Publications of the Mississippi Philological Association 1998

Editors

Susan Allen Ford
Delta State University

Bill Spencer
Delta State University

Poetry and Fiction Editor

Carolyn Elkins
Delta State University

Editorial Assistants

Sabrina Davidson
Shawn Layman

Production Assistant

Farzad Sadjadi

Editorial Advisory Board

Nancy Ellis
Dorothy Shawhan
Theodore Haddin

Acknowledgments

The editors gratefully acknowledge the generous financial assistance of Dr. W. Frank McArthur, Jr., Delta State University Vice President for Academic Affairs, without whose support this issue would not have been possible.

We also wish to thank the Delta State Division of Languages & Literature for its strong support of this publication.

Publications of the Mississippi Philological Association

Annual dues include a subscription to *POMPA*. Subscription rate for libraries is $10.00. Manuscripts are not solicited. Correspondence should be addressed to *POMPA*, Division of Languages & Literature, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733.

COUNCIL OF EDITORS OF LEARNED JOURNALS

CONTENTS

ESSAYS

The Muse as Metaphor, The Muse as Symbol: Gender and Genre in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Poetry
Sallye Sheppeard 1

"Better Than Reportingly": How to Create *Much Ado* out of Next to Nothing
John R. Ford 11

Homesteading Rhetoric in *The House of the Seven Gables*: Uncle Venner Votes Himself a Farm
Jennifer A. Beech 16

Jim's Hairy Chest: Magic, Money, and Marriage in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
Lorinda B. Cohoon 22

John Ruskin and Freshman Composition: Autobiography in Place of Personal Experience
Gregory J. Underwood 29

Burden, Escape, and Nature's Role: A Study of Janie's Development in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Yoshiko Kayano 36

Eliot v. Milton: Virgil's Greatest Heirs
Marilyn Claire Ford 45

The Question of Moral Intelligence in Flannery O'Connor's "The Life You Save May Be Your Own"
Nancy Ellis 50

Knock The Rock: Early Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll, 1955-1960
Anthony V. Baltakis 56

MacLain's Transcendence: Walker Percy and *The Golden Apples*
Brannon Costello 63

Josephine Humphreys and the Problem of the New South
William G. Chernecky 68

Sula: Existentialist Heroine
John T. West 74

Sam Shepard's Anti-Dialectics in *True West*
Harksoon Yim 80

The Rhetoric of Agronomic Communication: An Effective Technical-Writing Style
Bin Xie 87

POETRY

Joe Amoako
Examination 95
Nostalgia 97

Theodore Haddin
What happened when mother went 98
Pine River Today 99
Mrs. Stanberry's Window 100

Rabiul Hasan
In all this rain 101

Alex Richardson
Cat Door 102
Going with Nets 103
Sidewalk 104
Vacation 105

Patricia Waters
el Sueno de la Vida 106
The Daughter of the House Comes of Age 107
Spring, Untitled 108

FICTION

Lip Music
Jo LeCoeur 109

Life in the Trailer Park
Bruce R. Magee 114

Bless this Sun
Lana White 118

ESSAYS

The Muse as Metaphor, The Muse as Symbol:
Gender and Genre in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Poetry

Sallye Sheppeard
Lamar University

As early as 1579, Philip Sidney composed and circulated in manuscript his influential *A Defence of Poetry* (pub. 1595), in which he briefly characterizes a Renaissance hierarchy of poetic forms, moving from the heroic, lyric, tragic, and comic; to the satiric, iambic, elegiac, and pastoral; and finally to all others (27). Shortly thereafter, in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham gave Renaissance England a similar, although expanded and differently ordered, list of forms. In addition to the advice gleaned from such authoritative treatises on poetry, Renaissance poets in general learned their craft from myriad distinguished rhetorical texts and from the examples of great classical and Italian writers, among others. Although, as Ann E. Imbrie correctly observes, such theorists did not encourage from Renaissance writers strict adherence to formal rules (59), it would be folly to assume that Renaissance poets overthrew prescriptive norms altogether even as they experimented with genre. Learning through discriminating reading, imitation of classical models, and conscientious practice, as stressed by Erasmus and other educational reformers and as encouraged by major theorists, remained at the heart of formal and tutorial instruction, as well as artistic creation, throughout the period.

Our general understanding of the woman poet's creative relationship to genre has been augmented by the work of many recent feminist critics, including Gary Waller, Susan Stanford Friedman, Celeste M. Schenck, and Ann Rosalind Jones. In her discussion of how genre norms and gender codes influence poets' choices of poetic forms, Susan Stanford Friedman remarks that "As the genre that most embodies male territory, the epic has been the last bastion among poetic genres for women to approach" (205), an approach we do not see women taking until Elizabeth Barrett Browning and H. D. Sometime later, Celeste M. Schenck characterizes the funeral elegy as "a resolutely patriarchal genre" (13) that traditionally signifies "admittance of the male novice to the sacred company of poets" (15). Through "rigorously prescribed conventions" (14), the elegy "excludes the feminine from its perimeter except as muse principle or attendant nymph" (13). Although Schenck notes that female poets from Sappho to the present have consciously and successfully subverted conventions of male elegy and "have clearly enjoyed an elegiac mode of their own," in which they mourn "their dead in a poetic form that calls the genre, as patriarchally codified, into question" (23), she nevertheless laments what she sees as their tendency

to "deplore their own inadequacies rather than the patriarchal constraints of the form" (14). In fact, many scholars and critics lament the frequency of what Elaine Beilin calls in another context the "inability topos" (*Redeeming Eve* 184) in women's poetry, by which she means the self-effacement statements and sense of inferiority that figures so prominently in the poetry of Renaissance women. Although I, too, have agonized over the appearance of such statements in women's poetry, I have come to believe that these comments are reactions not to personal inadequacies but to genre constraints of a particular type overlooked as such in the otherwise insightful discussions of gender and genre by Friedman, Schenck, Beilin, and others.

Ann Rosalind Jones comments in *The Currency of Eros* that because Renaissance women poets "composed poems that record rather than harmonize the tensions they confronted in a cultural context that demanded silence," we need to read their work with "an ear open to the half-said, the quickly withdrawn, the manipulation of masculine rituals of self-eternalization" ("Surprising Fame" 92). Both genres with which Friedman, Schenck, and Beilin are concerned, the epic and the funeral elegy as received from the classical tradition, required Muses. The present discussion is concerned with the effective influence of a particular convention within the classical tradition as transmitted to and interpreted during the Renaissance: the classical Muse and women poets' sense of alienation from certain parts of that tradition, their acknowledgment of this alienation, and their refusal to be silenced by it. Poetic evidence in Renaissance England reveals that both men and women practice self-effacement in the presence of the Muse convention: for men, self-effacement precedes their entering into an intimate creative relationship with the Muse in order to produce serious, public poetry; for women, self-effacement acknowledges their being barred from such a creative relationship in order to produce similar types of poetry.

When we hear Edmund Spenser in Book I of the *Faerie Queene* call for "Help then, O holy Virgin chiefe of nine" (I.2.1), we know that Spenser is following the prescriptive rules of poetic genre: he is invoking the Muse after the example of the classical epic model. And when we hear him say to the Muse "Help thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong" (I.2.9), we understand without question that his weakness of wit and dullness of tongue are shortcomings of mortality, not of gender. Similarly we know that Spenser acknowledges the differences between the classical pastoral and epic genre and their conventions when he says in the opening lines of the *Faerie Queene*:

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
As time her taught, in lowly Shepheards weeds,
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,

And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;
Whose prayses hauing slept in silence long,
Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
To blazon broad emongst her learned throng;
Fierce warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song.

(I.1.1-9)

When in *Virgil's Gnat*, Spenser calls his complaint "a small Poeme" (5), that is, a form inappropriate to honor the deceased Earl of Leicester who deserves a poem in which the "Muse shall speak to thee / In bigger notes" (9-10); or when in *Prosopopia: or Mother Hubbard's Tale* Spenser declares, "No Muses aide me needs heretoo to call; / Base is the style, and matter meane withall" (43-44), we understand that the poet is distinguishing between poetic occasion and appropriate poetic genre rather than confessing personal artistic inferiority. Yet when we hear the period's women poets making similar statements in similar contexts, we rarely grant them the same aesthetic courtesy, even more rarely examine such statements within their poetic contexts, but instead take them literally, which is to say, personally.

In "To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney," Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke (1561-1621), speaks about her working relationship with her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, in giving Renaissance poetry *Psalms of David*, the period's only aesthetic version of the psalms. Addressing herself to the spirit of her brother, she reveals that their collaborative effort necessitated for her as a woman poet an unusual creative maneuver: "So dar'd my Muse with thine it selfe combine, / as mortall stuffe with that which is divine" (5-6). Clearly Herbert has had to manipulate the conventions governing "higher poetry" in order that her Renaissance audience might deem *Psalms of David* acceptable as divine poetry and thus take it seriously as a work of art. The Countess's metaphor of Muses, in which her earthly Muse merges with the dead Sidney's divine one, successfully circumvents the strict demands of poetic theory underlying the Muse-poet-poem relationship which implies a procreative process. In order to raise the *Psalms*, a work of divine poetry in the Hebraic tongue, to the status of divine poetry in the English tongue, the Countess has committed an act of artistic daring and rather skillful metaphoric sleight of hand that allows the work to represent a legitimate consummation of mortal and divine sans any suggestion of moral debasement.

To make this point in a broader context: the dearth of so-called higher forms of poetry by the women who wrote during the Renaissance suggests that common understanding and application of the classical Muse convention denied them access to these "more serious" forms. That Renaissance women poets had to be innovative within the confines of literary convention in order for their voices to be heard at all, much less to

be taken seriously, comes as no surprise to anyone in touch with women's scholarship during the past two decades or so. Such is the case with *Psalms of David*, a work which is almost entirely that of Mary Herbert herself, a work which, according to Philip Sidney's own definition in *A Defence of Poetry* (22), qualifies as divine poetry requiring the Muse's inspiration of the poet.

To the Greeks, as we know, the Muses were divinities, the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory). After Hesiod, who provides our first complete record of the Muses in his *Theogony* late in the eighth century B.C.E. (*Oxford* 372), "Artists of all kinds felt a personal bond with the Muses, who seemed to them to be the source of their gifts" (*Oxford* 372). Ernst Robert Curtius numbers the Muses "among the 'concrete' formal constants" in early western literary tradition, belonging "not only to poetry but to all forms of intellectual life besides." Although we no longer regard them as such, Curtius continues, the Muses were "vital forces. They had their priests, their servants, their promise . . ." (228).

Certainly not culturally real to the Renaissance as literal sources of inspiration as they had been to the earliest Greeks, the Muses were nonetheless deemed essential formulaic devices in the Englishing of certain poetic forms inherited from the Greeks and Romans. Much of the Medieval and Renaissance practical understanding of the Muses' function in relation to poetry came by way of Homer and Virgil, from whose times these divinities "had been indissolubly connected with the epic form. The West was able to get along without the drama for over a thousand years, but before 1800 there is not a single century without epic" (241). And epic, of course, is what Philip Sidney in his *Defense* means by "the heroic."

Sidney was well-versed in Platonic doctrines of poetry, as were all the poets of his day. In Plato's *Ion,* Socrates differentiates between art and poetry as the difference between knowledge and inspiration. Through reason, the artist learns and employs the rules of writing, but the true poet "is holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him" (220). Later in the same work, Plato reiterates that "poems are not of man or human workmanship, but are divine and from the gods, and that the poets are nothing but interpreters of the gods, each one possessed by the divinity to whom he is in bondage" (220-21). Plato associates such frenzy with "lust of procreation with its blaze of wanton appetite" (*Laws* 1358), and in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates speaks plainly about the nature of poetic inspiration, in which the madness of the Muses

> . . . seizes a tender, virgin soul and stimulates it to rapt passionate expression, especially in lyric poetry, glorifying the countless mighty deeds of ancient times for the instruction of posterity. But if any man come to the gates

> of poetry without the madness of the Muses, persuaded that skill alone will make him a good poet, then shall heand his works of sanity with him be brought to nought by thepoetry of madness, and behold, their place is nowhere to be found. (492)

Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Plato's teachings about art, poetry, and inspiration were well known and widely discussed; and repeatedly, influential theorists such as Marsilio Facino (1433-1499) and Cristoforo Landino (1424-1498) reminded Renaissance audiences of Plato's teaching "that poetry springs from a divine frenzy," that "nobody can acquire the divine inspiration, no matter how learned he may be," and that "whoever attempts to write poetry without being inspired by the Muses, labors uselessly" (Greenfield 219).

