is thrown onto it." The exclusion relation can operate on mathematical descriptions, such as "the shape is three-sided" and"the shape is four-sided." It also includes non-analytic descriptions, such as the former example of the wet ground excluding its being set on fire. The exclusion relation, as it is here the only primitive modal notion, will not be defined here. Nevertheless, informally, it captures the intuition that certain things are certain ways, and that these rules out other ways that things could be. A fundamental feature of the exclusion relation is that it is a *de re* modal notion. *Things, facts, and states of affairs,* can be described in certain ways, and these descriptions exclude other descriptions.

The exclusion relation can, therefore, be broken down into at least three separate components. The first is analytical exclusion. This occurs when a description p is analytically impossible given a description q. For example, the description "2+2=4" excludes the description "2+2=5." Another component of the exclusion description is physical impossibility. For example, in ordinary circumstances, human beings are unable to fly unaided by technology. Thus, the description "human beings fly" is excluded by some set of descriptions involving human biology. Likewise, presumably, there are metaphysical impossibilities. Thus, the description "cause precedes effect" excludes "x causes y, and y causes x." Likewise, any other form of impossibility where x and y are mutually incompatible, satisfies the informal meaning of the exclusion relation. Thus, strictly speaking, the general exclusion relation is the set of all exclusion relations in a particular domain.

Once we have the exclusion relation, we can then construct several other *de re* modal definitions:

1. A description p *entails* q iff p excludes -q.
2. Likewise, a description p is *impossible* iff it excludes q and -q (this is equivalent to it entailing q and -q).
3. A description p is *necessary* iff -p is impossible.
4. A description p is *contingent* iff p is not necessary, and if p is not impossible.
5. Two descriptions, p and q, are *compossible* or *consistent* iff p does not exclude q and q does not exclude p.
6. Two descriptions that are not compossible are inconsistent
7. We speak of all the descriptions excluded by a given proposition p as the *exclusion set* of p. Alternatively, we speak of all the descriptions entailed by a description as the *entailment set*. Additionally, we will speak of the set of all propositions that are not excluded by p as the *inclusion set* of p.
8. Take the inclusion set of S, of a description p. Subsets of S that are compossible with each other are called *coherent inclusion sets of p*. If a subset from S contains two descriptions that are inconsistent, then we call this an *incoherent inclusion set*.

Having constructed some basic modal operators from exclusion, we can begin to generate possible worlds. The first step in this process lies in *combining* descriptions. I will do this by using Nelson Goodman's mereology, the calculus of

individuals.[34] According to Goodman, individuals group to-
gether to form sums.[35] For example, for two individuals x
and y, the sum of the two, x+y, is itself an individual. I will
employ the same process for combining individual descrip-
tions to create compound descriptions. The description "the
house is on fire" may be coupled with, for instance, the de-
scription "firefighters arrived on the scene quickly." These
descriptions should be combined as sums, not as sets. This is
because two events (or in this case descriptions of events)
may conflict, enforce each other, or interact in any number of
meaningful ways. For example, the sum of the two descrip-
tions surrounding the fire described earlier involves one de-
scription (the firefighters arriving early) that contradict cer-
tain features of the other description (the house being on
fire). This interaction is not captured by sets, which are unor-
dered collections.

To develop possible worlds, we take sums of de-
scriptions, p+q…+f… and treat them as individual descrip-
tions. We then take coherent inclusion sets as possible worlds
accessible from the sum. For example, if we take the actual
world, W, then a coherent inclusion set on W is a possible
world. Similarly, if we want to find a possible world that is
logically and mathematically possible, accessible from ours,
then we take the sum of mathematical descriptions of our
world, for example 2+2=4 and the Pythagorean Theorem,
and take a coherent inclusion set on them. This constitutes a
world that is, at the very least, logically and mathematically
possible. Similarly, to form a biologically possible world,
form a fusion of biological descriptions, and then take the co-
herent inclusion set of the sum of these descriptions.

At this point, some defense of the basic starting point
of "descriptions" must be given, as opposed to "things"

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[34] Goodman, Nelson, and Geoffrey Hellman. *The Structure of Ap-
pearance*. (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1977), 12-20.
[35] Ibid.

"propositions" or "facts." Why do we not say "the thing x excludes the thing y," or "the proposition x excludes the proposition y"? The reason is that, while it is clear that we can describe the world logically, biological, etc., it is not clear that there are mathematical things, as opposed to biological things, or physical things, as opposed to chemical things, etc. While it *may* be true that there are pure mathematical things, such as platonic shapes and numbers, possessing no chemical or physical properties, my theory does not rely on their existence. Instead, it relies on the more moderate notion that, even if only one type of entity actually exists, there may be several different ways to describe such an entity. We can describe the world mathematically, even if there is not a separate category of things called numbers. The reason against using propositions is that they do not range over the actual world, unlike descriptions. This, as we noted above in addressing Stalnaker's theory, runs into the difficulty of changing the subject in regard to possible worlds.

Apart from its usefulness in defining possible worlds, the exclusion relation sheds light on certain aspects of modality. As exclusion is a relational property, modal terms, conceived in this manner, are relational. There are not simply possibilities and impossibilities, but possibilities *in respect to x* or *in respect to y.* As we have seen, both possibility and necessity are conceived in terms of exclusion, where an impossible state of affairs is excluded by every description of the world, while the opposite, necessary states of affairs, are excluded by no description of the world. This, therefore, demands an acceptance of the traditional theorem that actuality precedes possibility. There are not, in this model, possibilities or impossibilities "out there," existing in the abstract. There must always be descriptions of an actually existing world in order for those descriptions to exclude anything at all. Thus, without a basic point of reference, we cannot speak meaningfully of possibility or necessity.

Next, as descriptions are necessarily descriptions *of* some non-empty domain, this rules out certain statements

such as "at one point nothing existed" granted that "something exists now" is true. If the statement were true, then, while nothing existed at some point in the past, it would have at least been *possible* that something exists at some point in the future, since some things exist now. But possibility is defined in terms of exclusion, and exclusion operates only on descriptions of an actually existing reality. Thus, possibility itself can only be defined in the context of a non-empty domain. Therefore, given that there is a world now that currently exists, it is not possible that at one point nothing existed.

This system, unlike that of Lewis, gives a clear explanation of how humans epistemically access possible worlds. We take the world as we know it, and select our attention on certain of its features. For example, we may pay attention to its biological descriptions, its musical descriptions, its chemical descriptions, etc. While focusing on whatever subset we choose, we take only a limited set of numerous possible descriptions. Then, a sum of such descriptions forms a possible world. Cognitively, therefore, we take a certain feature of our world and ask "does this rule out that X could be true?" If not, then X forms part of a possible world. For example, if we attempt to answer the question of whether unicorns are mathematically possible, we take the sum of our knowledge regarding the mathematical world (a sum of mathematical descriptions) and attempt to analyze if these exclude descriptions of the world involving unicorns.

A result of this, is that while our world and that of, say, Charles Dickens's writings are not the same world in all respects (assuming Oliver Twist does not exist unbeknownst to us), it *is the same mathematical world*. That is, if we take the worlds described in the writing of Charles Dickens, we are unable to differentiate these from our own if we only examine mathematical descriptions. Likewise, the world of Oliver Twist and our world are likely the same biological world as well, as, presumably, the same set of biological descriptions true in one is true in another. This helps to explain how

one world "accesses" another in a certain respect. Two worlds access each other in reference to a description P iff they are the same worlds in respect to P. Thus, a possible world is best conceived as the actual world, but in a different mode.

Thus, my theory, unlike that of Lewis and Stalnaker, allows a plethora of modal notions to be formed from one elementary relation, called exclusion. Not only can it define possibility, necessity, compossibility, etc., modal exclusion can define possible worlds as coherent inclusion sets. Possible worlds are collections of descriptions, or ways reality could be, that are not ruled out by descriptions of the actual world. It thus possesses great ontological simplicity. The theory also has the advantage that it does not leave various forms of possibility undefined. Rather, a certain world type is formed based on a certain description type. For example, a mathematically possible world is defined in terms of mathematical descriptions of the actual world, coupled with exclusion.

By relying on descriptions of the actual world, the theory allows a middleground between Lewis and Stalnaker. It avoids the issues inherent in Lewis's concrete interpretation, such as metapossbilities. It also avoids the issue faced by Stalnaker's view, that possibility is a property of the real world, not merely of proposition sets. My theory further allows us to draw important metaphysical and epistemological conclusions. For example, as exclusion is relational, the theory rules out possibilities existing as separate things, independently of the actual world. It also falsifies statements such as "at one point nothing existed." Epistemically, exclusion provides a compelling model of how human beings conceive of possible scenarios. We take what we know of the world (a set of descriptions), see what statements are ruled out based on those descriptions, and then conceive of various possibilities accordingly. Thus, the theory possesses several important advantages, on the logical, metaphysical, and epistemological levels.

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NIETZSCHE AS A PROPONENT OF COMMUNAL FLOURISHING: THE OVERMAN AS A VEHICLE TO IDEALIZED POLITICS, COMMUNITY, AND FRIENDSHIP

Matt Bush

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche aimed to present his philosophy in a way that could guide the creation of a new myth as an antidotal response to the collapse of religion as a source of human meaning. "Without myth," Nietzsche claims, "all cultures lose their healthy, creative, natural energy…"[36] To Nietzsche, the creative ability of humanity is something that should be pushed in the pursuit of human flourishing, both personal and communal. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* Nietzsche writes,

> I name you three metamorphoses of the spirit: how the spirit shall become a camel, and the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child…The weight bearing spirit takes upon itself all the heaviest things: like a camel hurrying laden into the desert…But in the loneliest desert the second metamorphosis occurs: the spirit here becomes a lion; it wants to capture freedom and be lord in its own desert…To create new values – even the lion is incapable of that: but to create itself freedom for new creation – that the might of the lion can do…But tell me, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion cannot?...The child is innocence

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[36] Maudemarie Clark and Monique Wonderly, "The Good of Community," in *Individuality and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy,* ed. Julian Young (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 118-140.

and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes…The spirit now will *its own will*…[37]

Here, Nietzsche tells the story of the liberation of a spirit from the blunting and conforming influence of the masses in the creation of his ideal "overman." While the retaliation of the lion against an imposed social narrative is an individual act of power, it is unclear what the nature of community is in Nietzsche's understanding of the child. Is there any room for community in the story Nietzsche tells? Is there room for embracing communal bonds and shared action in Nietzsche's encouragement of self-overcoming? Can Nietzsche be read with an understanding of the step "becoming the child" as the third step in a larger process?

In this paper, I will evaluate the possibility of a step *after* becoming the child; a fourth step that involves a return to communal life. Reminiscent of Kierkegaard's return to finite humanity described in the "second movement of faith" in his "religious" mode of living, this step would involve recognition and development of one's own selfhood and a subsequent return to reality.[38] Where Kierkegaard's return involves a coming back to finitude and departure from the obsession with the ideal characteristic of his "ethical" mode of living, I will argue that Nietzsche's return involves a coming back to the community one had to separate from in order to become the overhuman. To articulate this "next step" or "fourth metamorphosis," I will turn to Nietzsche's ideas of the overhuman, his ideal politics and communities, and his conception of the meaning of friendship. Ultimately, I will contend that

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[37] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in *The Nietzsche Reader,* ed. Keith Pearson and Duncan Large. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 263.

[38] Kierkegaard, Soren. "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," in *The Essential Kierkegaard,* ed. Howard Hong and Edna Hong. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 234.

Nietzsche's metamorphoses towards the creation of child-hood and his encouragement of self-overcoming into the meaning making of the overhuman are connected to his vision of idealized communities. By building off recent scholarship around community, politics, and friendship in Nietzsche's philosophy, I argue for a value held by Nietzsche in community that can be easily missed amidst the encouragements of independence. This paper connects the ideas of various Nietzsche scholars to make room for a lived practice of Nietzschean overcoming that extends beyond the third metamorphosis, a continuation into communal living.

The reading of Nietzsche as a proponent of community is not a new interpretation. There has been significant scholarship that evaluates Nietzsche's thoughts on community from various angles. For example, a more recent and more comprehensive work on the tension between individuality and community is Julian Young's anthology entitled *Individuality and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy*.[39]

Nietzsche's encouragement to invest in one's own humanity and overcome oneself does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is a response to the dulling and standardizing forces of the masses. His writings can, thus, largely be understood as a reaction to the inadequacies of modern community. His encouragement of self-overcoming is not only geared toward a correction of the personal but a correction of the communal. Julian Young's essay, "Nietzsche: The Long View*,"* in his anthology understands this.[40] For Young, Nietzsche sees overmen as the most fit to lead humanity into the future. In discussing "free spirits" Nietzsche states that the most powerful of them, arguably the ones closest to being the overman, are the "seed-bearers of the future," the creators of "new life-possibilities to weigh against the old ones…"[41]

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[39] Julian Young, "Individuality and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy," (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[40] Ibid., 7-30.
[41] Ibid., 25.

This goal of creating new possibilities for the future implies the relevance and importance of community. Why would an individual focus on changing the future if the future is external and shared? Self-overcoming can be done in solitude, "new life-possibilities" cannot. Reading Nietzsche this way, the journey to the overman is not finished with full individual power. An overman is made even more powerful if their path includes being an agent of historical change. In fact, according to Young, Nietzsche sees this act towards change as a source of meaning and happiness. He writes that "the free spirit, too, derives his meaning and happiness from the community, although not in the same way that 'most people' do."[42] Where most people are made happy by conforming to the herd, the overman or free spirit is made happy by shaping community and redefining the future. Young writes, "the free spirit is valuable because he enables the community to survive and thrive."[43] If Young is right about this value or purpose of the overman, then overcoming, as such, cannot be understood as the "last step" in the progression of metamorphoses. Young describes the role of the overman as someone *dedicated to* community yet still *removed from* it. I assert that while Nietzsche's overman should be read as highly independent, there are elements that bring them back to communal life.

Nietzsche's criticism of the communal herd as "conforming and uncritical" and his appraisal of exceptional individuals for their ability to shape the norms conformed to by the herd informs major interpretations of his writings.[44] It is tempting to understand this distinction as a binary made of two extremes. As political scientist and philosopher, Jill Hargiss, points out, "all individuals are members of social groups," which blurs the line between an individual's wholly

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[42] Julian Young, "The Long View," 27.

[43] Ibid., 25.

[44] Bertrand Russel, A History of Western Philosophy (London: Allen & Unwin, 1947), 796.

original ideas and their social influences. Through, "exposing the dichotomy between the authentic or free individual and the conforming masses as a binarism," Hargiss aims to embrace context and avoid sweeping judgements.[145] As the interpretive dichotomy between "herd" and overman is loosened, a better understanding of Nietzsche's perspectivism demonstrates a more accessible, albeit no less difficult, path to the overman, allowing for any "herd" member to overcome themselves and become a genuine individual. Loosening the dichotomy between *either* living in community or in solitude allows a blending of the two ideas that I argue allows to understand Nietzsche's encouragements toward overcoming in light of possible communal life, in light of a fourth metamorphosis.

Understanding perspectivism is an important step in appreciating Nietzsche's reasons for rejecting the abundant conformity of community. In an essay entitled *Knowing Limits: Toward a Versatile Perspectivism with Nietzsche, Heidegger, Zhuangzi and Zen*, Bret Davis cites an excerpt of Nietzsche critiquing physicists that demonstrates his understanding of perspectivism:

> Physicists believe in a "true world" in their own fashion…But they are in error. The atom they posit is inferred according to the logic of the perspectivism of consciousness—and it is therefore itself a subjective fiction…precisely this necessary perspectivism by virtue of which every center of force—and not only man—construes all the rest of the world from

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[45] Hargis, Jill. "From Demonization of the Masses to Democratic Practice in the Work of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault." *Human Studies: A Journal for Philosophy and the Social Sciences* 34.4 (2011): 373–92.

> its own viewpoint, i.e., measures, feels, forms, according to its own force…[46]

Davis explains that the tendency for community to establish a set of "Truths," moral, metaphysical, etc. ignores the inescapable perspectival nature of truth inherent to the human experience. Nietzsche encourages his readers to embrace their own human nature, rather than denying it. By ascribing to social "Truths" individuals are limited by failing to participate in their own definition of truth, something that can be inferred to be part of human nature to Nietzsche. Nietzsche's push against this limiting socialization is not a *rejection of others*, but rather an active investment in developing an unadulterated perspective and an *embracing of the self*. I argue that this exceptional individuality is accessible to all and can coexist with a robust community focused on human flourishing.

The core of Nietzsche's encouragement involves removing oneself from social influences and expressing one's strength by making one's own meaning and defining one's own humanity. The external dynamics surrounding the overhuman expressed by Nietzsche's ideal politics and communities demonstrate an embracing and mutual strengthening between the overman and their community. In his writing *The Wanderer and His Shadow,* Nietzsche discusses the ideal of a "free spirit" that is very similar to the ideal of the overman and of the child. Nietzsche writes in *Human, All Too Human* that a free spirit "thinks differently from what, on the basis of his origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the

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[46] Davis, Bret W. "Knowing Limits: Toward a Versatile Perspectivism with Nietzsche, Heidegger, Zhuangzi and Zen." *Research in Phenomenology* 49.3 (2019): 303-304.

basis of the dominant views of the age, would have been expected of him…"[47] Nietzsche's free spirit ideal is a reaction of the tendency he attributes to politics of restricting our freedom and limiting human creativity. In the political sphere it is necessary to develop self-awareness, historical understanding, and discipline in the active study of what an individual "simply fails to understand about himself."[48] Discipline and freedom are not typically associated with each other. Reading it this way, the freedom of a free spirit becomes less of a whimsical non-commitment and more of an active control of one's own thinking in the face of influence. This type of self-control is characteristic of one who has made the journey of self-overcoming. So, becoming an overhuman is a prerequisite to *maximally* effective political engagement. Professor Leslie Paul Thiele sees the process of self-overcoming a political process in itself, but one of an internal politics. His paper *The Politics of the Soul* takes Nietzsche's rejection of modern politics and argues that it is replaced by an internal form of the "struggle, power, domination and rule…and search for organic unity."[49] This process is self-evidently an internal one, making it difficult to differentiate power-seeking politics from human flourishing-focused politics. Nietzsche understands the difficulty that comes with walking the line between competition in leading to more enthusiastic creation and senseless and directionless political competition seeking nothing more than power. While Nietzsche's politics do involve a hierarchy of power, the goal of politics is not a

[47] Fortier, Jeremy. "Nietzsche's Political Engagements: On the Relationship between Philosophy and Politics in 'The Wanderer and His Shadow.'" Review of Politics 78.2 (2016): 209.

[48] Fortier, Jeremy. "Philosophy and Politics," 211.

[49] Thiele, Leslie Paul. "The Politics of the Soul: Heroic Individualism in the Thought of Friedrich Nietzsche," January 1989, 2.

mere expression of that power but rather the "creative invention of values…"[50] Where the power-lust of current politics undermines the aims of the individual by not allowing him to serve "his own domain," Nietzsche's ideal politics would embrace the creation of leaders who have overcome themselves and their socialization and become overhumans. [51] While this method is certainly not egalitarian in its hierarchy, it holds as a goal the betterment of society for all members.

Nietzsche believes that world history has no intrinsic meaning, and instead meaning is created and given to the world through human action. Human efforts of nationalism and war are distinctly less meaningful to him than efforts of culture creation which bring ideological diversity to what meaning can be. With the evolution of the will to power, human life became capable of more creation and communal control than ever. In evaluation of this will to power, Nietzsche only supports it as natural when it is "building and establishing new forms."[52] Condemning violent or destructive manifestations of power, Nietzsche emphasizes that nature is "attempting to achieve" creation through humanity. While rejecting the meaning making humanity enforces on the world, he seems to leave space in his writing for a "purpose" of nature being a flourishing of human creative power. Modern politics is abundant with the will to power for power's sake. Nietzsche sees ideal politics as being shaped *by* individuals who have overcome themselves *toward* both the creation of

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[50] Hans Sluga, "The Time is Coming when One will have to Relearn about Politics," in Individuality and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy, ed. Julian Young (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 36.

[51] Ibid., 45.

[52] Metzger, Jeffrey. "The Rise of Politics and Morality in Nietzsche's 'Genealogy': From Chaos to Conscience." *Review of Politics* 83.1 (2021): 151.

new human possibilities and the cultivation of more overhumans. By understanding the final metamorphosis of a return to community with childlike creativity, the goal of self-overcoming can be extended towards the overcoming of politics as a whole towards the cultivation of human flourishing.

The ideal nature of communal dynamics consists of how individuals participating in a community view each other, interact with each other, and are motivated. Kathleen Higgins' essay "Festivals of Recognition: Nietzsche's Idealized Communities" evaluates various positive conceptions of community in Nietzsche's philosophy to present what his ideal would look like. In assessment of communities, Nietzsche often argues that community functions as a herd who "may congregate," but "are not an organic community. They are a collection of self-satisfied dolts who crave status, pleasure, and influence without aspiring to improve themselves…"[53] This negative view is not necessary of communities but is rather a product of a population of individuals unmotivated to overcome themselves. If a group of Nietzschean "children" or overhumans came together to form a community, is it necessary that they would devolve into "self-satisfied dolts" simply because they are communing? If a community of overhumans were constructed, how would they engage with each other? In *Homer's Contest,* Nietzsche states that "there are always several geniuses, spurring each other to action, even as they hold each other within the limits of measure."[54] Higgins aligns with this *agonistic,* or competition-oriented, community, seeing the possibility of natural human aggression being directed towards the production and

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[53] Kathleen Higgins, "Festivals of Recognition: Nietzsche's Idealized Communities," in Individuality and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy, ed. Julian Young (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 80.
[54] Ibid., 85.

advancement of human possibilities, enriching both the individual and community.[55] Nietzsche views human aggression as natural and unavoidable, encouraging humanity to direct that aggression towards productive flourishing instead of senseless power-seeking.[56] It is important to understand that the purpose of an agonistic community is competition towards *creation.*

The capacity for humans to become artists, pushing the limits of their creative power, is a tremendous potential method of meaning making. In discussion of the loss of myth's detriment to society that came with the death of religion, he writes "One must will illusions – that is what is tragic," continuing to ask, "might not art perhaps itself be capable of creating a religion, or giving birth to a myth?"[57] With the loss of God, as Nietzsche argues has already come, humanity is left with a crisis of meaning. In *The Gay Science,* when discussing the death of God, he states that humanity must invent new "festivals of atonement and sacred games" to fill the meaning vacuum.[58] In another work he asks,

> What do all our art of artworks matter if we lose the higher art, the art of festivals? Formerly all artworks were displayed on the great festival road of humanity as commemoration and memorials of high and happy moments.[59]

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[55] Ibid., 86.