That Renaissance poets understood, even took for granted, sexual connotations associated with the classical poetic process is evidenced widely in their poetry. In his *Defense of Poetry*, for example, Philip Sidney deplores mercenary writers' ill use of poetry so that "all the Muses were got with child to bring forth bastard poets" (62-63). *In The Barons Warres in the Reigne of Edward the Second*, Michael Drayton invites the Muse "into my Brest thy sacred'st Fire infuse; / Ravage my Spirit, this Great Worke to attend" (II.10.25-28); and in the poem by the same name, he writes of the Muses Elizium as "The Poets Paradice . . , / To which but few can come; / The Muses only bower of blisse" (III. 251.101-104). Even the aging speaker in Thomas, Lord Vaux's "The Aged Lover Renounceth Love" laments that as "My lusts they do me leave, / My fancies all be fled" so "My Muse doth not delight / Me as she did before" (qtd. in Golden Hind 567).

Even Renaissance poets who eschew strict use of classical devices on moral/religious grounds (that is, who wish to render classical forms more suitable for Christian perspectives) seem to divorce themselves from the classical Muse not so much because of the non-Christian culture she represents as because of the erotic creative principle she implies. Samuel Daniel, for example, declares his *Delia* sonnets to be "the Infants of my love, / *Minerva*-like, brought forth without a mother" (I.38.2.1-2). To Daniel and others the pagan Muse inspires through sexual union but a Christian Muse might inspire more abstractly through intellect or spirit.

The Muse convention is part of the poetic material available for making Renaissance poetry, brought in through Latin and later vernacular translations of classical writers and, by the late Renaissance, ingrained in concept if not in constant generic practice. As far as prevailing theory was concerned, then, Renaissance women ought never be able to write "divine"--that is, Muse-dominated genres--because they cannot properly be "inspired" in order to produce such works. When writing poetic genres requiring the Muse convention, British, American, and continental women poets may

bargain with her to find creative legitimacy or they may circumvent her altogether and seek a legitimate creative relationship through an appropriate male divinity, but they never "invoke" the Muse's intimate creative relationship as their male counterparts do. Thus the "inability topos"--this commonplace of which Beilin speaks--acknowledges and challenges the Muse convention as a symbol of patriarchal control of classical poetic theory and contemporary poetic practice rather than as a viable source of creative inspiration.

Mary Herbert's innovative response to the demands of the Muse convention in "To the Angell spirit" provides perhaps the earliest but certainly not the only evidence of this poetic fact in England. Indeed, numerous examples of this phenomenon reside in the poems of Amelia Lanier, Mary Wroth, and Katherine Philips, as well as in those of Anne Killigrew and Anne Finch in the late seventeenth century, and of Anne Bradstreet in colonial America, to name only a few. A cursory overview of the work of continental women poets of the period suggests their similar treatment of the Muse convention in similar circumstances. French poet Louise Labé (ca. 1515-1556) never invokes nor alludes to the Muses in her work but finds some suitable alternative, such as in her "Sonnet V":

> Bright Venus, you who wander through the Skies,
> Listen to my song that shall lament,
> While yet your face shines in the firmament,
> My agony and cares and lengthy sighs.
>
> My wakeful eye more deeply moved shall feel,
> And, seeing you, more copious tears shall shed,
> The better will it drench my gentle bed,
> Knowing your eyes will witness its ordeal.
>
> Thus are the souls of men with weakness brushed;
> By want of rest and gentle sleep they're led.
> Beneath the Sun, I suffer and am strong;
>
> But, when I've been almost entirely crushed,
> And have, exhausted, crept into my bed,
> I must cry out my pain the whole night long. (101)

As similar as it is to traditional invocations to the Muse, this apostrophe requests only that Venus listen to her song rather than participate in its creation. In fact, when convention demands that Labé seek creative inspiration for her "Elegies," she defers to the greater authority of Apollo as "patron of the arts" (88) and giver of "the gift of verse" (88), remarking that "his sacred madness fills my heart / And makes it bold enough and fervent" (88) to sing her elegies. Of the nature of her relationship to Apollo Labé

explains:

He makes me sing, not of the thundering noise
Of Jupiter, nor of the cruel wars
That Mars inflicts upon the world at will.
The lyre that he gave me is the one
That used to sing, on Lesbos, songs of love;
And, in that vein, will also mourn for mine. (88)

In short, Apollo sees to it that Labé sings not heroic songs but only "songs of love" and thus that she avoids the need for creative consummation with the Muse.

Pernette du Guillet (1520-1545), Labé's French contemporary, alludes to but never invokes the Muses in her *Rymes*, a collection of epigrams, songs, elegies, and other occasional poems first published in 1545. A particularly interesting treatment of the Muse convention occurs in her funeral elegy "Les Obseques D'Amour," in which she calls upon Apollo:

Phebus amy, chantez,
En chantant escoutez:
Vostre Muse Thalie
Qui vous veult reciter,
Et en beaux vers conter
D'Amour la grand' folie. (131)

[Phoebus, my friend, sing,
While singing listen to
Your Muse Thalia
Who wants to recite to you
And speak in beautiful verses
Of love the great folly.][1]

By evoking Apollo in his role as leader of the Muses (Larrington 67) and insisting that he become the vehicle (the singer) of Thalia's song, Pernette avoids singing a Muse-inspired elegy herself. That Apollo will sing Thalia's elegy of Love's folly undercuts traditional classical elegiac method in another way as well, for Thalia's usual provinces are pastoral and comedy: in classical tradition, she is "'the festive' Thalia who [wears] the comic mask and wreaths of ivy" (Monaghan 244). So, too, does Pernette's second stanza undercut traditional funeral elegy convention by insisting again that a male give voice to a Muse:

Orpheus gracieux,
En chants, melodieux,
Terpsicore vous mande
De Cupido la mort,
Son dangereux effort,
Et temerite grande. (131)

[Gracious Orpheus,
In channts, melodious,
Terpsicore orders from you
The death of Cupid,
His dangerous effort,
And his great boldness.]

That Terpsicore, "'lover of dancing,'" she "who carried a lyre and ruled choral song as well as dance" (Monaghan 244), orders the pre-Homeric (which is to say pre-epic) poet (*Oxford* 399) Orpheus to sing of Cupid's death implies a certain formalized celebration through choric changing and dancing reminiscent of the movement of odes and other ritual forms. In the third stanza, Clio, Muse "of history, depicted with an open scroll or a chest of books" (Monaghan 244), has promised the speaker, "D'escrire a ses amys / D'Amour la mort curelle" ["To write to my friends / Of the cruel death of love"] (132), and in subsequent stanzas the speaker calls forward an additional group of prestigious mourners, including Pallas Athene, accompanied by Erato "'awakener of desire'" and "ruler of erotic poetry" (Monaghan 244); and Cythere (Aphrodite), who has long known of her child's death but never yet mourned (132). Pernette's reference to Aphrodite as Cythere, of course, recalls the goddess's long geographic association with Cythera, the island near Laconia where she is said to have gone after being born of the seafoam.

The Renaissance woman poet's isolation from the Muse convention in the poetic tradition finds a living parallel in the brief life and limited work of Italian poet Isabella Di Morra (c. 1520-1545?). A native of southern Italy, Isabella lived during the "fierce conflict between the French dynasty (Francis I) and the Emperor Charles V, whose vast territories included Spain and dominated southern Italy" (Stortoni 114). Because of her affair with a married Spanish lover, three of her own brothers beat her to death on behalf of her pro-French family in order "'to cleanse the family name'" (Stortoni 114). She was twenty-five years old. By that time she had written thirteen poems, all of which reflect her isolation from mainstream central and northern Italian culture, which isolation she experienced as nothing less than a living spiritual inferno. In the first of her eight extant sonnets, Isabella expresses her hope of transcending "the fierce assaults of Fortune" (Stortoni 119) on her life by achieving literary fame, not through being inspired by but "by following the Muses" (Stortoni 119) and finding "the favor of those goddesses" (Stortoni 119). Similarly, Lucia Bertani Dell'Oro (1521-1567), Isabella's contemporary, cites two noted Italian women poets, Veronica Gambara and Victorria Colonna, as her inspiration "to strive / To bring my little light out of the shadow" (Stortoni 133)--that is, not as her modern Muses but as her poetic role models.

That women poets during the Renaissance do not call upon the

Muse for inspiration and find ways to avoid direct confrontation with her suggests that Renaissance poets generally perceived the Muse convention not as a piece of ancient artifice but as a still viable aesthetic principle with power to confirm or deny authorial legitimacy in certain creative situations. When the Muse convention threatens to silence Renaissance women's attempts to write public poetry, these women respond by negotiating a legitimate metaphorical relationship to the Muse that satisfies the spirit of the convention but does not compromise their "virtue" in the process. As the chief symbol of the classical tradition's placement of women poets outside the major venues of public discourse and its desire to keep them there, the Muse convention becomes an ironic tribute to the determination of Renaissance women poets to write in the mainstream rather than from the periphery of English and continental poetry.

Notes

[1]For his assistance in translating Pernette du Guillet's poems, I am grateful to my colleague Kenneth T. Rivers, Associate Professor of French, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas.

Works Cited

Beilin, Elaine V. *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987.

Bradstreet, Anne. *The Complete Works of Anne Bradstreet.* Ed. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. and Allan P. Robb. Boston: Twayne, 1981.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages.* Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973.

Daniel, Samuel. *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel.* Ed. Alexander B. Grosart. 1885. 5 vols. New York: Russell & Russell, 1963.

Drayton, Michael. *The Works of Michael Drayton.* Ed. J. William Hebel. Oxford: Shakespeare Head P, 1961. 5 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965.

Du Guillet, Pernette. *Rymes.* 1545. Crit. ed. Victor E. Graham. Textes Literaires Francais. Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1968.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Gender and Genre Anxiety: Elizabeth Barrett Browning and H. D. as Epic Poets." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 5.2 (Fall 1986): 203-228.

Greenfield, Concetta Carestia. *Humanist and Scholastic Poetics, 1250-1500.* Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1981.

Herbert, Mary Sidney. "To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney." *The Triumph of Death and Other Unpublished and Uncollected Poems of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke (1561-1621).* Ed. G. F. Waller. Salzburg: U of Salzburg, 1977.

Hesiod. *Theogony.* Trans. Dorothea Wender. *Hesiod: Theogny; Works and Days; Theognis: Elegies.* London: Penguin, 1987.

Imbrie, Ann E. "Defining Nonfiction Genres." *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation.* Ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski. Harvard English Studies 14. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986.