[56] Hans Sluga, "The Time is Coming,"

[57] Ken Gennes and Chris Sykes, "The Culture of Myth," *Individuality and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy*, ed. Julian Young (New York,: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 70.

[58] Julian Young, "Individuality and Community," 18.

[59] Ibid.

Just as the individual act of creating art is brought to one's community in the form of festival, Nietzsche sees the individual journey of self-overcoming as being shared through celebration between community members. This excerpt makes an important distinction between the *creation* of new values, achieved through individual self-overcoming, and the *sharing* of those values, achieved only though community. Nietzsche here holds the communing and celebrating around the creative acts of the overman as a higher goal than the acts themselves.

That said, how can we return to the art of festivals if the historical subject of our festivals, namely God, has been murdered? By coming together not to celebrate God, but to celebrate our shared human undertaking of self-overcoming in a "festival of recognition."[60] As Higgins writes, this new myth "combines articulation of individuality and insight to the point that one finds kinship everywhere with the common quest for a more perfect humanity that transcends the distinction between individual and community."[61] Where our current communities embrace homogeneity and simplify human values down to the point where no internal work is necessary to participate in a seemingly meaningful way, Nietzsche's ideal community lets go of the stories limiting our communities and embraces the creative power characteristic of humanity towards new values and new definitions of being human. Despite the clear value Nietzsche views the communal celebrations of human self-overcoming and definition with, the journey of becoming the overman remains at its core a solitary one. In describing what the communication between overmen would look like, Nietzsche describes, "each giant,"

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[60] Kathleen Higgins, "Festivals of Recognition," 91.
[61] Ibid.

[overman] "calling to his brother through the desolate intervals of time."[62] Overmen must maintain their exceptional individuality and not let communal bonds bring them back into mediocrity and conformity. The nature of communal interactions is made clearer with an understanding of the value Nietzsche attributes to friendship.

In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche defines friendship as "a shared thirst for an ideal," as an opportunity to inspire one another into a "yearning for the Overman."[63] The ability for friends to push each other towards their own individual self-overcoming involves a balance of connection and individuality. While some thinkers argue that the shared ideal or goal of friendship is truth, Willow Verkerk holds that this is a misunderstanding. As I demonstrated with my discussion of perspectivism, Nietzsche conceptualizes truth as largely perspectival and thus a faulty indicator of reality on its own. Understanding Nietzsche's perspectivism makes the benefit of communal interactions possible. If each human has their own version of self-defined truth inherent to their perspective, the sharing of these perspectives is a possibility for ideological synthesis. The life of a hermit leads to ideological stagnation. Nietzsche encourages intentional interaction with one's community, not for the purpose of defining one's identity but for the sake of pushing oneself closer to the overman and for challenging one's own ideology. He encourages the overhuman to embrace complexity, and to leave behind the simple social truth and morality laid out by the masses. This radical refusal of committing to one form of Truth, mirroring William James's radical empiricism, can be argued as a reason for collaboration. If every individual has their own perspective meaning and truth, the exchange of these perspectives without an imposition of them onto each other would be

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[62] Ken Gennes and Chris Sykes, "The Culture of Myth," 75.
[63] Verkerk, Willow. "Nietzsche's Goal of Friendship." *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 45.3 (2014): 279-280.

deeply productive in the evolution of ideas, not towards truth but towards creation and flourishing.

While Nietzsche can be read as denouncing the modern ways truth is conceived in communities, I find it hard to read his work as a complete advocation for radical solitude. While Nietzsche does praise going into solitude as allowing one to become more "self-oriented…and in doing so also unlearn obeying" it is important to understand the potential dangers of solitude.[64] Verkerk understands Nietzsche as stating that "In solitude one is likely to repeat the same stories and habits with which one came into solitude…A friend is a possible remedy to this predicament."[65] This argument outlines the difference Nietzsche sees between a community of friendship and the more common modern community. Where the modern community of the "herd" or "rabble" is a stagnating and thoughtless influence, friendship has the "potential to interrupt this regular ignorance and thus become a partial remedy to the limitations that one faces during the solitary pursuit of truth."[66] In other words, a friend is a companion who is on their own journey and is aware of yours. While these journeys are separate, they are tied together by a mutual devotion to self-overcoming.

In *On Love of One's Neighbor*, Nietzsche describes "the creating friend" who aids others in their pursuit of their own self-overcoming, stating that ideally this friendship resembles "a festival of the earth and a premonition of the overhuman."[67] Despite renouncing popular sources of meaning, he seems to see the expansion of humanity into "overhumanity" as a meaningful pursuit. Verkerk understands the idea of *Redlichkeit*, used by Nietzsche in *Daybreak*, as "passionate knowledge-seeking friendships: bringing attention to

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[64] Verkerk, Willow. "Nietzsche's Goal of Friendship." 286.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid. 285.

[67] Ibid. 288.

the lived world "and the potential of human relationships to facilitate change."[68] [69]This understanding of Nietzsche does not see social movements or community as a pointless endeavor, but rather sees a multitude of work on oneself as a prerequisite if the community is to be effectively conducive to the creation and maintenance of the overhuman. Verkerk writes, "…making the goal of friendship the overhuman gives an immanent spiritual meaning to human relationships, one that Nietzsche considers vital for the thriving of the human spirit. Nietzsche's conception of friendship is connected to a broader understanding of human flourishing that emphasizes the passionate and measured pursuit of knowledge in the interest of overcoming and creative reevaluation."[70] Nietzsche understands that the current organization of humanity is not a necessary one. If there is to ever be an intentional restructuring of society to embrace human flourishing above all values, there must first be individuals who see themselves as transcendent of the status quo and embrace their human ability to create new value systems and ways of organizing community. These overhumans, however, must encourage others to pursue the same transcendence and self-overcoming in order to make possible the kinds of "festivals of recognition" Higgins describes. Humanity has the power of choice, but if they see themselves as *defined by* others rather than *sharing* humanity *with* others this power is gone unused.

Not all friendship reaches the heights described by Verkerk, however. Dana Freibach-Heifetz cites Nietzsche's distinction between "inferior, common friendship and exalted

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[68] Ibid. 290.

[69] Melissa Lane, "Honesty as the Best Policy: Nietzsche on Redlichkeit and the Contrast between the Stoic and Epicurean Strategies of the Self," in *Histories of Postmodernism*, ed. Mark Bevir, Jill Hargis, and Sara Rushing (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 25.

[70] Verkerk, Willow. "Nietzsche's Goal of Friendship." 290.

or noble friendship."[71] Where common friendship is undirected and has more to do with company and the easing of loneliness, exalted friendship is directed at helping the other to overcome himself and become the overhuman. This friendship does not require similarity in personhood, but rather congruence in the nature of one's goal. Nietzsche writes, "what is love but understanding and rejoicing at the fact that another lives, feels, and acts in a way different from and opposite to ours?"[72] The essence of this friendly love is that it involves intention and work. Nietzsche writes that the love of an "overflowing heart…hath always a complete world to bestow"[73]. "A complete world" is not something that an individual can attain without devotion to their own self-overcoming. These friends are not dependent on each other, they are wholly independent beings supporting each other in their own becoming. "Fellow rejoicing, not fellow suffering, makes the friend," Nietzsche says.[74] The friendship Nietzsche envisions is a celebration, a festival of each other's humanity. By seeing each other's humanity and finiteness, the task of self-overcoming becomes something larger shared between the bond of friendship. Not only is this sharing inherently meaningful, but Heifetz argues that a strong bond assists and is "maybe even essential for self-understanding."[75]

Synthesizing Nietzsche's ideas on friendship, community, politics, and the overhuman depicts the balancing act required to integrate radical individualization with communal celebration and support. Nietzsche's encouragement to overcome oneself is aimed at both the creation of new values and

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[71] Freibach-Heifetz, Dana. "Pure Air and Solitude and Bread and Medicine: Nietzsche's Conception of Friendship." *Philosophy Today* 49.3 (2005): 245.
[72] Ibid. 246.
[73] Ibid. 247.
[74] Ibid. 248.
[75] Ibid. 252.

the creation of new overhumans. Nietzsche writes, "these new duties are not the duties of a solitary; on the contrary, they set one in the midst of a mighty community…"[76] The task of overcoming is a nuanced one. While the focus of it is radically perspectival, Nietzsche builds friendship, community, and politics around its encouragement and hopes to fill the vacuum of culture left by God's death with the power of radical creativity overhumans can harness. In his work *Untimely Meditations,* Nietzsche writes,

> To climb as high into the pure icy Alpine air as a philosopher ever climbed, up to where all the mist and obscurity cease and where the fundamental constitution of things speaks in a voice rough and rigid but ineluctably comprehensible! *Merely to think of this makes the soul infinitely solitary*; if its wish were fulfilled, however, if its glance once fell upon things straight and bright as a beam of light, if shame, fear and desire died away - what word could then describe the condition it would be in, that new and enigmatic animation without agitation with which it would…lie extended over the tremendous hieroglyphics of existence, over the petrified doctrine of becoming, *not as the darkness of night but as the glowing light of dawn streaming out over all the world.*[77] (emphasis added)

This excerpt speaks to the heart of my argument. While the journey of self-overcoming, embarked on by a would-be Nietzschean "child" or overhuman, is necessarily solitary, the benefits of such a journey must be shared and celebrated with the rest of humanity in the creation of a new ideal and the encouragement of all to rise up to their own self-overcoming.

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[76] Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Untimely Meditations," translated by R. J. Hollingdale. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 160.
[77] Ibid., 159.

The light of humanity's own self-definition shines "out over all the world," resounding into politics, communities, and friendships. While Nietzsche doesn't describe a distinct fourth metamorphosis depicting a return to love of and participation *with* one's community, there is room in his philosophy to read an encouragement for communal devotion in all stages of overhuman development.

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Mental Illness, Normalization, and the Construction of the Abnormal Subject

Paige Lau

In the 19th century, a new field of empiricity opened up, taking "life" as its object. Twentieth century French philosopher Michel Foucault, throughout his works, refers to this domain as that of biopolitics. He describes the underlying form of power within a biopolitical apparatus, referred to as biopower, as "a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations."[1] Within a biopolitical apparatus, the subject is articulated upon by a plethora of scientific discourses that aim to uncover the truth and ensure the health of human beings as living organisms. The living subject, invested with biopower, is subjected to regulation, intervention, and transformation by scientific observation and practice. Biopolitics operates on both macro and micro levels, encompassing entire populations as well as individual lives, with the goal of effectuating transformations away from pathology and disease and towards the health of mind and body.

Medico-scientific psychology is biopolitical in form and content. It produces and administers to subjects constructed as either healthy or unhealthy living beings constituted by neurobiological and environmental effects. It constructs certain kinds of subjectivities: mentally ill subjects. It

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[1] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 137.

subsequently situates mentally ill subjects in relation to normality and abnormality, normal and abnormal forms of subjectivity, and exposes mentally ill subjects to a variety of procedures of normalization in order to produce greater conformity to the norm.

Building upon these assertions, I take up a distinct line of inquiry: what are the ramifications of mental illness for those constituted as mentally ill, for the varying subjectivities encompassed by the biopolitical apparatus constructing and constructed around mental illness? In this paper, I outline several significant ramifications: (1) mental illness is linked up with a variety of normalizing procedures designed to individuate and transform individuals, aligning them with the norm, (2) these individuated normalizing procedures are not universally employed and are increasingly supplanted by the administration of social and actual death for the 'abnormal,' a process Achille Mbembe terms necropolitics, and (3) these processes shed light on the ill-functioning of American institutional and social arrangements surrounding mental illness. The arguments posed here are specifically intended to apply to the treatment of mental illnesses in the United States and draw heavily on observations derived from Michel Foucault's works on the norm, normalization, and discipline.

Normalization and mental health treatment

Before delving into the questions outlined above, it is necessary to provide a more comprehensive explication of the concept of the norm and normalization in Foucault. François Ewald provides a useful account of the norm that fits well with Foucault's understanding. In modernity, the norm is configured in opposition to the abnormal or pathological. The normal sits on the side of morality, propriety, purity, industry, and intelligibility; the abnormal on the side of immorality, impropriety, abjection, inefficiency, and non-

sense.[2] The norm pertains to visible and modifiable behavioral patterns and the position of individuals or populations within a broader social grouping. It prescribes an ideal type of individuality, of thinking, of morality, of activity—in short, of subjectivity. Every real subject are inevitably deviates from the norm to some degree, so it is imperative for the maintenance of the norm that everyone be drawn to it or otherwise situated in relation to it. The process of normalization involves aligning individuals and populations with the norm by transforming their behaviors until they fit with normatively valorized modes of being. This process at once creates normalities and eradicates abnormalities. However, fitting subjects to the norm does not always entail creating conformity to it; it can also entail situating individuals and populations in respect to the norm in manners which allow for its continued functioning.

Normalization operates not only by producing homogeneity around the norm but also by directing subjects towards mediated forms of abnormality that are more easily administered and more compatible with hegemonic arrangements of knowledge. Foucault elaborates that, "In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them to one another."[3] In other words, maintaining the norm requires the ongoing production of individualities along a multidimensional spectrum of managed abnormality, "distributing the living in the domain of value and utility."[4] This production is fundamentally biopolitical, insofar as the norm is tied to the demand for the health of in-

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[2] Francois Ewald, "Norms, Discipline, and the Law." *Representations* 30 (1990): 138–161.

[3] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 184.

[4] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 144.

dividuals and populations as living beings. It is also discipli-
nary in nature, insofar as it works on individual bodies to in-
duce visibly embodied behavior in line with specific criteria.[5]
As Foucault puts it, normalization works through "the admin-
istration of bodies and the calculated management of life."[6]
The diagnoses and treatments of mental illnesses are them-
selves procedures of normalization.

The development of psychiatric diagnoses on a med-
ico-scientific paradigm enables increasingly meticulous and
effective practices of normalization to be applied to whole
populations; standardized therapeutic treatments are desig-
nated for different diagnoses and certain categories of drugs
are assigned as appropriate treatments. Some of these drug
treatments can substantially shift the personalities of patients
prescribed them. For some, treatment may both act a form of
normalization and as a way of improving one's sense of
flourishing and/or quality of life. The transformations ef-
fected on a patient's subjectivity by normalizing procedures
may be tied to increased flourishing in relation to oneself and
the world. However, this is not always the case. While the fo-
cus of this paper magnifies some of the more harmful ele-
ments of these normalizing processes, I do not argue that the
results of the specific normalizing procedures I will discuss
are universally or intrinsically bad; they are dangerous,
which is, as Foucault puts it, "not exactly the same as bad."[7]
In what follows, I will explore treatment of borderline per-
sonality disorder (BPD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

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[5] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the
College de France 1977-1978.* ed. Michel Senellart. trans. Graham
Burchell. Michel Foucault Lectures at the College de France 6
(London: Picador, 2009), 58.

[6] Foucault, 140.

[7] Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics; An Overview of
Work in Progress" In *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow,
340-373 (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 343.

in order to further illustrate how normalization plays out in the treatment of mental illnesses.

Personality disorders typically involve abnormal modes and degrees of emotional experience and expression. Borderline personality disorder (BPD) often manifests in erratic, excessive, or otherwise inappropriate anger. This is not merely dysfunctional; it is also widely construed as vicious.[8] Thus, treatment on a medico-scientific model is shaped by a negative ethical vision of the unreason ascribed to intense emotionality.[9] Anger is suffered as an impairment in part because of the values constructed around anger, such as the ways in which responses to anger are racialized and gendered. The same could be said for other symptoms of BPD, such as inflexibility and impulsivity, and commonplace ascriptions of manipulative or otherwise malicious intent to people with BPD.[10] Treatment of each of these emotional and behavioral patterns involves drawing patients towards normalized modes of emotional experience and expression; treatment both transforms the subjectivities of people with BPD and how they perform their subjectivities, normalizing both. This does not mean anger, inflexibility, or impulsivity never warrant therapeutic intervention, nor does it preclude the possibility of them taking on a vicious character when acted upon immoderately. Encouraging BPD patients who experience anger, impulsivity, and inflexibility in this way to develop a healthier relationship with their emotions and actions is a crucial element of effective treatment. However, it

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[8] Peter Zachar and Nancy N. Potter. "Personality Disorders: Moral or Medical Kinds—Or Both?" *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 17, no. 2 (2010): 101-117.

[9] Michel Foucault, *History of Madness, First Edition.* ed. Jean Khalfa. trans.Jonathan Murphy. (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2006), 159.

[10] Nancy N. Potter. "What is Manipulative Behavior, Anyway?" *Journal of Personality Disorders* 20, no. 2 (2006): 139-156.

does suggest that even broadly beneficial interventions are at once procedures of normalization.

Treatment for autism spectrum disorder has historically been explicitly centered on normalization. It consists in great part in attempting to modify behavior and thinking in order to produce more manageable, more proper, more legible autistic subjects. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) has long been the standard therapeutic model for treating autistic children. Historically, its disciplinary techniques have been organized around punishment for abnormality and reward for normal behavior. Its disciplinary methods historically involved everything from physical restraint to electroshock therapy intended to serve as corrective punishments for engaging in behaviors such as stimming, echolalia, or meltdowns.[11] In their own testimony,[12] many patients have come forth with well-grounded claims that it has inflicted suffering upon them "with the rigor of a moral necessity."[13] ABA functions as a dual intervention on autistic embodiment and cognition, designed to induce normality, to secure health for the individual and to prevent the individual's abnormalities from 'polluting' the broader population.

The family has also long been the site for procedures of normalization, inserted into the medico-scientific biopolitical apparatus: a whole industry rose in the 20th century dedicated to teaching parents how to parent 'medically,' with the goal of eliminating undesirable traits in autistic or otherwise

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[11] Cody Morris and Stephanie M. Peterson. "Teaching the History of Applied Behavior Analysis." *Perspectives on Behavior Science* 45 (2023): 766-769.

[12] Laura K. Anderson, "Autistic Experiences of Applied Behavior Analysis," *Autism* 27, no. 3 (2023): 737-50.

[13] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 182.

mentally ill children.[14] The autistic child, as a result of ABA and the medico-scientific disciplinary family, suffered from a system of what Foucault calls "micro-penalities"—of behavior, of speech, of the body—elaborated as normalizing procedures.[15] As a result of autistic self-advocacy movements and developments in medicine over the past several decades, we are now aware of the disastrous impact these normalizing procedures, culminating in the search for a 'cure' to autism, has on the overall well-being of many autistic people subjected to them.

In these three cases, we can see some of the contours of the intimate relationship between mental illness and normalization. Each involves, to varying degrees, efforts at transforming mentally ill people into normalized subjects. However, it is not always the case that normalization functions as an agent of homogenization in the way these examples seem to imply. Instead, it simultaneously draws subjects towards the norm and differentiates subjects in relation to the norm. Foucault describes, along these lines, "the constitution of the individual as a describable, analyzable object . . . . in order to maintain him in his individual features, in his particular evolution, in his own aptitude and abilities under the gaze of a permanent corpus of knowledge."[16] Individuals categorized as mentally ill are frequently subject to precise, exacting, and continuous operations of power and knowledge in this way. Exacting documentation, examination, and administration is attached to each individual patient. These procedures are at once normalizing and individuating.

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[14] Waltz Mitzi, "The production of the 'normal' child: Neurodiversity and the commodification of parenting." In *Neurodiversity Studies: A New Critical Paradigm*, ed. Hanna B. Rosquvist, Nick Chown, and Anna Stenning, 15-26. (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2020).

[15] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 178.

[16] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 190.

Personality disorders exemplify the relationship between normalization and individuation. On one hand, the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of each individual's history are often meticulously documented, capturing the unique aspects of their experiences. Therapeutic interventions involve highly specific self-work even as they follow rigorous and highly standardized models (such as dialectical behavioral therapy). Conversely, patients are objectified *as* their case histories and clinicians run the risk of folding patients' behaviors into pre-written medico-scientific narratives. Normalization thus operates as a force of simultaneous individuation and combination: it formalizes, captures individuality as a point in a network of intelligible, documentable codes. Individuals are maintained in their singularity while *at the same time* inserted into series of regularities defined according to rigidified identity-categories such as "PD patient," which are accompanied by standardized treatment approaches and documented through symptom arrays and behaviors.

Similarly, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy works on autistic people as individuals through a fine-grained system of individual surveillance, correction, and reformation. Individuals are organized in the therapeutic space as singular entries on a comprehensive table, allowing clinicians to meticulously attend to each person's needs while ensuring the precise allocation of bodies and movements throughout the space. Micro-penalities are imposed not only on actions but also on patients as individuals, taking into account their dispositions, their progress (or lack thereof) towards the norm, and their individualized archives of past punishment and intervention. However, it is not always the case that mentally ill subjects undergo individualized processes of normalization. The image of a normalizing apparatus that reconstructs mentally ill subjectivities to fit with the norm only reflects part of the current landscape of mental health treatment and management in the American context.