Jones, Ann Rosalind. *The Curency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990.
------. "Surprising Fame: Renaissance Gender Ideologies and Women's Lyric." *The Poetics of Gender*. Ed. Nancy K. Miller. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
Killigrew, Anne. *Poems (1686)*. Ed. Richard Morton. Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1967.
Labé, Louise. *Louise Labé's Complete Works*. Trans. and ed. Edith R. Farrell. Troy, NY: Whitson, 1986.
Lamson, Roy and Hallett Smith, eds. *The Golden Hind: An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose and Poetry*. Rev. ed. New York: Norton, 1956.
Lanyer, Aemilia. *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*. Ed. Suzanne Woods. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.
Larrington, Carolyne, ed. *The Feminist Companion to Mythology*. London: Harper Collins/Pandora, 1992.
Monaghan, Patricia. *The Book of Gods and Goddesses*. St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1990.
Oxford Companion to Classical Literature. New Ed. Ed. M. C. Howatson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.
Plato. *Ion*. Trans. Lane Cooper. Hamilton and Cairns, 215-28.
-----. *Phaedrus*. Trans. R. Hackforth. Hamilton and Cairns, 475-525.
Schenck, Celeste M. "Feminism and Deconstruction: Re-Constructing the Elegy." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 5.1 (Spring 1986): 13-27.
Sidney, Philip. *A Defence of Poetry*. Ed. J. A. Van Dorsten. London: Oxford UP, 1966.
Spenser, Edmund. *Poetical Works*. Ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt. London: Oxford UP, 1970.
Stortoni, Laura Anna, ed. *Women Poets of the Italian Renaissance: Courtly Ladies and Courtesans*. Trans. Laura Anna Stortoni and Mary Prentice Lillie. New York: Italica P, 1997.
Waller, Gary F. "The Countess of Pembroke and Gendered Reading." *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*. Ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990.

"Better Than Reportingly": How to Create *Much Ado* out of Next to Nothing

John R. Ford
Delta State University

As the five members of ACTER take the stage at the University of Memphis, they walk briskly and in single file toward the front of the bare, square-shaped acting space, until they stand side by side, at attentive readiness, for the audience's inspection. There's just the slightest hint of Dogberry's watch as, one by one, each of the three men and two women steps forward, announces, in character, one of the several roles he or she will perform, then steps back into formation. All five actors are wearing exactly the same uniform: black slacks, black, double-breasted jacket, white T-Shirt. These are good men and true.

Suddenly, and simultaneously, the formation breaks. Each actor moves in a different direction and turns. In the choreography there is metamorphosis. In a single gesture, one figure ages, another miraculously rejuvenates. Genders melt, transpose. The play is awake with language and motion: "I learn in this letter . . . "

Of all the remarkable achievements of this production, perhaps its most compelling feature is this simple elegance. Its power is as efficacious as it is suggestive. Five actors dressed alike, an empty stage, a single prop (Dogberry's flashlight) effectively create the more than twenty-four characters, the several settings, the multiplicity of voices and plots and tones that make up the rich and troubled texture of this play: enormous riches in a little room.

ACTER (A Center for Theatre, Education and Research) is part of a tradition of Shakespearean companies like The Shenandoah Shakespeare Express and Cheek By Jowl that are reinvigorating Shakespearean theatre by rediscovering the spirit, if not always the letter, of the Elizabethan stage conditions that gave the very form and pressure to Shakespeare's art. Their stage is minimalist and presentational, unlike the more representational modern style, with its elaborate settings and costumes, special effects, large casts, and fourth walls. The style of acting for these companies is also less naturalistic, more presentational. Each actor plays many parts, and cross-gendered parts, as Shakespeare's own small, all-male cast would have been obliged to do. The effect is to give a vivid clarity and integrity, not so much to an *illusion* as to a *performance*. The audience becomes committed to such a fiction not so much through suspension of disbelief as through active engagement. For the audience is also transformed by such alchemy from silent observers to active partners in the song. We are ill singers to be sure, like Balthasar. But, in the modest roles assigned to us, we do well

enough for a shift.

The sheer technical and imaginative genius implicit in such an achievement is, of course, stunning. But the *effect* of that genius is, strangely, all the more moving for its visual artifice. One might think that a five-member acting company performing an uncut play--tripling, quadrupling, quintupling roles--would have been more a celebration of the virtuosity of these actors than of the play's own powers. But it wasn't. If anything, the actors were self-effacing, the modesty and cunning of their own professional talents serving to distill the energy of their own movements and transformations into something else that helped create the unique environment of this particular play.

That paradox has always inhabited the imaginative efficacy of ACTER's performances. In their Fall 1992 production of *The Tempest*, for example, the actors, as they moved from one role to another, would seem to fall into a sleep and then reawaken into a new consciousness, rich and strange. The effect throughout the play was one of extraordinary transformation, identities suddenly appearing then dissolving into thin air, mirroring perfectly the quality of the isle. In their Spring 1995 production of *Twelfth Night*, they actually *exaggerated* the busy and disruptive chaos created by constant exits and re-entrances in a way that replicated the dizzy movements and noises--the sensory overload--of Illyrian carnival; moreover, by muting some of the signals that might have helped us more easily distinguish these multiple personalities, they kept us seeing double and triple in a world where identity seemed as changeable as a chev'ril glove. Which is Sebastian?

Implicit in the choreography of their blocking and character transitions in *Much Ado About Nothing* was still another kind of world, one of hard geometry, the cold luster of polished surfaces. There was certainly a natural energy to the language that formed these communities of men and women, soldiers and lovers. But there was something else that seemed just right for the structured artifice, the fragile hierarchy of Messina's social code. The grouping of characters on stage as they interacted would often freeze into rigid designs: diagonals, triangles, circles that seemed to formalize a relationship. There was quite literally a distance between characters as they spoke to one another from their fixed positions across the space of the stage. Even the "natural" movement of characters on stage, especially in those scenes where the dynamic of discourse and loyalties was especially unstable, seemed to trace out a fluid succession of changing spatial alignments, as if the entire action of the play were one, long, masked dance.

"He were an excellent man that were made just in the midway between [Don John] and Benedick," says Beatrice. And indeed, *Much Ado* is filled with characters who counterpoint or parody their seeming opposites.

ACTER's multiplied roles often gave an especially suggestive power and poignancy to these comparisons. Frances Jeater, who played Beatrice, also played Don John. Here are two characters born under quite different stars; and yet the doubling kept alive a hint of the sadness and estrangement that might attend Beatrice were she not blessed with a "merry heart" that "keeps on the windy side of care" (II.i.237, 238-39). In a madly inspired bit of casting, Benedick and Beatrice double with Dogberry and Verges. As one giddy pair dances out the competitive rhetoric of its relationship ("You always end with a jade's trick"), the second provides the antimasque: "and two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind" (I.i.107; III.v.28-29). And, of course, both pairs will perform their modest roles in the defense of Hero. Gifts that God gives.

Doubling is always inherently destabilizing and resonant with uneasy suggestion. As two distinct characters are seen to inhabit the same bodily space, the certainty of all kinds of definitions begins to dissolve. Each character may contain her own antithesis: self and other. This production offered multiplied opportunities for apt yet unexpected counterpoint, so appropriate in a play where piety and villainy, wisdom and folly are not so easily distinct. Claudio (Peter Lindford) doubled as Borachio, which sharpened the irony of Borachio's response to Leonato's "which is the villain?"

> Leonato: Art thou the slave that with thy breath hath killed
> Mine innocent child?
>
> Borachio: Yea, even I alone. (V.i.226, 230-31)

Moreover, since Claudio also doubles as Margaret, the whole "mistaking" episode literally reflects Claudio's own sexual fears as well as his self-love. Perhaps the most powerful use of doubling occurred between Hero (Biddy Wells) and Leonato, especially in the first wedding scene. The living proof of Hero's innocence, that the lady did indeed father herself, was made even more effective by the technical problems of that particular doubling. Hero defended herself to her father from a supine position, flanked on either side by her only two supporters, Benedick and Beatrice. Then Hero would metamorphose into Leonato by rising slowly into the characteristic posture of her father as Beatrice and Benedick continued to look steadfastly at the space where Hero had been. When Leonato resumed his part in the slander, his faithless accusations were directed at nothing, an empty space. The power of that moment required our simultaneous engagement and detachment. Beatrice and Benedick's demeanor, especially their eyes, allowed us to "see" the maligned Hero under the weight of her father's attack. But at the same time our visual awareness of the absence of any object of Leonato's attack established the mocking ocular proof of a "mistaking" no less egregious than Claudio's.

But often the most powerful moments of the performance were the

simplest. Immediately after this broken nuptial, where Claudio's elaborate language of faithlessness subverts his own marriage vows, the simplicity of Benedick's language is all the more eloquent and forceful. Benedick's language connects his decisive movement away from "allegiance" to the fraternal code of Don Pedro and Claudio to an equally decisive commitment to a new order of belief and trust: both in Hero's innocence and Beatrice's soul. In this production Benedick underscores his words with an equally simple, wonderfully restorative gesture. As he does so, the language and gesture of faith become one with the liturgy of betrothal. He takes Beatrice's hand as he swears, "by this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account" (IV.i.314-15). He completes his betrothal by articulating, in this world of verbal deceit, his absolute faith: "I am engaged" (IV.i.313).

Throughout this intricately verbal play, we are constantly aware of our fallible limits, under the best of circumstances, to use language to embody an emotional truth, to measure events or character, to tell a story. Moments into the play, as we hear the messenger attempt to articulate the story of Claudio's military prowess, we sense that pressure: "He hath indeed better bettered expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how" (I.i.12-13). Moments later, in the play's only reference to Claudio's uncle, we hear only the report of his inarticulate joy: "even so much that joy could not show itself modest without a badge of bitterness" (I.i.16-17). Borachio tells his tale vilely. Dogberry is too cunning to be understood. Even Friar Francis' holy counsel is not quite up to the narrative task:

> doubt not that success
> Will fashion the event in better shape
> Than I can lay it down in likelihood. (IV.i.227-29)

One of the badges of Messina's fallen state (we're long past "the time of good neighbors"), is that its inhabitants again and again are compelled to create narratives that can neither be expressed nor understood. In this verbal ethos, where eloquence is both a badge of privilege and an instrument of shame, there is also a sense that words are nothing, emptied of power as well as truth. "Testimony," Beatrice asserts, no less than "manhood is melted into curtsies, valour into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue" (IV.i.301, 304-05).

In the gap between our narratives and the mysteries they fail to embody, we find our doubts, our ignorance, and our slanders, as Borachio, or any of us who tell our tales vilely, can attest. But that gap may also define our faith. The usually voluble Beatrice reminds us of this as she intuits the truth of her love for Benedick: "For others say thou dost deserve, and I / Believe it better than reportingly" (III.i.115-16).

If our linguistic and auditory failings can destroy a world, they also restore it, no less than Balthasar's flawed singing about "the fraud of men" can recover a communal harmony and a lover's truth. ACTER succeeds in

recreating *Much Ado About Nothing* precisely and mysteriously by celebrating the impossibility of those five bodies, that bare stage, the limited costumes, the logistical hazards of quadrupling parts, ever to tell the story. We were always aware of the artifice. In their multiple characters, for example, each actor required of us a heightened awareness of the technical codes that distinguished character from character. A confident, half-turned pose, hand casually in pocket: that meant Leonato. But when muscles tightened, body arched with attentive expectation: that meant Hero. By any conventional measure, by mere suspension of disbelief, they were telling the tale vilely.

But in the very presentational artifice of performance--and in the extraordinary self consciousness it demanded of us--something remarkable was happening. In one of those moments of "disengaged" self consciousness, I became fascinated by the behavior of the actors after exiting the stage. They sat on the floor, just outside the perimeter of play, their faces and their bodies arched attentively toward the actors on stage. They were eavesdropping! As I was, as we were. In that moment actors and audience became a community of self conscious *listeners* straining to interpret formal codes of language and gesture. We had become Messina. Like Dogberry, we were vigitant, at least to the extent that our dull wits would allow. And like his double, Benedick, we were engaged.

Works Cited

Much Ado About Nothing. By William Shakespeare. ACTER. University of Memphis Theater, Memphis. 19 Sept. 1996.

Shakespeare, William. *Much Ado About Nothing*. Ed. F. H. Mares. The New Cambridge Shakespeare. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.

Homesteading Rhetoric in *The House of the Seven Gables:* Uncle Venner Votes Himself a Farm

Jennifer A. Beech
University of Southern Mississippi

America has always claimed to be a land of great promise, a place where anyone who works hard can hope to own a piece of land, earn a decent living, raise a family, and be a respectable citizen. The idea of owning one's own home(land) was at the heart of the American Revolutionary War and has since been at the heart of the American dream. Yet, as America moved from an agrarian to a market economy, changing property laws in the early nineteenth century called into question notions about who might rightfully own a piece of property. As such critics as Gillian Brown, Brook Thomas, and Ellen Weinauer have recently noted, in *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne explores issues of property rights from a number of angles, ranging from inheritance law to women's property rights.[1] The very title of the novel emphasizes an important relationship between a specific piece of real estate and Hawthorne's main characters. In an essay entitled "Romance and Real Estate," Walter Benn Michaels examines Hawthorne's preface for its defense of the genre of romance and recognizes a definite parallel between Hawthorne's assertion of a right to construct "castles in the air" and "the property rights of impoverished aristocrats" (161). In his discussion, Michaels hits on an important connection between the homestead movement and the Pyncheon's claims to the ownership of a long lost territory. I would like to suggest that if we push Michael's reading a bit further, we shall see that it is, in fact, the character of Uncle Venner who appropriates the rhetoric of homesteading the most for his own advantage.

According to Michaels, the Pyncheon's assertion of the "right" to ownership of an Eastern territory invokes the rhetoric of inalienability, a rhetoric used by those in favor of the Homestead Act. As Michaels points out, "The notion of inalienable title was central also to one of the most radically progressive social movements of the 1840's and 1850's, the 'land for the landless' agitation" (161). Those in favor of this movement, which led to the Homestead Act, held that those who worked the land were tied to it, and that, therefore, their land could not be held or sold by bankers or speculators as liability for debts (161-62). Michaels uses the following passage from an early pamphlet entitled *Vote Yourself a Farm* to provide an example of the type of homesteading rhetoric that the Pyncheons have appropriated in order to assert their *bare rights* to property:

If a man have a house and home of his own, though it be a thousand

> miles off, he is well received in other people's houses; while the homeless wretch is turned away. The *bare right* to a farm, though you should never go near it, would save you from many an insult. Therefore, vote yourself a farm. (Michaels 162)

Arguing that the Pyncheons have voted themselves a farm, Michaels adds, "Hawthorne himself, figuring the romance as uncontested title and inalienable right, has sought in the escape from reference the power of that bare right" (162). I find it curious that Michaels would make this link between Hawthorne and the Pyncheons' claims to their "farms" and yet fail to notice that the operative word--farm--is most employed by or associated with Uncle Venner every single time this minor character figures into the narrative.

As Claudia D. Johnson has pointed out, "Every character [in this novel] is initially described in terms of economic circumstances....Uncle Venner's poverty directs his self-sufficient but marginal existence and his anticipation of the poor farm" (88). Uncle Venner is first introduced into the narrative upon entering the shop on Hepzibah's opening day. Himself a laborer, Venner reflects a nineteenth-century Jacksonian desire for a return to an agrarian society in his words to Hepzibah:

> "So, you have really begun trade . . . really begun trade! Well, I'm glad to see it. Young people should never live idle in the world, nor old ones neither, unless when the rheumatize gets hold of them. It has given me warning already; and in two or three years longer, I shall think of putting aside business, and retiring to my farm. That's yonder--the great brick house, you know--the work-house, most folks calls it; but I mean to do my work first, and go there to be idle and enjoy myself. And I'm glad to see you beginning to do your work, Miss Hepzibah!" (62)

In "Hawthorne's Legal Story," Brook Thomas argues that *The House of the Seven Gables* chronicles three stages in American property law history: from law founded on agrarian principles (the Maule's clearing of the original land) to manipulation of property law by a rising commercial class for their own benefit (Judge Pyncheon's seizing of the Maule property) to a renewed nostalgia for agrarian ideals (260-61). He adds, "Hawthorne's version allows us to see the Jacksonian threat to the propertied class not as a threat to basic American values, but an attempt to return to America's original agrarian values" (261). Thus, when Uncle Venner praises Hepzibah's efforts to support herself through her own active labors, he tries to help Hepzibah shift the focus from viewing herself as an old aristocrat to viewing herself as a young member of the newly respected working class.

Besides flattering Hepzibah by suggesting that she is young, Uncle Venner also helps to cheer her by subtly reminding her that she is not as low as she could be. After all, she is not an old man destined for the poor house.

Yet, for a poor, homeless man, Uncle Venner is remarkably well-received by the Pyncheons. As we shall see, that is because he inverts standard perceptions of the poor house and lays claim to it as something that he has a *bare right* to. When referring to the work-house, Venner employs the possessive pronoun "my" to assert ownership. Perhaps, if he speaks often enough of his "farm" in terms of something pleasant to look forward to, others will not turn him away as a homeless wretch, but instead admit him into their society due to his claim. In reality, as historian Lawrence Friedman explains, poor houses were places for the insane, the lame, the destitute, places where going to them meant becoming a social pariah. These poor houses were often called poor farms because they were attached to farms, on which the paupers were supposed to help earn their keep (191). To the contrary, Uncle Venner inverts society's plan by deciding to work first and then retire to the farm. Johnson reads Venner as "a kind of primitive businessman who lives by exchanges, [who] seems to have taken on wisdom by refusing to play the game by society's rules" (89). According to Friedman, an historical 1824 New York poor house act centralized the poor of a town or county under one roof, which often meant the centralization of horror and inhumane living conditions (190-91). It is no accident, then, that the farm that Uncle Venner projects in no way resembles the real poor houses of Hawthorne's day. Most likely, Venner never intends to go to such a place himself, but, instead sets it up as his own "castle in the air" to win himself a place in polite society. In truth, Hepzibah buys into the picture that the old man sells, for she tells him that rather than accept Judge Pyncheon's charity, she would "find it convenient to retire with [him] to [his] farm" (63).

Uncle Venner no doubt knows of Hepzibah's own "great claim to the heritage of Waldo County [which] might finally be decided in favor of the Pyncheon's; so that, instead of keeping a cent-shop, Hepzibah could build a palace" (65). Therefore, when he tells Hepzibah that she need not go with him to his farm, that "something still better will turn up for you. I'm sure of it!" (64), we might imagine that by ingratiating himself to this lady and her family, if the Pyncheons ever should come into their fortune, they might come up with something better for him, as well.

When Uncle Venner makes his second appearance, he has already won his way into the hearts of the Pyncheons and become a regular member of their Sunday gatherings. True to form, Uncle Venner does not miss this opportunity to announce to the entire party his *bare right* to a piece of property: "'Mis Hepzibah...I really enjoy these quiet little meetings, of a Sabbath afternoon. They are very much like what I expect to have, after I retire to my farm!'" (155). In the following dialogue, we can see that Uncle Venner's rhetoric is, indeed, advancing him towards a better p(a)lace:

"Uncle Venner," observed Clifford, in a drowsy, inward tone, "is

> always talking about his farm. But I have a better scheme for him, by-and-by. We shall see!" "Ah, Mr. Clifford Pyncheon," said the man of patches, "you may scheme for me as much as you please; but I'm not going to give up this one scheme of my own, even if I never bring it really to pass. It does seem to me that men make a wonderful mistake in trying to heap up property upon property." (156)

Even though Uncle Venner's "scheme" might involve endearing himself to this family with future prospects of their providing him with a home, he knows that at this point, no family fortune is yet within the Pyncheon's reach. Therefore, he cannot yet allow himself to be viewed by the Pyncheons as a case for charity. Phoebe's reply to Uncle Venner highlights a desire that all, from the young to the old, seem to possess: "But, for this short life of ours, one would like a house and a moderate garden-spot of one's own" (156). Sarah Davis reads Phoebe's "agrarian skill, practicality, and good cheer" as a relieving counterpart to "Hepzibah's settled aristocratic gloom" (156). Therefore, in Phoebe, Venner finds the true picture of the young, respectable working-class woman that he had tried earlier to help Hepzibah imagine herself as.

With his repeated references to his "farm," we can see that part of Venner's scheme is to become synonymous with the word and with the idea of property. By the time the old fellow makes his third appearance in the novel, the narrator's description of him hints at Uncle Venner's success:

> Uncle Venner's pig was fed entirely and kept in prime order on [Hepzibah's] eleemosynary contributions; insomuch that the patched philosopher used to promise that, before retiring to his farm, he would make a feast of the portly grunter, and invite all his neighbors to partake of the joints and spare-ribs which they had helped to fatten. (286)

This is the first time that someone mentions the old man's farm before Uncle Venner has a chance to, which suggests that to think of Uncle Venner is to immediately think of *his* farm. The narrator's use of the possessive pronoun marks his acknowledgement of Venner's right to the property.

When the Pyncheon's do come into a fortune at the end of the novel, Uncle Venner makes certain that his scheme comes to fruition. When Holgrave reveals his identity as a descendent of Matthew Maule and his knowledge of the hiding of the "Indian deed, on which depended the immense land-claim of the Pyncheons" (316), Uncle Venner does not allow Phoebe to answer whether or not she minds assuming the name of Maule. Taking advantage of everyone's good mood, he breaks in and exclaims, "And now . . . I suppose their whole claim is not worth one man's share in my farm yonder!" (317). With his comment, Venner accomplishes two things. First, he diverts Phoebe from an unpleasant association of Holgrave

with the Maules, an association which might have caused her to reject the daguerreotypist's proposal. Most importantly, once again, he reminds his wealthy friends that their prospects are better than his. Uncle Venner's words achieve their purpose, for Phoebe replies, "Uncle Venner . . . you must never talk any more about your farm! You shall never go there as long as you live! There is a cottage in our new garden . . . and we are going to fit it up and furnish it, on purpose for you" (317).

With his acceptance of the Pyncheon's offer, we can see that Uncle Venner has truly voted himself a farm. On that farm/cottage, he promises Clifford to carry on his agrarian ways where, "My words of wisdom, that you and Phoebe tell me of, are like the golden dandelions . . . And you are welcome, friends, to my mess of dandelions, if there were twice as many!" (318) Interestingly, Uncle Venner's crop will be dandelions of wisdom, rather than some real agricultural crop. Like Holgrave, Venner does not acquire land as a direct result of his laboring in the soil. Rather, Venner, like Holgrave, stays true to himself throughout the narrative. Michaels says of Hawthorne's ending that Holgrave is restored to his land more because of a trick of fate than a social justice, and by ending the novel as such, Hawthorne places more of a focus on Holgrave's trueness of character than on accumulation of property (165). Because Holgrave follows a "law of his own," Michaels contends, Hawthorne "[anchors] property not in work but in character" (166). Similarly, with his portrayal of Uncle Venner, who follows his own principles of ownership, rather than society's, Hawthorne places real value in possessing a consistent character, more so than in possessing property, which he has exposed as liable to loss by any number of legal tricks. Thus, Hawthorne might appropriately have subtitled his novel *Vote Yourself a Character.*

Notes

See Brown. "Hawthorne, Inheritance, and Women's Property. *Studies in the Novel* 23.1 (1991): 107-18; Thomas. "*The House of the Seven Gables:* Hawthorne's Legal Story." *University of MS Studies in English* 52 (1984-87): 249-71; and Weinauer. "Property Writes: Authorship and Ownership in America, 1848-1870." Diss. Indiana U, 1993. *DAI* 54.11 (1994): 4097A

Works Cited

Davis, Sarah I. "The Bank and the Old Pyncheon Family." *Studies in the Novel* 16.2 (1984): 150-66.

Friedman, Lawrence M. *A History of American Law*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The House of the Seven Gables*. 1851. New York:Penguin, 1986.

Johnson, Claudia D. "Unsettling Accounts in *The House of the Seven Gables*." *American Transcendental Quarterly* 5.2 (1991): 83-94.

Michaels, Walter Benn. "Romance and Real Estate." *The American Renaissance Reconsidered.* Eds. Walter Benn Michaels and Donald Pease. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985. 156-82.