As Foucault reminds us, if biopolitics promotes life of certain kinds, it disallows other kinds "to the point of death."[17]

The mentally ill, the administration of death, and panoptic power

With the demise of the asylum and the swarming of the emergency room, coupled with the growing population of unaccounted for mentally ill wallowing in deep impoverishment, and the transformation of entire sectors of the carceral system into ill-equipped and ill-suited holding centers for the severely mentally ill, a new approach to mental illness emerges. It is the dark underbelly of biopolitics: it is not defined by the administration of life, but rather by the administration of death. Achille Mbembe addresses this concern in his work *Necropolitics*,[18] where he discusses the relegation of entire populations to social and literal death through a combination of neglect, immediate violence, and subtly eugenic political and social systems. He terms this new strategy of power "necropolitics." Necropolitical reality is supported by an array of tactics designed to ontologically 'other' (that is, to other the very modes of existence of) those who do not fit with the norm.[19] The motions of necropolitics are centrifugal, seizing upon populations and pushing them to the diminished, far reaches of being—ontologically, geographically, juridically, and in the minutiae of the everyday.

Populations of the mentally ill targeted by necropolitical intervention do not occupy the same position in relation to the norm as other mentally ill individuals. Instead of being subjected to normalization as individuated subjects,

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[17] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 139.

[18] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

[19] Mbembe, 132.

which is productive of certain modes of living, they face violently subjugating exclusionary procedures. The objective of this mode of necropolitics is not to assimilate them into the norm, but rather to extinguish them as a way of upholding the norm on a broader scale. Mentally ill populations experiencing homelessness, for instance, face significant barriers to accessing essential care.[20] This, coupled with the persecution of homeless people by law enforcement and various major social institutions, condemns them en-masse to severe mental and physical suffering, with sometimes fatal outcomes. Mentally ill people who use drugs encounter punitive measures directed against them both as mentally ill subjects and as drug users, trapping them in cycles of imprisonment, homelessness, and constant exposure to the perils of poverty, violence, or overdose. They exist in a more-or-less permanent, self-reinforcing state of exception, characterized by violent spatial partitioning (such as police violence against homeless encampments and the implementation of anti-homeless architecture), de facto exteriority from the law and its accompanying protections, and the moment-to-moment cruelties of casual dehumanization by a significant portion of the 'normal' population.

Similarly, undocumented immigrants grappling with severe mental illnesses are frequently deported to their countries of origin, thereby becoming entangled once again in the miseries that compelled them to leave in the first place. Moreover, the processes of racial othering experienced by undocumented immigrants are compounded by the designated 'abnormalities' of behaviors characteristic of mental illness. The psyche of the racist seizes upon the abnormal in the racialized other in order to establish, in his eyes, "*savage* life [as] just another form of *animal* life,"[21] excluded from

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[20] Ann E. Montgomery, Stephen Metraux, and Dennis Culhane. "Rethinking Homelessness Prevention among Persons with Serious Mental Illness." *Social Issues and Policy Review* 7 (2013): 58-82.
[21] Mbembe, *Necropolitics,* 77.

the community of 'humanity.'— 'humanity' taken as a normative condition that must be attained, rather than as a designation of mere species-belonging. Both of these instances of necropolitical violence—agains homeless people and undocumented immigrants—further hinge on the imperative of health. The norm of health is upheld by necropolitical practices of sanitization, exclusion, and elimination of 'unhealthy' populations. Eugenicism once again rears its head. The targets of necropolitical violence occupy "the external frontier of the abnormal,"[22] a territory traversed by series of legal and extra-legal penalities inserted into strategies of exclusion and extermination.

Concomitant with the emergence of a necropolitics of mental illness, we witness the modern medico-scientific application of the great dream of Panopticism elaborated by Foucault. Panopticism is a form of power characterized by a fully accounted for, registered, archived social body, constantly surveyed and administered from all directions. It entails simultaneously universalized and highly-specific systems of surveillance, control, and distribution that govern individualities and populations at once—an economy of meticulous detail. The foundation of this "panoptic power" lies in a network of intersecting gazes, facilitating efficient and continuous administration of disciplinary interventions in the process of normalization. The constant possibility of active surveillance further encourages individuals to actively participate in their own normalization, insofar as it implicitly threatens further corrective intervention if one fails to take up the tasks ascribed by the normalizing apparatus.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy, for instance, operates on a panoptic schema. It involves continuous observation of heterogeneous autistic bodies and minds within the therapeutic space. Minute articulations of the pa-

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[22] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 183.

tients' speech patterns and bodily motions are rendered visible and intelligible, enabling the more effective application of therapeutic and micro-penal techniques (reinforcement and punishment, in behaviorist terms). Patients take up active roles in their own normalization. They are trained to rigorously discipline their own movements and speech in order to suppress behaviors such as 'disruptive' stimming or echolalia. The panoptic schema of ABA does allow it to help work towards improving the quality of life of some patients, such as those who could not otherwise prevent severe self-injurious behavior.[23] Nevertheless, it is shot through with the workings of panoptic power.

Foucault distinguishes between the organization of power inherent in Panopticism and that found in "rituals of exclusion." While rituals of exclusion function to partition masses of people in the form of "exile-enclosure," Panopticism "bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies."[24] Rituals of exclusion are fundamentally necropolitical. These practices of exile-enclosure surface in the necropolitical 'consignment to death' of vast numbers of mentally ill people who are impoverished, belong to minorities, or are taken as especially abnormal. This contrasts with the Panoptic procedures of normalization applied to the mentally ill, as explored earlier in the cases of BPD and ASD. However, necropolitical intervention can also be performed as an intentional procedure of panoptic power: as a zone of deliberate silence and averted gazes employing individualizing measures to mark exclusion combined with the use of robust technologies to surveil the anonymized other "via statistics, modeling, and mathematics."[25] This form of necropolitics is lodged within

[23] Abraham Graber and Jessica Graber. "Applied Behavior Analysis and the Abolitionist Neurodiversity Critique: An Ethical Analysis" *Behavior Analysis in Practice* (2023).

[24] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 198.

[25] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 109.

strategies still based on the precise administration of discipline to normalize individuated subjects.[26]

Following Foucault's account of the asylum in *Madness and Civilization*, I would argue that asylums epitomize the panoptic mode of necropolitics. The prison, used as a site for the spatial partitioning of the mentally ill, serves a similar function but with a stronger necropolitical inclination and greater alignment with the exile-enclosure model of necropolitics. As I will now argue, all the aforementioned developments regarding Panopticism and necropolitics highlight significant issues with the modern American treatment of mental illness, both inside and outside of science and medicine. However, these same developments are concomitant with the creation of new possibilities for alternative spaces of freedom, where mentally ill subjects can (and do) escape the dominant biopolitical apparatus that has shaped their constitutions as social subjects over the past couple centuries.

Consequences and Concluding Thoughts

The concomitant and interdependent developments outlined above illustrate the deep dysfunctions within the American psychiatric apparatus. This is not a new phenomenon; on the contrary, the asylum, center of the apparatus of disciplinary power developed around mental illness in the 19th and 20th centuries, operated in part as a space of non-seeing, hiding 'hysterical' women, 'homosexuals,' and other populations away from the outside world even as the internal mechanisms of the asylum itself subjected them to an unremitting disciplinary gaze. Since the 1980s, the ill-functioning of American psychiatric power has taken a different trajectory: deinstitutionalization and changes in welfare and hous-

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[26] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 199.

ing policies have left many former patients completely unaccounted for,[27] living on the streets and criminalized for their poverty, resulting in devastating consequences.[28] This movement, along with the advent of the prison as a location to confine the mentally ill, typifies the dual motion from Panopticism to necropolitics on the 'exile-enclosure model' and from a biopolitical form of panoptic power to a necropolitical one.

On the other hand, the hegemonic biopolitical apparatus of medico-scientific psychiatry has always had an outside. Early gay liberation movements, for instance, coexisted with and resisted the pathologization of homosexuality by the American Psychiatric Association and popular discourses. Even after the declassification of homosexuality, queer activists continued to fight against medico-scientific psychology's hegemony. Altogether, "more sweeping refusals of psychiatry [constituted] an important site of coalition in early LGBT organizing."[29] Figures like Foucault theorized homosexuality as a socio-historically contingent phenomenon, challenging the notion that it was strictly neurobiological, and asserting that it was only one way among many to construct knowledge of relationships between men and between women.[30] Throughout history, gay men and women have themselves resisted psychiatric power and flourished in gay practices of living and modes of relationality. The history of

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[27]David Mechanic and David A. Rochefort. "A Policy of Inclusion for the Mentally Ill." *Health Affairs (Project Hope)* 11 (1992): 128-50.

[28] Marisa Westbrook and Tony Robinson. "Unhealthy by design: health & safety consequences of the criminalization of homelessness*." Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness* 30, no. 2 (2021): 107-115.

[29] Abram J. Lewis. "'We Are Certain of Our Own Insanity': Antipsychiatry and the Gay Liberation Movement, 1968-1980." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25, no. 1 (2016): 87.

[30] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1.*

homosexuality illustrates that scientific psychology has never developed into an uninterrupted and unified field of power and knowledge. Contemporary critiques of the construction of mental illness as deviance or as pathology, such as those made by proponents of neurodiversity, illustrate the same. Even after securing a number of crucial reforms for better treatment of autistic patients within the domain of scientific psychology, activists have continued to push to free autistic subjectivities from the hegemony of scientific psychology as a whole. Therefore, the normalizing capacity of the biopolitical apparatus of medico-scientific psychology is limited and supplemented by other, overlapping regimes of power and knowledge, which may offer possibilities for mentally ill subjects to reconstitute themselves in new ways: as queer or as neurodiverse, for example.

Based on the arguments and examples I have elucidated throughout this paper, I will now posit a few hypotheses regarding the impacts of the contemporary biopolitics of mental illness on subjects constituted as mentally ill. Firstly, the normalizing elements of mental illness are not universal; they function differently, towards diverse ends, and in varying contexts. Moreover, the 'norm' of scientific psychology is not the only norm. Secondly, normalization in the realm of mental illness is not exclusively homogenizing. It also functions as a principle of individuation and combination, making subjects manageable as archived, documented singularities inserted into pre-defined categories, facilitating the application of standardized medicinal, therapeutical, and social interventions. Thirdly, the necropolitical violences endured by some mentally ill people often arise at the intersections between mental illness and other forms of abnormality, as illustrated by the links between homelessness and mental illness. The prevalence of necropolitical spaces of exclusion points towards the enduring significance of eugenics and other violent, exclusionary practices in maintaining the norm. These

tentative conclusions demand further elucidation and theoretical refinement, and their implications for the ethics of mental illness deserve thorough exploration.