Thomas, Brook. "*The House of the Seven Gables:* Hawthorne's Legal Story." *University of MS Studies in English* 52(1984-87): 249-71.

Jim's Hairy Chest:
Magic, Money, and Marriage in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Lorinda B. Cohoon
University of Southern Mississippi

Throughout *Huckleberry Finn,* Jim's knowledge of magic is linked to money. One of the controversial issues surrounding the book is the charge that Twain describes Jim's beliefs in a derogatory, racist way. Peaches Henry notes that "critics disparage scenes that depict blacks as . . . superstitious beyond reason and common sense" (368). Daniel G. Hoffman argues that before Jim runs away, he is "helpless before the dark powers, a gullible prey to every chance or accident which befalls him" (102). Reading against these views, I would argue that Jim's belief systems reveal a source of his economic power. Jim's magic helps to strengthen his relationship with Huck, which adds to his ability to gain money and freedom. The origins of the power of Jim's stories and beliefs can be seen in Twain's own relationships to Jim's real-life counterparts. Jim's use of these beliefs to gain economic leverage is illustrated in Jim's establishment of the raft relationship with Huck and in his motives for continuing south past Cairo.

In his *Autobiography*, Twain relates that one of his chief pleasures as a child was listening to stories told by Uncle Dan'l, his uncle's slave. The ghost stories Uncle Dan'l told filled Twain with a "creepy joy" (1: 112). Later, these stories resurfaced in Twain's fiction in the shape of Jim's belief in signs. Twain writes, "Spiritually I have had his welcome company . . . and have staged him in books under his own name and as 'Jim'" (1: 100). E. Hudson Long argues that Twain's folklore is a result of "first hand knowledge" acquired "[t]hrough companionship with the Negroes and through saturation of boyish beliefs" (293). Perhaps Twain tries to make light of Jim's familiarity with the supernatural world in order to free himself of his childhood memories of the true power of these stories. If it is true that Twain used Uncle Dan'l's stories as a source for Jim's stories, then perhaps it is possible to read beneath Twain's words portions of a slave narrative encoded in the forms of folklore and magic.

Magic is often employed by enslaved or colonized groups as a means of preserving resources for resistance. In "Marvellous Realism," Michael Dash explores the ways enslaved peoples use their imaginations and beliefs. He writes, "The only thing they could possess (and which could not be tampered with) was their imagination and this became the source of their struggle against the cruelty of their condition" (200). Jim's knowledge of magic gives him status within the slave community and also allows him a means of establishing valuable relationships with the children of Hannibal.

When Jim and Huck meet on the island, Huck (and the reader) are already well acquainted with Jim's clever economic manipulations of his supernatural powers. Early in the book, Huck recounts Tom's trick with the hat and the five-cent piece. Jim turns the trick around to increase his economic power.

> [He said] it was a charm the devil give to him with his own hands and told him he could cure anybody with it and fetch witches whenever he wanted to, just by saying something to it; Niggers would come from all around there and give Jim anything they had, just for a sight of that five-center piece; but they wouldn't touch it, because the devil had had his hands on it. (36)

Jim protects the power of the coin's connection with the devil and the witches in ways that increase its economic power. He "never [tells] what it was he said to it," and he emphasizes the idea that "the devil has had his hands on it" in order to safeguard it from theft (36). The convincing way he tells the tale of the coin makes others willing to give up valuable goods in exchange for the tale and a sight of the coin.

Huck says this event causes Jim to be "most ruined, for a servant, because he got so stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches" (36). As David L. Smith points out, this is to Jim's advantage: "It is his owner, not Jim who suffers when Jim reduces the amount of his uncompensated labor" (109). Jim might also tell the story to scare Miss Watson into allowing him more free time. Richard Hill notes that "Miss Watson gave him latitude enough to earn his own money and to engage in 'speculat'n'" (317). Perhaps her threats and punishments do not mean as much when Jim can provide for himself by telling the tale of the coin.

John Blassingame's *Slave Testimony* indicates that Jim's methods of gaining extra income through fortune and story telling are outside of the traditional money-making methods of slaves. Most slave owners knew about the extra income of slaves and took most or all of that income. The occupations of hired-out slaves tended to be in trades, like shoemaking (47), cabinetry (268), or baking (241). Sometimes slaves would work farm plots at night and sell the produce for income (353). Jim's methods are more subversive. His main customers are children with small amounts of pocket money that won't be missed and other slaves who trade goods rather than cash.

When Huck goes to Jim for advice about Pap, Jim is able to take a counterfeit quarter as payment for the hairball inquiry, because he knows how to make counterfeit quarters into money by sticking them into raw potatoes. Huck comments, "I knowed a potato would do that, before, but I had forgot it" (45). Smith sees Jim manipulating Huck in this instance: "Jim serves his own interest while appearing to serve Huck's" (110).

However, Huck also benefits, because Jim is a valuable source of information and advice, and only he has access to the hairball.

On Jackson's Island, Jim shares his knowledge of signs for free. He explains that he knows and personally possesses at least one sign of good luck: "Ef you's got hairy arms en a hairy breas', it's a sign dat you's agwyne to be rich" (67). He doesn't know when he'll become rich, but he is confident that it will happen. Jim points out, "I owns mysef, en I's wuth eight hund'd dollars, I wisht I had de money, I wouldn't want no mo" (69). He claims self-ownership even when he is so close to the place of his enslavement and defines himself as already being rich through his own worth. Later, others recognize his value even through the strange guise of Tom's worthless tasks. The doctor says Jim is worth "a thousand dollars" (259). When Jim has control over his own talents and assets, he will definitely be able to earn the money that he needs to free his family.

When Jim establishes a relationship with Huck, he knows that Huck does not care very much about money. Nevertheless, he is one of the richest citizens of his town. Huck is one of Jim's regular customers when it comes to people who will give him money or commodities in exchange for his own knowledge of signs. Together, they make good business partners. Jim uses his understanding of Huck's psychological makeup to emphasize his own powers. During their early relationship, Jim demonstrates his ability to correctly interpret events and to predict future ones.

When Huck maliciously insists that he hasn't been separated from the raft, Jim unravels Huck's attempts at mystification and scolds him for his unkindness. Jim says, "En all you wuz thinkin 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is *trash*; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed" (100). Huck's narration of this event confuses Jim for a while, but Jim is able to straighten out the order of events and to correctly divine their meaning. This interpretation startles Huck, who would have been satisfied to leave Jim confused. Jim's interpretation makes Huck remorseful and establishes Jim's ability to correctly figure out even deliberately misleading events.

As they begin to live on the raft, Huck and Jim's relationship changes from a business relationship to one of friendship. Twain says Uncle Dan'l was "a faithful and affectionate good friend, ally and adviser," and Jim becomes all these things to Huck as well (*Autobiography* 1: 100). This change in relationship becomes important in terms of Jim's status as a free man.

In "Archaeology, Ideology, and African American Discourse," Houston A. Baker, Jr. argues that slave narratives show that "it is absolutely necessary for slaves to negotiate the economics of slavery if they would be free" (174). Jim is able to negotiate successfully the economics

of raft life as he moves toward Cairo. He does this in part through his relationship to Huck. As they float along, Jim's friendship with Huck helps to bind them more tightly together in the mission to gain Jim's freedom. As they approach what they believe to be Cairo, Jim speaks his economic plans aloud:

> He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn't sell them, they'd get an Ab'litionist to go and steal them. (102)

It disturbs Huck that Jim is free enough to begin planning further changes in his life and that Jim's plans are practical enough to seem plausible. Huck sets off, presumably to reconnoiter, but really to betray Jim. Jim senses this upcoming betrayal and calls on the power of their friendship to keep Huck from following through on his plans: "Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim" (103). Jim heightens Huck's reconnaissance trip from a simple action to a deed done as a fulfillment of a promise. A broken promise is not only a breach of honor, but might carry unlucky results for Huck, especially since Jim seems to be correctly reading the signs of betrayal in Huck's behavior. He depends on Huck's wariness of unlucky actions and his knowledge of their real friendship to keep Huck from betrayal.

In addition to seeing ability to negotiate slave economics as a key to freedom, Baker also notes that in achieving freedom, there is a "conflation of economics and conjugal union" in most slave narratives (175). This is particularly interesting in light of Leslie Fiedler's suggestion in "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" that Jim is Huck's "dark-skinned beloved" and that their love is homoerotic (43). The marriage Baker sees as a pattern usually occurs between two black people who "reunite a severed black community" through their marriage (175). Shelley Fisher Fishkin suggests that Huck's language is African-American language and that Twain's model for Huck was an African-American child named Jimmy. She writes,

> The cadences and rhythms of Jimmy's speech, his syntax and diction, his topics of conversation, attitudes, limitations, and his ability to hold our interest and our trust bear a striking resemblance to those qualities of speech and character that we have come to identify indelibly with Huck. (412)

If we can accept the possibility that Huck's voice provides him with the one drop necessary to make him metaphorically black, then during the time spent on the raft, I would suggest that we see Jim and Huck establishing not

only an economic partnership but a conjugal relationship that empowers them both. Together on the raft, they are both "mighty free and easy and comfortable" (125).

After Jim correctly interprets the signs of Huck's betrayal, Huck cannot bring himself to break his promise to his friend. He tells the two men on the skiff that Jim is white and goes along with their smallpox assumption, gaining two twenty dollar gold pieces. Jim is the one who comes up with a practical plan for the money: "Jim said we could take a deck passage on a steamboat now, and the money would last us as far as we wanted to go in the free States" (105). This plan is contingent on their finding Cairo, and when they finally decide that they have passed Cairo in the fog, Jim draws on Huck's feelings of responsibility and friendship to keep himself under Huck's protection by bringing up the rattlesnake incident: "I awluz 'spected dat rattle-snake skin warn't done wid its work" (105). Like the plans Huck makes to betray Jim, this event makes Huck feel guilty because he connects his handling of the snake skin to Jim's snakebite. Jim survives the snakebite only through what Betty H. Jones terms his "shaman or medicine man" powers (163). The snakeskin event, interestingly, also connects to money. They find eight dollars in the lining of a coat, and Huck claims it is a result of touching the snakeskin. "You said it was the worst bad luck in the world to touch a snake-skin with my hands. Well, here's your bad luck! We've raked in all this truck and eight dollars besides" (73). Jim disagrees with Huck and predicts that bad luck is coming. By mentioning it again after he finds out they have passed Cairo, he lessens the chance that Huck will abandon him.

The decision to continue further south is one that is criticized because it seems illogical. Why doesn't Jim turn around and continue to attempt to escape to the North? His reasons may be tied to the money they have just received. Jim is safer with Huck, and Huck holds some of the money, which is enough to buy them both a steamboat passage further down. Also, Huck seems to have a knack for getting what he needs and for escaping from tight situations, so Jim might be able to add to his own resources if they can stick together. If he starts off his free life with a little money, he will be better able to work toward buying back his family, which is one of his main concerns.

Huck seems to be generous with money, unlike the duke and the king who keep profits away from Huck and attempt to cheat each other. Jim had his own funds to buy back the raft from the Grangerfords' slaves: "I gin 'm ten cents apiece, en dey 'uz mighty well satisfied, en wisht some mo' raf's 'ud come along en make 'm rich agin" (121). This indicates that Huck divides at least some of the profits of the raft journey with Jim. Perhaps Huck's willingness to share the money adds to Jim's motivation to continue south with Huck.

At the end of the book, Tom pays Jim forty dollars for the trouble he has had to undergo. This whole sequence of events is problematic because Tom withholds the knowledge of Jim's freedom. Tom forces Jim to play the role of a slave and rationalizes his actions by paying him later. Baker describes slavery as a "disruptive economics that sanctions rape and precludes African male intervention" (174). As master, Tom disrupts the free marriage between Huck and Jim, forcing Jim to submit to his will. Jim's only successful resistance comes when Tom suggests using rattlesnakes, perhaps because Tom is aware of their unlucky power (241). Tom's fraudulent enslavement of Jim can be seen as a rape that destroys the dignity Jim has built up during his raft voyage. The black parts of Huck are not able to protect Jim from Tom's cruel quest for personal pleasure.

Although performed for perverse purposes, the value of Jim's labor under Tom is emphasized. After the goings on in the cabin are made public, the local people consider Jim's work to look like the work of dozens of slaves: "A dozen says you!---*forty* couldn't a done everything that's been done" (254-55). If the work really appears to be done by more than one man, Jim should be paid more for performing Tom's outrageous chores. That Jim seems satisfied by this payment, which is only twice the twenty dollar smallpox payment, is troubling, but he begins his survival as a free man by re-claiming the value of his beliefs. Jim exclaims: "I *tole* you I got a hairy breas', en what's de sign un it; en I *tole* you I ben rich wunst, en gwineter to be rich *agin*; en it's come true; en heah she *is*! *Dah*, now! doan' talk to *me*—signs is *signs*, mine I tell you" (265). Jim's excitement is probably connected to the symbolic value of the money. It is his first real payment as a free man, and it validates his beliefs in his own powers of prediction.

For the most part, Jim's predictions come true. Knowledge of the lore of magic gives Jim a means of economic freedom. Huck's willingness to listen to tales of signs leads to a relationship that helps to ensure Jim's safety and freedom, while allowing them both to experience freedom's privileges of friendship and love.

Works Cited

Baker, Houston A., Jr. "Archaeology, Ideology, and African American Discourse." *Redefining American Literary History*. Eds. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward, Jr. New York: Modern Language Association, 1990. 157-95.

Blassingame, John W., ed. *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1977.

Dash, Michael. "Marvellous Realism: The Way Out of Negritude." *The Post-ColonialStudies Reader*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. New York: Routledge, 1995. 199-201.

Fiedler, Leslie. "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" *The Critical Response to Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn.* Ed. Laurie Champion. New York: Greenwood P, 1991. 199-201.

Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. "From *Was Huck Black*?" Ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Case Study in Critical Controversy.* New York: St. Martin's, 1995. 407-50.

Henry, Peaches. "The Struggle for Tolerance: Race and Censorship in *Huckleberry Finn.*" Ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Case Study in Critical Controversy.* New York: St. Martin's, 1995. 359-82.

Hill, Richard. "Overreaching: Critical Agenda and the Ending of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*" Ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Case Study in Critical Controversy.* New York: St. Martin's, 1995. 312-34.

Hoffman, Daniel G. "Black Magic—and White—in *Huckleberry Finn.*" *Mark Twain:A Collection of Critical Essays.* Ed. Henry Nash Smith. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice, 1968. 101-11.

Jones, Betty H. "Huck and Jim: A Reconsideration." Ed. James S. Leonard, Thomas A. Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis. *Satire or Evasion?: Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn.* Durham: Duke UP, 1992. 154-72.

Long, E. Hudson. *Mark Twain Handbook.* New York: Hendricks House, 1957.

Smith, David L. "Huck, Jim, and American Racial Discourse." Ed. James S. Leonard, Thomas A. Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis. *Satire or Evasion?: Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn.* Durham: Duke UP, 1992. 103-20.

Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Case Study in Critical Controversy.* Ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan. New York: St. Martin's, 1995.

---. *Mark Twain's Autobiography.* 2 vols. New York: Harper, 1924.

John Ruskin and Freshman Composition: Autobiography In Place of Personal Experience

Gregory J. Underwood
University of Southern Mississippi

In his autobiography, *Praeterita*, John Ruskin makes a conscious self-interpretation of his childhood, shaping his youthful past as he wishes his adult self to be known. That reshaping, however, changes "the prevailing notion about himself" (Austin 43); rather than focusing on the "significant" parts of his life, he "was mercilessly faithful to the banal truth about himself, as he conceived it. . . . [He] is less a tragic genius than an Everyman" (Austin 42). Ruskin's willingness to embrace the seemingly mundane for his writing fodder is of particular interest for composition theorists today. All too often in today's freshman writing sequence, the litany of assignments begins with the personal experience essay. In this essay, first time college students are asked, in the words of one such anonymous actual assignment, to "write with passion and feeling about an experience which has been meaningful to them, and to fully explain its significance to an audience of their peers." Inevitably, the teacher receives a deluge of papers discussing the deaths or tragic accidents of one of the following: 1) close friends, 2) grandparents, or 3) family pets. This assignment and its subject matter unfortunately place the teacher in many roles--ersatz counselor is one that comes readily to mind--roles which Richard Marius says make composition teachers "look like a crowd of amateur therapists dishing out dime-store psychology to adolescents" (476). Other roles include the academic gatekeeper, and/or the insensitive cretin who must inform a student that her description of her boyfriend's fatal car crash is not "significant" enough for however a particular teacher might define "significant" (the situation which I have just described, in which neither student nor teacher benefit constructively, is slightly embellished to heighten its altogether too common dramatic effect).

The personal experience essay is designed to allow students their own voice, but all too often it takes place in an assignment-sequence in which, as Marilyn Cooper puts it, "teachers respond as readers who are interested in insights derived from human experience and who can help students express their insights in a form acceptable to this community" (52). Cooper's assumption is that 1) students don't know how to communicate with the community of humans in which they find themselves, 2) that students aren't really human, and 3) that to become human, students must pass through the teacher. What is most galling in this situation, however, is the way in which the personal experience essay ostensibly gives students their own voices and subject matters, but in reality still feeds the traditional gate-keeping function

to which the academy so anal-retentively clings.

The actual demands of the assignment itself can be just as pernicious. The very words "significant personal experience" will, in a great many students' minds, conjure up the catastrophic. In many instances, an assignment of this nature might cause a student to feel compelled to write about a subject he or she does not want to share with other members of the writing class, much less a writing teacher the student might only have known for a few weeks, who will then pronounce judgment upon the student's experience of the event. When the subject is then mandated for class consumption by the teacher, though, the net effect can often be an academic strip-search of students, invading the most traumatic events of their lives. The assignment meant to give students their best opportunity to write from within their own domain of experience effectively becomes a window into the student's soul--revealing more than a teacher needs to know, and more than a student wants to offer.

In this aspect, the personal essay that demands the student explain its personal significance acts as both an examination and as confessional. Michel Foucault explains in the *History of Sexuality* how "the modern West has used confession as a mode of social control [and that] getting people to reveal their private life is prime way of disciplining them" (Schilb 173). Another avenue for discipline is the examination, a method for demonstrating the exercise of power over people by extracting personal information from them. The sheer visibility of the assignment and its writers ensures this aspect:

> Disciplinary power . . . is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. (Foucault 187)

Because the personal essay--with significance--assumes that a student will tell the truth, it enables those in authority-laden positions--namely, teachers--to view the student. At the same time, students are unaware of the of the power being exercised over them since it occurs in the guise of "education." The institutional setting itself, then, acts as a vehicle by which power is exercised over students. The end result is that given the absence of any chance to offer multiple interpretations of the self within the assignment, our students feel compelled to furnish the most personal aspects of their lives as the "truth." Furthermore, many students will feel compelled to offer a traumatic event to demonstrate their own veracity. As writing teachers, we are ill-equipped to bear such a burden.

I am not naive enough to suggest that assigning an autobiography as I

define it here resists the inherent power exercised by the academic institution in disciplining by examination, or that this assignment has not been offered without some academic merit. At the very least however, an autobiographical extract--as conceived here--would acknowledge that such relationships exist, while the personal essay assists in the perpetuation of such relationships by pretending they do not exist.

So then, my title and introduction beg the question, "What can the composition theorist learn from Ruskin and *Praeterita*?" I'm certainly not suggesting that freshman composition students are banal or that they should write the banal truths about themselves. What I am suggesting however, is that the personal experience essay, and the way it is taught, be instead shifted to an autobiographical extract, whose topic could be mundane, but whose overriding focus is on the adult looking back on the child--or more accurately, the writer looking back on a previous self. The idea of autobiography in place of the personal essay offers the composition teacher a new perspective which actually **can** give students their own voice, chosen according to the dictates of the audience for whom they are addressing. Accordingly, the personal essay's focus on the event and its significance would shift in the autobiographical extract to the manner in which the author wishes to be portrayed. That is, student authors, rather than taking new looks at major events, instead would focus on how they would want to present themselves to an audience of their choosing. This change in the assignment's focus would allow students to creatively re-present themselves according to their wishes before a reading public. Obviously, past events are of tantamount importance in such a project, but, like so much of Victorian and Ruskin-era autobiography, the events shape the representation of the author's persona in print. Accordingly, since most freshmen are not too far physically removed from their childhood, most students can easily recall the one time of their lives, childhood, which was for Victorian autobiographers a way to choose among patterns of self-representation. George P. Landow writes "the invention of childhood seems to have been occasioned by the same forces which produce autobiography--the need and ability to choose between various roles" (xxxvii). The writing of an autobiographical extract can offer the student various roles to play, helping students to see themselves as either having many dimensions or having to choose one out of many dimensions.

Viewed another way, this assignment would ask students to mythologize themselves in order to cast themselves in a certain role. In one sense, autobiography is personal myth-making. David Hanson writes that "biographers point out that Ruskin's childhood was not in fact so spartan and suggest that he misrepresented his childhood in order to mythologize the growth of his faculties" (45). Likewise, students could follow Ruskin's autobiographical style by offering a view of themselves that an audience

might not expect to see. Ruskin's *Praeterita* breaks from the conventions of the spiritual autobiography, which many of his readers expected, and which also mimics much of what freshman composition personal essays become. Concerning *Praeterita*'s break from spiritual autobiography, Hanson continues that "it shows Ruskin rejecting the genre's main conventions: he declines the demands of painful introspection, the duty to review the dark passion of life" (52). Like Ruskin, students who write autobiography in the classroom would be primarily concerned with their self-interpretation rather than the events which formed their history, the de facto concern of so many students who write the personal experience essay.

Timothy Peltason presents a picture of Ruskin which is not unlike that of many first-year writing students. He writes that "Ruskin is a maddeningly willful writer who nevertheless distrusts his will and its creations and who would like to receive from the world much more than he imagines himself capable of giving" (665). In other words, Ruskin doesn't have confidence in his own abilities despite his knowing he has them. The same situation exists in many of the students we teach now. We teach our students--many of whom are convinced they cannot write--that they can simply because they have already been using language systems as forms of representation for a long time before they have ever set foot on a college campus. A large portion of freshman writing students are unsure of themselves as writers, often mistaking what they consider an inability to write with merely failing to be aware of the conventions associated with it. Mina Shaughnessy writes that a beginning writer "lacks confidence in himself in academic situations and fears that writing will not only expose, but magnify his inadequacies" (85). In order to combat this effect, writing from personal experience has been used as a remedy, but the strip search it all too often becomes--a cure worse than the malady it proposes to remedy--can be cured itself with autobiography.

What makes Ruskin so particularly generous to the discussion of freshman autobiography is that he focuses on childhood, and its seeming mundaneness. It is in the ordinary vagaries of life, that of submitting to the external order implied by his parents, that he finds the meaning and interpretation of his life to offer the reader. The point to emphasize here for the freshman autobiographical extract is that the topic one chooses does not have to be catastrophic, exciting, provoking, or in some other way astounding. The only thing Ruskin makes extraordinary in his childhood is his ability to observe, an action which is more than likely not going to astonish one watching the observer. Ruskin writes

> that in all essential qualities of genius, except these, I was deficient; my memory only of average power. I have literally never known a child so incapable of acting a part, or telling a tale. On the other hand, I have never known one whose thirst for visible fact was at once so eager and

methodic. (75-76)

Despite his stature, Ruskin emphasizes "the fictive self and fragmented self" (Machann 167), which is what the autobiographical extract of the freshman course could also do. The student's primary goal, like Ruskin's, is to provide a lens for the reader to cause a certain reading of the subject, namely, the writer. The myth that results would fall somewhere between an objective reporting of a life and a fictional account of it. Obviously, students will shape the images they present of themselves in their own ways, just as Ruskin created what Paul Sawyer calls "the myth rather than the history of life, an organic structure adapting itself to an old man's apparent needs for serenity" (311). The autobiographical extract can restore some of the serenity lost by the personal essay's de facto focus on the catastrophic. At the same time, though, the student is still free to draw upon personal experience as subject matter for writing. The true benefit in moving from the personal essay to the autobiographical extract is that the focus moves from the student's actual history to the student's writing. Rather than concentrating on how best to describe the student's past and how it might be "significant," the aim becomes how to best represent whichever of the student's fragmented selves he has chosen to offer the reader.