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THE GREAT VICTORY AGAINST ENEMIES OF THE FAITH: THE BATTLE OF LEPANTO (1571) IN GERMAN NEWS AND PRINT

Amelia Spell

In 1453, the Ottoman Empire took the Byzantine Empire's capital city of Constantinople, sending shockwaves through the Christian world. The Ottomans' westward expansion continued into the Balkans and the Mediterranean region. There, they met opposition from European powers in several theaters who wanted to preserve their territory and trade routes.[31] Ottoman growth and dominance over the eastern Mediterranean was challenged in 1571 by a joint Venetian, Spanish, and Papal fleet off the coast of the Greek city of Lepanto.[32] Though the two sides were fairly evenly matched, each with about two hundred galleys, the Christian forces won an overwhelming victory over the Ottomans on October 7.[33] Nearly

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[31] Europeans and Ottomans met at battles throughout the early modern period such as those at the Negroponte in 1470, Vienna in 1529, and Malta in 1565. Baki Tezcan, "Introduction," in *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World,* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 1-13.

[32] Andrew C. Hess, "The Battle of Lepanto and Its Place in Mediterranean History," *Past & Present,* no. 57 (1972): 53, http://www.jstor.org/stable/650416.

[33] Ibid.

two weeks after the battle, on October 19, news reached Venice of the Christian victory via sailors returning from the battle.[34]

Venice rejoiced, and word was immediately sent out along news networks to spread the joyful reports.[35] Across Europe, both elites and commoners celebrated a high point in the sustained conflict against their common enemy. Immediate manuscript reports were followed by printed works in prose and verse. A study of a range of news and print sources about the Battle of Lepanto reveals contemporary European attitudes towards the Ottomans, indicating that as German sources become further removed in the chain of transmission from the Battle of Lepanto, they display more pronounced prejudices against the Ottomans.

European Views of Ottomans

To identify European views of Ottomans in early modern texts, one must first establish which attitudes were present at the time. Most scholars of the period emphasize the medieval belief that Muslims were heretics and natural enemies to Christians. This attitude had been developed through crusade rhetoric, but it held strong through the early modern period and was still present even after the Enlightenment.[36] For early modern Europeans, the "fall of Byzantium," when the Ottomans took Constantinople in 1453, shook them

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[34] Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 139.

[35] Ibid., 142.

[36] Noel Malcolm, *Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought, 1450-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) 413.

to their core.[37] In the years following, this event was profound in shaping the West's definition of the "Turk" in relation to itself.[38] Europeans saw the Ottomans as a threat not only to the Christian religion, but to Western culture as a whole.[39] The fear of the outside threat of Ottoman expansion was an important identity-building tool for Europe's people to understand themselves as Europeans.[40] In other words, it gave Europeans an "other" to define themselves against.

New sources of thought emerged in the early modern period which had not been present in the medieval period. The role of humanist writers in shaping early modern European thought is especially emphasized. Humanists were scholars who emphasized rhetoric and human-based perspectives. In the Renaissance, humanists had a great interest in antiquities and in the emerging print industry. Many humanists were staunchly anti-Ottoman and used the traditional Crusader arguments to justify their attitudes, while other humanists added nuance to the established perceptions. Humanists did not necessarily re-examine the old stereotypes because they were more tolerant or open-minded than their

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[37] Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453-1517)* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), 10.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Off-and-on throughout the period, religious figures and political writers urged leaders for a new crusade against the Ottomans to stop their expansion or to take back lost Christian territory such as Constantinople. Malcolm, *Useful Enemies,* 413; Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, "Crusade Propaganda in Word and Image in Early Modern Italy: Niccolò Guidalotto's Panorama of Constantinople (1662)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2014): 503–43, https://doi.org/10.1086/677409.

[40] Joop W. Koopmans, "A Sense of Europe: The Making of This Continent in Early Modern Dutch News Media," in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Brill, 2016), 597.

contemporaries, but because they wanted a more secular approach to their Ottoman studies rather than a religious-based one.[41] In the secular and antiquarian view of some humanists, the Ottomans had destroyed the heritage of Rome. Other humanists believed that the Ottomans had inherited Rome's legacy.[42] The antiquarian view deepened the perceived differences between European nations and the Ottoman Empire and contributed to a sense of European superiority over the Ottomans: where Ottomans were archaic and warlike, Europeans were innovative and harmonious.[43] The perception of great difference also led European countries to recognize similarities among themselves, contributing to the development of a pan-European identity.[44]

The cultural and economic expansion of European nations also led to more complex views of Ottomans in these areas. Western European nations like England, France, and the German Empire developed favorable diplomatic and trade relations with the Ottomans during this period.[45] These

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[41] Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 187; Malcolm, *Useful Enemies,* 411-412.

[42] This dualistic view was promoted by sixteenth-century humanist visitors to Constantinople who printed works about their experiences. Amanda Wunder, "Western Travelers, Eastern Antiquities, and the Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Early Modern History* 7, no. 1/2 (February 2003): 89–119, doi:10.1163/157006503322487368.

[43] Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 187.

[44] Iver B. Neumann, "Making Europe: The Turkish Other," in *Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation* (University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 40, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/furman/detail.action?docID=310434; Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 25.

[45] Lisa Jardine, "Gloriana Rules the Waves: Or, the Advantage of Being Excommunicated (and a Woman)," in *Transactions of the*

practices created what some scholars have identified as a shared cultural space that spanned Europe and Ottoman areas, suggesting that the polarized "us versus them" narrative of European-Ottoman relations is overly simplified.[46] Other research suggests that the early modern period was merely a transitional time in polarized European attitudes toward Muslims, as attitudes transformed from medieval to modern, which is familiar in imperialist, Orientalist attitudes. Some scholars have identified a Eurocentric sense of hierarchy that emerged as early as the early modern period which construed Ottomans and other non-Europeans as the "other" at a level below Europeans.[47] This sense of Ottoman "otherness" and European superiority is a fundamental characteristic of the later-emerging concept of Orientalism. Yet, the early modern attitudes were fluid and had not yet developed into the well-defined Orientalism of later centuries.[48] Additional key characteristics of modern Orientalism, such as a European colonial interest, are not present in the early mod-

Royal Historical Society, Sixth Series, XIV (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2004), 209-222; Detlef Haberland, "Die Perzeption des südosteuropäischen Grenzraums in Türkei-Reiseberichten der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Osmanisches Europa und Ostmitteleuropa,* ed. Robert Born and Andreas Puth (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 47-61. https://www.periodicals.narr.de/index.php/zmg/article/download/1895/1874.

[46] Tobias Graf, *The Sultan's Renegades: Christian-European Converts to Islam and the Making of the Ottoman Elite, 1575-1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Gerhild Scholz Williams, *Ottoman Eurasia in Early Modern German Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021), 4-5.

[47] Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 187; Carina L. Johnson, *Cultural Hierarchy in Sixteenth-Century Europe: The Ottomans and Mexicans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[48] Daniel Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); 44.

ern era; early modern Europeans were more interested in protecting themselves from the successful, violent Turk than they were in civilizing him.[49] Though the groundwork for Orientalism was laid, the attitude itself was not yet fully developed.

The Ottoman threat was an important identity-building tool for Europe's people to understand themselves as Europeans.[50] Christian crusader ideology, antiquarian humanist thought, and European supremacist ideas mingled during the early modern period to create a notion that the Ottomans were an inimical and insatiable threat to Europeans and to Christianity. This notion only grew stronger during times of conflict, such as the campaign leading up to the Battle of Lepanto.[51]

News Networks

News networks played an integral role in allowing both physical documents and attitudes to spread. Ottoman military campaigns, especially those involving Europe, prompted flurries of European news reports. Many of the reports were written by civilian eyewitnesses to the Ottoman campaigns, meaning that they offered unflattering commentary about the Ottomans. News from the beginning of the early modern period, such as reports about the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, was spread through eyewitnesses and messengers.[52] The Ottomans took Constantinople almost

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[49] Malcolm, *Useful Enemies,* 415.

[50] Koopmans, "A Sense of Europe," 597.

[51] Malcolm, *Useful Enemies,* 414.

[52] Initial news of the Fall was carried by traders to port cities, by trading cities to inland areas, and by Christian refugees fleeing north from Ottoman expansion. More detailed reports of the Fall came in the months following. The origin of the sources influenced their portrayal of events; Italian messengers saw it as a defeat for

concurrently with the invention of the printing press, and news of later major events was dispersed through print. In fact, some of the first printed material in several European countries reported on Ottoman activities.[53]

Recent studies of news networks, which emphasize the pan-European flow and spread of news over case study methods, demonstrate the importance of the printing press in the development of news, as short papers could be printed for a relatively low cost and spread to a wide audience.[54] News networks grew to span northern, western, and central Europe in the early modern period, and great strides were made in the speed of news transmissions. In 1400, a courier service could carry news from Constantinople to Venice in about 40 days.[55] By 1700, news from Constantinople could reach Haarlem in North Holland in the same amount of time.[56] News reports were flying around early modern Europe, making them perfect vessels to transmit and develop attitudes toward the Ottoman Empire. Thus, a sampling of several genres of news reports following the 1571 Battle of Lepanto will

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Christendom while refugees were more concerned with their personal well-being. Schwoebel, *Shadow of the Crescent,* 1-7.

[53] One of Johan Gutenberg's early pamphlets warns about the Ottoman threat following the Fall of Constantinople; Pettegree, *Invention of News,* 61-62. Published in Mainz in 1454, the so-called "Turkenkalender" with the top line "Ein Manung der Cristenheit widder die Durken" is the oldest surviving complete book to come off the Mainz printing presses.

[54] Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham, "News Networks in Early Modern Europe," in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe,* ed. Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 7.

[55] Pettegree, *Invention of News,* 44.

[56] Joop W. Koopmans, *Early Modern Media and the News in Europe: Perspectives From the Dutch Angle* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) 203. https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.furman.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1913487&site=ehost-live.

enhance our insights into factors shaping European attitudes toward the Ottoman Turks.

Manuscript and Print Sources

Manuscript Newsletters

During this period, elites such as traders and bankers subscribed to receive their news in handwritten packages personally delivered to them. The handwritten news sheets, called *avvisi,* were tailored for the recipients' interests, usually political and economic.[57] Wealthy merchants like the Fugger family in Augsburg used *avvisi* to cultivate impressive news networks to keep up with business interests in far-flung holdings.[58] The Fugger family also had their local agents curate packages of printed news-sheets and handwritten summaries of printed texts.[59]

Source 1: Fugger newsletter

The first source examined is a manuscript newsletter sent to the Fugger family. The Fuggers probably received

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[57] The service originated in the trade-rich states of Italy and was offered by various companies as the practice spread throughout Europe. Pettegree, *Invention of News,* 97, 114.

[58] Pettegree, *Invention of News,* 114; Victor Klarwill, *Fugger News-Letters, First Series* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970) xvii.