In this sense, the call to have students write autobiography borrows heavily from post-modern theory. It assumes that there is not a unified student who can effectively offer the significance of an event as it relates to the student's entire self. Perhaps the difficulty many students face in this assignment is in trying to write through this impossibility of defining meaning for the self. Schilb is quick to point out that "identity isn't some fixed state. Students' sense of self can be very much in flux" (142). Ruskin wasn't a post-modernist who didn't know it. However, he does allude to the idea that the self is constructed. While many people would even say this idea is a commonplace in our profession, the assumptions of the personal experience essay deny this very notion. The personal experience essay assumes that a student can reflect in such a way upon an event that it only offers one way of impacting the individual. It tacitly implies that one event has one meaning for one person. In essence it denies that multifaceted cultures, discourses, and ideologies help to form, shape, and change us perpetually. It assumes that events--generally those that form an easy narrative--form us into the person we are. An autobiography, on the other hand, as I have tried to outline it here, could help students to "better understand how their particular circumstances influence their beliefs and claims" (Schilb 171). The autobiography would first ask students to reflect on how images are created in discovering who they think they might be, and then it would ask them to manipulate that image for a reading public.

Thus, the "I" of autobiography can be quite different than the "I" of the personal experience essay. The latter asks a student to accomplish a task

equivalent to that of Christ when he became incarnate--it assumes students will literally transfer themselves to the written word in an essentially "true" form. Usually the first assignment of the semester, the personal experience essay often asks the student to become "word."

The "I" of the autobiography is ironically more complex than the "I" of the personal experience essay, but is distinctly more human than the divine imperative of reversing an incarnation. Rather, an autobiographical extract is not equivocal to the real person. In fact, when offering this assignment to students I have deliberately asked them to offer an image of themselves that might not be readily apparent to themselves or others. Putting on paper the multifaceted, various aspects of the self is definitely "a matter of craft. Whereas therapists coax patients to pour out their feelings, autobiographers must carefully, deliberately strategize, all the while realizing that they are producing at best a partial version of themselves" (Schilb 187). In fact, an autobiography need not at all possess the "truth" factor that is implicit in the personal experience essay:

> Granted, readers may very well be disturbed by one that appears thoroughly deceitful, but even when an autobiography seems truthful, readers may come away unmoved or unconvinced that the writer's life has significance for them. Again things like craft are important. . . . [A]utobiographers who put a premium on honesty ignore how they actively construe their experience instead of just record it. (Schilb 187)

In this aspect, the personal experience essay's unstated demand for truth is particularly damning to the academic institution, because it reaffirms the power structures inherent within the monologic, voiced authority. Moreover, students are asked to duplicate that thought and voice by being forced to view themselves as monologic entities who can only offer the significance of an event as it has helped to shape them into the "unified" selves they are.

This shift in emphasis from a student's past to self-presentation can offer the benefits of providing students with their own voice while denying the students the indignity of revealing too much of themselves or placing the teacher in the unwanted position of voyeur. This shift in emphasis also echoes Ruskin's own change in the convention of Victorian autobiography. Clinton Machann writes that "it redefines the concept of story and thus provides a model for change within this genre as well as fictional genres which are also based on certain assumptions about the structure of a life story" (167). By assigning the autobiographical extract, freshman composition instructors can put an end to their roles as teachers-cum-counselors and let the myth-making begin.

Works Cited

Austin, Linda M. "*Praeterita* in the Act of Rebellion." *Modern Language Quarterly* 48 (1987): 42-58.

Cooper, Marilyn M. and Michael Holzman. *Writing As Social Action*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1989.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979.

Hanson, David C. "Ruskin's *Praeterita* and Landscape in Evangelical Children's Education." *Nineteenth Century Literature* 44 (1989): 45-66.

Landow, George P. "Introduction." *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*. Ed. George P. Landow. Athens: Ohio UP, 1979. xiii-xlvi.

Machann, Clinton. "Ruskin's *Praeterita* and Nineteenth Century Autobiographical Genre." *English Language Notes* 16 (1978): 156-67.

Marius, Richard. "Composition Studies." *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*. New York: MLA, 1992. 466-81.

Peltason, Timothy. "Ruskin's Finale: Vision and Imagination in *Praeterita*." *English Literary History* 57 (1990): 665-84.

Ruskin, John. *Praeterita*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1886.

Sawyer, Paul. *Ruskin's Poetic Argument: The Design of the Major Works*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

Schilb, John. *Between the Lines: Relating Composition Theory and Literary Theory*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996.

Shaughnessy, Mina. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teaching of Basic Writers*. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.

Burden, Escape, and Nature's Role: A Study of Janie's Development in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Yoshiko Kayano
The University of Mississippi

> Who knows what the cry of a bird means to him, or the sight of that old tree! A whole world of feeling is closed to us and is replaced by a pale aestheticism. Nevertheless, the world of primitive feeling is not entirely lost to us; it lives on in the unconscious. The further we remove ourselves from it with our enlightenment and our rational superiority, the more it fades into the distance, but is made all the more potent by everything that falls into it, thrust out by our one-sided rationalism. . . . We should listen to the voice of nature that speaks to us from the unconscious.
>
> --Carl G. Jung, "The Role of the Unconscious" (26-27)

Although Jung is widely known for his theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes, his deep concern about the individual in modern society in a broader context may not be known as well. His two essays on the relation of psychology to literary art, in which he described how the literary work could be the expression of the one-sidedness of the age and show what was most lacking and therefore most desired, appeared in 1922 and 1930. After witnessing the disastrous outcome of the modern wars and conflicts all over the world, in 1956 he wrote a series of short essays titled "The Undiscovered Self (Present and Future)." He discussed the importance of individual value and self-knowledge, which is not dependent on or distorted by the social force and factors, in other words, the knowledge of "one's own nature" or "the nature within." He also claimed the importance of "inner, transcendent experience which alone can protect [us] from the otherwise inevitable submersion in the mass," and further defined it as "religious experience and the immediate relation to God," which will keep us "as . . . individual[s], from dissolving in the crowd" (258, 292).

The period between the 1920s and the 1950s, when Jung expressed his concern about the individual in modern society, almost coincides with that of the Southern Literary Renaissance. The significance of this period seems to lie in the general direction in which the world was heading, which can be summarized with a group of terms such as industrialization, urbanization, materialism, the age of the machine, imperialism, fascism, nationalism, and so on, against which Jung sent warning messages, as did many Southern writers of this age either explicitly or implicitly.

In his introduction to *South: Modern Southern Literature in Its*

Cultural Setting, Louis D. Rubin points out that we can often observe in the fictional characters of modern Southern novels "a kind of cantankerous individualism that manifests itself, regardless of all social pressures" though they do "not exist apart from a social framework" (15). In fact, the conflict of "the individual within society," or the conflict between what one wants to be or to do as an individual and what one is forced to be or to do in society, is one of the major themes of the Southern novels written during this period. Some protagonists become quite impressive and memorable figures because of their individual quest for self-fulfillment against "all social pressures." Among them is Janie Crawford in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), whose "progress in the novel . . . is toward personal freedom" (Rosenblatt 29), because she grows and refuses "to be limited by the restrictions" imposed upon her by others, searches for true love, and achieves "personhood and independence from subjugation" (Davis 28-29).

Nature serves as an inspiring force at critical points in Janie's life, and it helps her find her true self and go her own way either directly or indirectly without losing a sense of connection or continuity.[1] Nature is not always depicted as a benevolent force; its cruelty and indifference are equally expressed in this novel. Nature, thus rendered as "mysterious and contingent,"[2] becomes a source of religious experience for Janie, who lives in tune with the natural world. The important point to note is that, though she goes against many aspects of the tradition, especially the female role imposed by others, her psychological experience demonstrates the importance of contact with the natural world and the view of Nature as the source of the religious mind, which is commonly expressed in the Agrarian manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*.[3] It seems possible to discern in the treatment of Nature in this novel a hidden protest against the progressive movement of the age, which tends to destroy and diminish human contact with Nature, the inspiring force.

Although Janie gradually becomes aware of the burden imposed on her by others and finally escapes from it and attains fulfillment of her own life, she first has to follow her grandmother's words and unwillingly marries Logan Killicks, who owns a house with a parlor and six acres of land. Janie's grandmother, Nanny, is an ex-slave and a week before the emancipation gives birth to Janie's mother, whose father is her white master. Threatened by her master's wife, Nanny escapes to another place in West Florida to bring up her daughter, who is raped when grown up, gives birth to Janie, and runs away, leaving Janie in Nanny's care. With all these harsh experiences, it is quite natural that Nanny develops her own views of the social structure in which black women are at the very bottom. She views marriage as the only protection for black women, and the image of the white woman sitting on the porch becomes her idea of woman's happiness--"a

mighty fine thing"--that she wants for Janie.

Janie's realization of Nanny's strong influence upon her life and her needs to escape from this burden comes gradually, but Hurston creates Janie from the beginning of the novel as a protagonist who is potentially capable of becoming aware of her burden and eventually escaping from it. Janie shows in various scenes her capacity to communicate with the natural objects surrounding her, which in a way helps her realize the things that many other people do not. As Henry Louis Gates points out, there is a strong relationship between her consciousness and the natural setting, and Hurston repeatedly uses "the metaphor of the tree" to express Janie's desires as well as "to mark the distance of those with whom she lives from these desires" (186). She also demonstrates in various scenes her stubborn resistance to her first two husbands who try to impose on her a restricted role that goes against her true nature, which foreshadows Janie's later decision to free herself from such restriction.

At the age of sixteen, a little before her first marriage, Janie hears a blossoming pear tree in the backyard calling her to come and see a mystery: "From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. How? Why? It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again" (23). Then, she witnesses a "marriage" between a dust-bearing bee and the pear blossom. She learns instinctively, without being taught by anyone, that this is a "marriage"; this should be a true "marriage," which is not the socially-established institutional marriage, or the marriage that her grandmother wants for Janie as protection and security. From that time on, Janie keeps searching for a true "marriage" that Nature taught her under the pear tree.

However, Logan, her first husband, does not treat her as a companion but just as a helping hand. As a protest against him, Janie refuses to help him in the field and spends most of the time inside the house while he is working outside. As a result, her direct contact with Nature is reduced. Besides, Janie wants no real communication with her husband: "Long before the year was up, Janie noticed that her husband stopped talking in rhymes to her" (45). A month after her first marriage, when Janie already starts to feel something seriously wrong, Hurston reminds the reader of her special faculty of communicating with Nature: "She knew things that nobody had ever told her. For instance, the words of the trees and the wind" (44). To her, their words are God's words: "She knew that God tore down the old world every evening and built a new one by sun-up. It was wonderful to see it take form with the sun and emerge from the gray dust of its making" (44). Janie, who witnesses and communicates with God's creations, sees a hope in the constant emergence of the new world in Nature; her search for a true "marriage" continues.