[59] One sixteenth-century patriarch, Count Philip Edward Fugger, realized the letters 'historical value and collected them, leaving a giant collection which has been the subject of much study. Klarwill, *Fugger News-Letters,* xvii.

several reports about the Battle of Lepanto.[60] The one presently studied is attributed to a member of the "Christian Armada," and was likely transmitted through Venice before being copied and sent to the Fugger recipient.[61] The letter is approximately three printed pages long and purportedly written by an eyewitness to the battle. It contains a limited scope of both coverage and perspective. The letter briefly mentions preparations for battle and the spoils captured after the battle, but mainly concerns itself on the battle itself. It reports from a Christian perspective, and does not attempt to rationalize Ottoman battle tactics or decisions. This limited scope is to be expected from an eyewitness report which was written to break the news to high-paying elites, but is distinct from the printed news pamphlets to follow, which assume a broader and more omniscient perspective.

The Fugger manuscript letter uses little harsh rhetoric against the Ottoman forces. They are described throughout the letter as the "enemy," which is not indicative of disrespect; the Ottoman and Christian forces were, indeed, enemies at the battle.[62] There are few other characterizations of the Ottomans in the newsletter, focused as it is on the Christian perspective. An exception comes when the letter describes pre-battle encouragement given by Admiral Don Juan of Austria to the Christian forces. According to the letter, Don Juan "exhort[ed] the crew to fight valiantly against the arch-enemy of the Christian Faith."[63] This brief polemic is as overtly negative as the newsletter gets, and it originated

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[60] Klarwill, *Fugger News-Letters,* 14-17. This newsletter was selected for analysis in this essay because it was included in a collection of Fugger newsletters edited by Victor Klarwill. Klarwill translated the letters in this collection into English, easing the study of them. The letter included in this paper is the only one in the collection reporting on the Battle of Lepanto.

[61] Klarwill, *Fugger News-Letters,* 14.

[62] Ibid., 14-16.

[63] Ibid., 15.

as a quotation from an outside party rather than from the letter-writer.

There are several possible explanations for the dearth of prejudiced language against the Ottomans. It is possible that the author of the newsletter did not hold strong prejudices against the Ottomans. This view is perhaps overly optimistic. It is also possible that the author felt that negative attitudes towards the Ottomans could be assumed and did not need to be made explicit. Perhaps the negative rhetoric circulating in Europe was prevalent enough that the author did not feel the need to parrot them. Lastly, the dearth of prejudiced language could indicate that *avvisi* writers were expected to keep their reports dry and factual, with minimal opinionated language or colorful descriptions.

This possibility is less likely when one examines the language used when describing the Christian forces. Christian soldiers are described as "valiant and brave," "gallant," and full of "courage."[64] Such descriptions create a strong characterization of the Christian forces; but inverse negative descriptions are not used to characterize the Ottoman soldiers. The one-sided nature of characterizations is more emblematic of a lack of feeling toward the Ottomans than it is of a genre-specific norm against biased language. Further complicating the issue is the clear sense of providence displayed in the letter. The author believed that the Christian forces had God on their side, writing that Christ was "the Patron of this Armada" and that "the Christians had achieved victory with the help of the Lord."[65] The author believes that the Christians are right, but does not explain why the Ottomans are wrong.

Another notable aspect of the manuscript newsletter is a description of a woman captured in the battle. The letter reports:

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[64] Ibid., 15-16.

[65] Ibid.

> "On several galleys there were also found a large number of Sultanas and Zechines and on Caragoggia's galley a beautiful young woman, a Christian. She was daintily and richly attired and her neck adorned with large pearls and other precious stones and jewels. She offered to buy her release with 60,000 ducats."[66]

The letter gives no further explanation of how the woman came to be on a warship, the source of her personal income, or if she was allowed to purchase her release. She is objectified but not exotified in the way that later Orientalist writers would describe Ottoman women. This could be because this woman was a Christian. Desire for the woman was not subversive or lewd because she was familiar rather than foreign and was free from the taint of being a Muslim "heretic." Still, her freedom from captivity from the Christians is not assured; she is not pure enough to be rescued rather than captured. In this light, a lack of exotification might reveal the same attitude that lies behind the lack of description of Ottomans in the letter.

Printed News Pamphlets

At the same time that these news networks were expanding, the print industry was also booming. The printing press was instrumental in the development of news, because short papers could be printed for a relatively low cost and spread to a wide audience. Some of the first printed works were about Ottomans, and the foreign threat remained a topic of interest for the whole period.[67]

Poems and pamphlets about major events like the Fall of the Negroponte were common from the beginning of

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[66] Ibid., 17-18.

[67] Pettegree, *Invention of News,* 61-62.

print, but starting in the mid-sixteenth century a different format of news pamphlet dominated the market in northern Europe.[68] This new genre of news documents were not merely intended for the elite like *avvisi* were, but were marketed to a broader audience. The pamphlets were called *Neue Zeitungen,* or "New Tidings," and were common starting in the 1530s through the rise of the newspaper in the early 1600s.[69] Like newspapers and *avvisi,* source reliability was valued in *Neue Zeitungen* and pamphlet authors would utilize dry but credible reports over sensationalized ones.[70] Unlike the newspapers of later years, *Neue Zeitungen* were single-issue rather than periodical and would report on only one event.[71] Ottoman news items were especially popular, given the public's enduring anxieties about an Ottoman invasion.[72] *Neue Zeitungen* usually came in a quarto pamphlet format, were typically written in prose, and sometimes featured a woodcut, usually a generic battle scene that could be reused for several different pamphlets.[73] *Neue Zeitungen* were a favorite among printers because of both their popularity and because of the ease at which they could be published – a 500-copy edition could be completed in as little time as one day.[74]

Source 2: Nuremberg news pamphlet

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[68] Margaret Meserve, "News from Negroponte: Politics, Popular Opinion, and Information Exchange in the First Decade of the Italian Press," *Renaissance Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2006): 456, https://doi.org/10.1353/ren.2008.0312.

[69] Pettegree, *Invention of News,* 72.

[70] Ibid., 75.

[71] Ibid., 72.

[72] Ibid., 74.

[73] Ibid., 72.

[74] Ibid., 73.

The second source studied is a printed news pamphlet entitled "News from the Great Christian Victory on the Ionian or Ausonian Sea, against the Turks, by which the Porto Le Pante (previously named Naupactus) was received by a peculiar act of God, The 7th of October, in 1571" (*"Zeitung Von dem Großen Christen-Sieg auff dem Ionischen oder Ausonischen Meer, wider den Türcken, so bey den Porto Le Pante [sonsten Naupactus genandt] auff sonderbarer schickung Gottes erhalten worden ist, Den 7. Octobris, Im 1571"*).[75] The pamphlet was published in Nuremberg, a center of *Neue Zeitungen* production, in 1571 by Wendelinum Borsch, and it is sixteen pages long.[76] It features a woodcut image on the title page of overlapping warships colliding and figures jumping into the water (Figure 1).[77] The image was probably not custom made, as it does not feature the distinctive imagery associated with Lepanto, opposing fleets arranged in a half-moon.[78] Instead, the woodcut simply conveys that the pamphlet reports on a dramatic sea battle.

The pamphlet takes a more holistic view of the battle, beginning with a summary of the Ottoman campaign leading up to Lepanto, then overviewing the Ottoman and

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[75] Wendelinum Borsch, *Zeitung Von dem Großen Christen-Sieg auff dem Ionischen oder Ausonischen Meer, wider den Türcken, so bey den Porto Le Pante (sonsten Naupactus genandt) auff sonderbarer schickung Gottes erhalten worden ist, Den 7. Octobris, Im 1571* (Nuremberg: Wendelinum Borsch, 1571) Ai, https://www.digitale sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00026869?page=,1. Translations of the included excerpts from German to English were made by Amelia Spell.

[76] Pettegree, *Invention of News,* 74; Borsch, *Zeitung Von dem Großen Christen-Sieg*, Ai.

[77] Borsch, *Zeitung Von dem Großen Christen-Sieg*, Ai.

[78] Pettegree, *Invention of News,* 142-144.

Christian preparations for the sea battle.[79] A great deal of detail goes into describing the Christian battle plans and strategies of attack, but the pamphlet-writer also seems to have knowledge of Ottoman strategies and movements.[80] The pamphlet also includes the European leaders discussing whether they should even engage with the Ottomans, and uses reasoning to justify their participation in the battle.[81] This inclusion is significant because the writer could have easily glossed over this portion and portrayed the conflict as inevitable, but instead decided to explain the choice to engage the Ottomans. Following an account of the battle, the pamphlet reports on the spoils taken by the Christians.[82] Casualties on both are also estimated, giving more quantitative evidence of a Christian victory.[83] The pamphlet then gives a conclusion to the battle by describing celebrations in Venice after the victory was announced.[84] Lastly, the pamphlet lists significant Christian casualties.[85]

   Though the pamphlet offers a multifaceted account of the battle in comparison to the manuscript newsletter, it contains more biased language against the Ottomans. They are described as "merciless" and "tyrants" (*"unbarmhertzig," "Tyrannen"*), and as "common enemies of the Christian faith and Christian will (*"gemeinen Feinden des Christlichen glaubens, und Christichr willen"*).[86] The descriptive prose of the pamphlet, too, highlights the violence of the Ottoman sol-

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[79] Ibid., Aii - Aii v.

[80] Ibid., Aiii - Aiii v.

[81] Ibid., Aiii.

[82] Ibid., Bi v.

[83] Ibid., Bii.

[84] Ibid., Biii.

[85] Ibid., Biii v - Biv.

[86] Ibid., Aii, Aii v, Aiv v.

diers against Christian soldiers and civilians in previous conflicts.[87] These descriptors of the Ottomans as violent and anti-Christian are strong signs that a traditional, Crusader-like view of Muslims is held by the pamphlet's author.

In contrast to the portrayal of Ottoman soldiers, the character traits of the Christian soldiers are described favorably. They are portrayed as measured, when deciding if they should join the battle; praiseworthy, when showing bravery in battle; and joyous, when celebrating their victory. Praise for the Christian soldiers as "chivalrous and well" (*"Ritterlich und wol"*) is in line with the manuscript newsletter's descriptions of the Chrisians, showing a consistent narrative across these sources.[88] The sense of providence has also been retained from the manuscript newsletter to the printed pamphlet. Here, the pamphlet describes that at the end of the battle, "almighty God finally bestowed the victory on the Christians" (*"hat endlich der Allmechtig Gott, den Christen den Sieg verliehen"*). Moreover, the pamphlet closes with a prayer thanking God for the victory:

> "So now the Almighty God, without a doubt, has responded to this sensible and glorious call upon so many thousands of poor imprisoned Christians who have resisted this mighty enemy, and in the utmost need those who call are able to help. An example should also be taken here. Place all your confidence and hope in the Lord Christ, and patiently await the Lord, who, when we cry out to him from the heart, can rescue us from all troubles. Amen."
>
> (*"So nun der Allmechtig Gott, one zweifel, auff dz Senlich und Herrlich anruffen, so vil Tousend Armer gefangener Christen, disem gewaltigen Feindt widerstandt gethon hat, unn in der euffersten noth*

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[87] Ibid., Aii.
[88] Ibid., Bi.

> *den anruffenden zn hilff kummen ist, So soll auch*
> *menigklich hierab ein Eyempel nemen, Alle seine*
> *zuversicht und hoffnung auff den Herrn Christum*
> *zustellen, und in gedult des Herrn zu er warten,*
> *welcher do wir zu ime von hertzen Ruffen werden,*
> *auß allen nöten uns erretten kan, Amen.")*[89]

With this addition, the battle's ideological component takes the foreground and the European victory shifts into a religious lesson meant for all of Christianity.

Printed Poetry and Religious Tracts

Devotional lessons were more commonly found in religious tracts, one of early modern period's most popular print genres, along with ballads, poems, and the aforementioned news pamphlets. Ballads were popular partly because they served a social purpose; they were written in verse and were meant to be sung to a particular tune.[90] Similarly, poems could be recited to a crowd. Most ballads and poems were printed in broadsheet form, making all lyrics visible on one page, but some were printed as pamphlets.[91] Unlike *Neue Zeitungen,* which focused on political and military news, ballads and poems featured more sensationalized topics such as natural disasters and the supernatural.[92] Monumental current events would also result in a flurry of poems and songs.[93] Both Italian and German authors produced ballads after the initial wave of news pamphlets about the Battle of Lepanto.[94]

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[89] Ibid., Biv.

[90] Pettegree, *Invention of News*, *121.*

[91] Ibid., 123.

[92] Ibid., 74.

[93] Ibid., 143.

[94] Ibid., 143-144.

Another common genre was *Türkenbüchlein,* or Turkish pamphlets, defined by John W. Bohnstedt as "popularly written tracts concerning the Turkish threat to Germany and Christendom."[95] *Türkenbüchlein* lay at the intersection of religious texts and Ottoman news. Unlike *Neue Zeitungen* or ballads, they did not usually report on specific events, but rather gave general warnings about the Turkish threat to Christianity. Their authors were mostly theologians, and the publication of *Türkenbüchlein* is heavily tied to the Reformation.[96]

Türkenbüchlein both evidenced and promoted stereotypes, further driving anxiety about Ottomans, while also giving their Christian readers actionable advice on how to counter the threat. The uniting theme of *Türkenbüchlein* was concern over the looming, violent threat of the Ottomans to Christians and their religion.[97] The authors decided that the concern was worth fostering. *Türkenbüchlein* featured violent imagery – Ottoman soldiers impaling babies, for example, was a common motif was spread through *Türkenbüchlein*.[98] This fear of extreme violence was somewhat tempered by an

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[95] John W. Bohnstedt, "The Infidel Scourge of God: The Turkish Menace as Seen by German Pamphleteers of the Reformation Era." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 58, no. 9 (1968): 3.

[96] Martin Luther famously wrote *Türkenbüchlein*, along with several of his colleagues and the protestant Swiss writer Theodore Bibliander. *Türkenbüchlein* have mostly been studied in Protestant contexts.

Bohnstedt, "Infidel Scourge of God," 3; Thomas Kaufmann, *»Türckenbüchlein«: Zur christlichen Wahrnehmung »türkischer Religion« in Spätmittelalter und Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008) 5-6; Rudolph Pfister, "Das Türkenbüchlein Theodor Biblianders," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 9, no.6 (1953): 438-454. http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-879018.

[97] Bohnstedt, "Infidel Scourge of God," 3; Kaufmann, *Türckenbüchlein,* 5.

[98] Kaufmann, *Türckenbüchlein,* 86, 102-103.

equally-prevalent belief that the Ottomans were militarily inferior to Europeans.[99] European victories like that at Lepanto only cemented this attitude. Many *Türkenbüchlein* authors also promoted the Deuteronomic idea that the Ottomans were tools of God's punishment to Christendom, and that Christianity should repent and address its errors in order to prevent further attacks from the Ottomans.[100] Depending on the author, the pamphlet would then prescribe that all European Christians should convert to either Protestantism or Catholicism or that all Christians should reunify the splintered Church.[101] This would earn them God's forgiveness and ensure that Christianity could continue unhindered.[102] Though *Türkenbüchlein* were a somewhat niche genre, certain elements displayed in them were common across much of early modern European writing about Ottomans.

Source 3: Bavarian Religious Poem

The last source examined is a poem entitled "A Christian Comforting Word against the Turks, put to dear and Honor in Rhyming Manner" (*"Ein Christlicher Trostspruch wider den Türken, zu lieb und Ehren inn Reimenweiß gestelt"*).[103] The poem was written by *"Gregorium Franckenmann, von Hall, Poet,"* who appears to have been a city official in Eggenfelden, a town in current-

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[99] Ibid., 5.
[100] Bohnstedt, "Infidel Scourge of God," 3.
[101] Pfister, "Türkenbüchlein Theodor Biblianders," 442-443.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Gregorium Franckenman, *Ein Christlicher Trostspruch wider den Türken, zu lieb und Ehren inn Reimenweiß gestelt* (1572) Ai, https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00007563?page=,1. Translations of the included excerpts from German to English were made by Amelia Spell.

day eastern Bavaria.[104] His pamphlet is eight pages long and written in iambic tetrameter with an AABB rhyme scheme. While the poem does not explicitly mention the Battle of Lepanto, it was written in 1572, shortly after the battle, when the conflict was still fresh in many Europeans 'minds.

The poem is religious in nature, looking much like a sermon or *Türkenbüchlein* written in verse. It begins by chastising Christians for their various sins: "gorging, boozing, playing, vows," "adultery, fornication," "war, murder, envy, hate," and more (*"Fressen, Sauffen, Spilen, Schweren," "Ehebruch, Hururey," "Krieg, Mord, Neid, Haß"*).[105] The writer worries that, if Christians do not improve their behaviors, God will send an Ottoman invasion as punishment:

> Lay Turkish vices away from you,
> > "Then God would also give his blessing.
> "Because if one doesn't do the same as us,
> > I worry that the Turk will become our rod."
> (*"Türkische laster von dir legen,*
> > *"Darnach so gäb Gott auch sein segen.*
> *"Weil man dasselb bey uns nicht thüt,*
> > *"Sorg ich der Türck werd unser Rüth."*)[106]

Christians should earnestly repent in order to prevent this eventuality.[107]

After this admonishment, the writer comforts his readers by giving Biblical examples of God's punishments

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[104] Franckenman is described on the title page as "The Earnest, Reputable, Long-Sighted and Wise Gentleman, Chamberlain and Councillor of the famous Marcks Eckenfelden, &c." (*"Den Ehrnthafften, Achtbarn, Fürsichtigen und Weisen Herrn, Cammerer und Rathe des berümbten Marcks Eckenfelden, &c."*). Franckenman, *Christlicher Trostspruch,* Ai.

[105] Franckenman, *Christlicher Trostspruch,* Ai v, Ai v, Aii.

[106] Ibid., Aii.

[107] Ibid.

and rewards. Across several pages, he retells the stories of Pharaoh and the Red Sea, David and Goliath, and the Assyrian siege on Jerusalem, and mentions several other figures from the Old Testament.[108] These examples support the writer's argument that God will save the righteous and the true believers. Christians should not despair (*"verzagen"*), because there is Biblical precedent indicating their eventual success.[109] Because the Christians, though they have sinned, are righteous and chosen, their triumph against the Ottomans is and has been inevitable. In fact, the writer argues, Christians have little reason to fear the Ottomans, even in the event of an invasion. While God can condemn one's soul to eternal damnation, an Ottoman can only kill you:

> "Do not be very afraid of man,
>> "But be much more afraid of God.
> "The soul and body together alike,
>> "May be thrown into the bright ditch.
> "And thereafter burn eternally,
>> "The Turk can only take your body.
> "He cannot spoil the soul,
>> "Through Christ it will inherit heaven.
> "There it is peaceful and quiet forever,
>> "The Turk is a help to you."

> (*"Vor dem Menschen förcht dich nicht sehr,*
>> *"Sonder förcht dich vor Got vil mehr.*
> *"Der Seel und Leib zusamen gleich,*
>> *"Mag werffen in der Helle deich.*
> *"Und darnach ewigkliche bremmen,*
>> *"Der Türck kan dir den Leib nur nehmen.*
> *"Die Seel die kan er nicht verderben,*
>> *"Durch Christum wirdts den Himmel erben.*
> *"Da hat sie Ewig frid und rüh,*

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[108] Ibid., Aii v – Aiii v.
[109] Ibid., Aiv.

"Der Türck ist dir ein hilff dazu.")[110]

More significant than the pamphlet's sense of Christian exceptionalism is its assertion that conflicts between Christendom and the Ottoman Empire are caused by Christian sin. According to the poem, the Ottomans are a holy punishment directly sent from God. The Ottomans are the "scourge of God," to borrow a phrase from Bohnstedt's study of *Türkenbüchlein*.[111] Because of this framing, the Ottomans are stripped of their agency as human beings. Their actions are the result of a predetermined punishment for a more special people, rather than their own ambitions or motivations. They are portrayed as a looming threat and as the worst-case scenario of where a life of sin leads someone. In this light, the lack of negative descriptors about the Ottomans does not indicate that the writer felt little prejudice about them. On the contrary, the lack of descriptors, beyond their roles in providing divine punishment to sinful Christians who will be ultimately victorious, might indicate that the prejudice is so profound that it did not need to be put into words, or that the writer did not believe that the Ottomans were worthy of being carefully examined and described.

As these three sources have shown, more narrative distance from the Battle of Lepanto to the source describing it results in heavier prejudice being displayed in the sources. Religious-based animosity, in particular, grows stronger along the chain of transmission. Explanations or diatribes for Ottomans 'motivations or natures, however, are not found in any of the three sources. Overall, the portrayal of Ottomans changes from worthy opponents, to enemies of the faith, to inhuman instruments of divine punishment.

Though these three sources show a clear trend, examining more early modern manuscript and print sources

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[110] Ibid., Aiv v.
[111] Bohnstedt, "Infidel Scourge of God."

would strengthen this argument. Additionally, applications of theories from psychology and other social sciences could help explain the findings of this study and guide future research.[112] The findings also raise a few more questions: if anti-Ottoman bias is not strong in firsthand manuscript news reports, which are first in the chain of transmission, where do the biases originate? How are they disseminated, if not from manuscript news reports? Further study of this topic could help uncover how prejudice spread in early modern German society. Questions of intended audience and social class may also play a role: did social elites, who read manuscript newsletters, hold fewer anti-Ottoman attitudes than the masses, who read printed news pamphlets and poems? The effect of media consumption on prejudices is an especially-important one here, as the attitudes found in these sources would later develop into a heady and powerful colonial and Orientalist mindset.

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[112] The intergroup contact theory, which proposes that increased contact between groups can reduce prejudice between them, is especially applicable. Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "Preface," in *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact* (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2011).

Fig. 1: Woodcut illustration on the title page of the news pam-phlet.[113]

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[113] Borsch, *Zeitung Von dem Großen Christen-Sieg*, Ai.

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