When Joe Starks from Georgia appears after Nanny's death and asks Janie to come with him to a newly built all-black town where he attempts to become a big man, she decides to go with him. It soon turns out, however, that he also does not treat her as a companion but forces her to play the role of a "mayor's wife" for him. He forces her to keep her head tied up to hide her beautiful hair and forbids her to talk with townspeople, whom he calls "trashy people" (85). Joe materialistically provides her with everything that she needs: food, clothes, the house, and even the store which has a porch, the center of the community, but Janie is not permitted to participate in their conversation and becomes tired of playing the imposed role of the "mayor's wife," just sitting in the house or in the store without any opportunity to express herself freely. She becomes just another possession of her husband. Some townspeople who happen to hear Janie talk reveal that she is a born orator (88). Janie loves heartfelt communication, but Joe shows his lack of this ability from the very beginning: "On the train the next day, Joe didn't make many speeches with rhymes to her" (56). Besides, her life being confined within the house and the store, she completely loses the direct contact with Nature. Janie learns that what Nanny wanted for her, the marriage to a man with property, never fulfills her needs but rather keeps suppressing her true self.

Then, Hurston inserts a tiny piece of legendary story of man's search for another: God made man out of "stuff that sung all the time and glittered all over," but "some angels got jealous and chopped him into millions of pieces," which still kept glittering and humming. "So they covered each one over with mud," but each piece, being deaf and dumb, kept hunting for one another out of loneliness. "Like all the other tumbling mud-balls, Janie had tried to show her shine" (139). This story serves as a great metaphor in that the socially imposed role often represses the real self and makes people "deaf and dumb" so that they cannot hear or articulate their own voice, just as the mud covers all their shine and song. Janie learns this instinctively from the natural world and keeps trying to get rid of mud to find her own "shine and song," that is, her true self.

After Joe dies of a kidney disease, Janie feels that she is ready for "her great journey to the horizons in search of people," but she realizes how her grandmother has already narrowed her horizon. It is not an easy task to get rid of once-acquired habits of mind. She even hates her for having "twisted her so in the name of love" (138). When free-spirited Tea Cake appears and treats her as an equal partner, Janie first hesitates to develop their relationship; she concerns herself about Tea Cake's age, status, money, and his "other women." All these concerns indicate that Janie is still not free from her grandmother's warning. However, after experiencing the genuine, heartfelt communication with Tea Cake, who also restores her lost contact with Nature by making flower beds and seeding the garden for her, taking

her with him to go fishing and hunting, and eventually taking her to the Everglades, where everything grows wild, she comes to think that he can be "a bee to blossom." Then, she finally makes a decision: "Dis ain't no business proposition, and no race after property and titles. Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means tuh live mine" (171).

Thus, the process of her getting deeply involved with Tea Cake and recovering and increasing her contact with Nature coincides with the process of her shedding the "mud" and finding her own "shine and song." Jan Cooper points out that, working with Tea Cake and other men in the Florida Everglades, "Janie regains something as close to the agrarian ideal as a modern Southern writer could imagine, a community in which all members . . . are fundamentally at harmony with the luxuriant natural world surrounding them" (66). The agrarian view of man's proper relationship with Nature is effectively expressed in the process of Janie's search for self.

The merciless power of Nature ultimately takes Tea Cake away from Janie, but it is only after he demonstrates his true love for her by saving her from a mad dog in the midst of the flooding. After Tea Cake's tragic death, she finds his package of garden seed, which reminds her of him more than anything else. She is going to plant these seeds in her garden for remembrance, and she knows that Tea Cake is not dead; he stays alive in her:

> Of course he wasn't dead. He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see. (286)

This is Janie's culminated vision of life; it is full of memories and gives her a sense of continuity which bridges the past, the present, and the future.

Janie, who finally attains peace of mind by liberating her true self from numerous social constraints, tells her friend Phoeby that they have to go there to know the place because nobody can tell or show them. She tells her that there are two things they have to do by themselves: "[t]hey got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves" (285). To her, "God" is not the Christian God, but rather the god-image or the divinity in Nature, through which her unconscious emerges and expresses itself in order to warn her and restore her psychic balance; Jung calls it "the mysterious god within" (*Psychology* 102). This religious view seems to reflect Hurston's own: "[l]ife, as it is, does not frighten me, since I have made my peace with the universe *as I find it*, and bow to its laws" (*Dust Tracks* 278, emphasis added).

In the midst of the flooding, Janie tells Tea Cake, who feels guilty to have dragged her there: "If you can see de light at day break, you don't keer

if you die at dusk. It's so many people never seen de light at all. Ah wuz fumblin' round and God opened the door" (236). It is the voice and the vision she heard and saw under the pear tree, or in the natural objects surrounding her, which she thought had been sent from God to her--this is the way she found it--that drives her into the search for her true self, shows her the light, and brings her peace of mind at the end.

Thus, Nature plays a crucial role in Janie's life. Janie is the granddaughter of an ex-slave woman without any property; therefore, she first has to depend on a man's protection through marriage, and only after acquiring her own property by the death of her second husband does she become independent and able to make her own decision. The rejection of tradition and the escape from the socially imposed role do not mean her rushing toward modernization or modern life; modernization is not presented as a solution for her conflict. Rather, it is her direct contact with and intimate relationship with the Nature surrounding her, in which she finds God's voice and vision, that connects her to ancient human experience, enables her to find her hidden or suppressed true self, and encourages her to go her own way. In other words, she is inspired by Nature, which is a religious experience and affects her life greatly. Nature provides various images through which her unconscious expresses itself and strives for wholeness, the true self hidden behind the socially-imposed female role. Interestingly, Janie is childless and free from a mother's role of transmitting tradition to and imposing the social role on the next generation; instead, she attains a solitary but self-contained life at the end, without losing the sense of continuity from the past.

It seems to me that the Southern natural landscape possesses an inspiring power to many writers--either Southerners or non-Southerners--and attracts them. Paul Binding, who is from England, for example, expresses his strong attraction to the Southern landscape by quoting from "O Magnet-South," a poem written by Walt Whitman, who is also not a Southerner but passionately admires and describes the Southern landscapes--from the trees to swamps and wild animals in it (4-5).[4] In *I'll Take My Stand*, the Southern Agrarians express the significance of Nature: Davidson states that "nature is an eternal balancing factor" in art (57); Tate argues that the Southern mind "was sensuous because it lived close to a natural scene of great variety and interest" (172); and Ransom grieves that people are losing "the sense of nature as something mysterious and contingent" (xxiv). I would say that the crucial point which these Agrarians consistently make as their common ground is not about the economical system itself but rather about what Havard describes as "[m]an's proper relation with nature, including respect and piety towards its grandeur and mysteries," which are "the ground of religion and art" (420). This view is powerfully reflected in this novel.

Wiliam Havard states that the Southern Literary Renaissance "has been judged to have lasting value because of its ability to convey universal truths about man, *nature*, and society through the portrayal of the concrete and particular," and further asserts that "[t]he characters, as well as the *natural* and social settings that provided the materials on which these writers set their imaginations to work, were distinctly and uniquely Southern" (427, emphases added). Nature is no less important than the characters and social settings in Southern novels. By using the familiar natural world as the crucial force in this novel, Hurston also fulfilled her own intention and urge to convey universal human experience: "I belong to no race nor time. . . . I am merely a fragment of the Great Soul that surges within the boundaries" ("How it Feels" 155). In this novel, human relation to Nature is an underlying theme and serves as a bridge between the unique individual experience and the universal human experience.

Every society, either traditional or progressive, wields a centralizing and unifying force on individuals, and many writers depict the ways this force affects members of the society. By focusing on the process of the individual quest for self-fulfillment, which Nelly Furman calls "rejecting the status of a defined object in favor of the dynamics of becoming" (49), instead of focusing on the conflict itself or its consequences, this novel more explicitly conveys what could protect us from losing the individual self in a society which has two constricting forces: tradition and progress. Nature and man's relation with the natural world are presented as the key.

Notes

[1] In order to avoid confusion, I am going to use the word "Nature" (with a capitalized "N") to indicate the natural world which includes both natural objects (mountains, rivers, trees, flowers, etc.) and natural phenomena (storms, seasonal changes, etc.), except when quoting from a text in which the word "nature" (with a small "n") is originally used.

[2] See John Crowe Ransom's "Introduction: A Statement of Principles" in *I'll Take My Stand* (xxiv). Ransom states: "[w]e receive the illusion of having power over nature, and lose *the sense of nature as something mysterious and contingent.* The God of nature under these conditions is merely an amiable expression, a superfluity, and the philosophical understanding ordinarily carried in the religious experience is not there for us to have" (emphasis added, xxiv).

[3] See Louis D. Rubin, Jr.'s "Introduction" to *I'll Take My Stand* (xii-xiv). Rubin states that "the authors of *I'll Take My Stand* presented a critique of the modern world," in which "[m]an was losing contact with the natural world, with aesthetic and religious reality."

[4] Binding explains how he felt when he was traveling in the South: "I found myself remembering that poem of Walt Whitman's which begins 'O Magnet South! O glistening perfumed South! My South!' (His South? Whitman was born on Long Island and spent his childhood in Brooklyn.) The poem continues with a list of the region's fascinations. . . . I felt the same rush of personal emotion toward it that

Whitman must have felt--'Mine,' I wanted to exclaim" (45). Interestingly, I, a Japanese native, felt exactly the same way when I moved to the South by car all the way from the Northwest. After living in the South for three years, I have come to confirm that the abundant natural beauty and dynamic seasonal changes in the South are still likely to give people a sense of divinity and a sense of awe.

Works Cited

Binding, Paul. *Separate Country*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1979.

Cooper, Jan. "Zora Neale Hurston Was Always a Southerner Too." Manning 57-69.

Davidson, Donald. "A Mirror for Artists." *I'll Take My Stand*. New York: Harper, 1962. 28-60.

Davis, Thadious M. "Women's Art and Authorship in the Southern Region: Connections." Manning 15-35.

Furman, Nelly. "Textual Feminism." *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. Ed. Sally McConnel-Ginet, Ruth Broker, and Nelly Furman. 1980. 45-54.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. "Zora Neale Hurston and the Speakerly Text." *The Signifying Monkey*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 170-216.

Havard, William C. "The Search for Identity." *The History of Southern Literature*. Ed. Louis D. Rubin et al. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985. 415-428.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. 1937. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978.

---. "How It Feels to Be Colored Me." *I Love Myself: When I Am Laughing and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive*. Ed. Alice Walker. New York: Feminist P, 1979. 152-155.

---. *Dust Tracks on a Road*. 1942. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984.

Jung, C. G. "The Role of the Unconscious." 1928. Read, Fordham, and Adler. 1964. 10.3-28.

---. "The Undiscovered Self (Present and Future)." 1957. Read, Fordham, and Adler. 1964. 10.247-305.

---. "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry." 1922. Read, Fordham, and Adler. 1966. 15.65-83.

---. "Psychology and Literature." 1930. Read, Fordham, and Adler. 1966. 15: 84-105.

Manning, Carol, ed. *The Female Tradition in Southern Literature*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993.

Ransom, John Crowe. "Introduction: A Statement of Principles." *I'll Take My Stand*. New York: Harper, 1962. xix-xxx.

Ransom, John Crowe, et al. *I'll Take My Stand*. New York: Harper, 1962.

Read, Herbert, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler, eds. *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. 20 vols. Princeton: Princeton U P, 1953-1979.

Rosenblatt, Roger. "*Their Eyes Were Watching God*." *Modern Critical Views: Zora Neale Hurston*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1986. 29-33.

Rubin, Louis D., Jr. Introduction to the Torchbook Edition. *I'll Take My Stand*.

New York: Harper, 1962. vi-xviii.
Rubin, Louis D., Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs, eds. *South: Modern Southern Literature in Its Cultural Setting.* New York: Doubleday, 1961.
Tate, Allen. "Remarks on the Southern Religion." *I'll Take My Stand.* New York: Harper, 1962. 155-175.
Whitman, Walt. *The Works of Walt Whitman.* New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1948.

Eliot v. Milton: Virgil's Greatest Heirs

Marilyn Claire Ford
The University of Southern Mississippi

Good criticism illuminates the literary work of art; bad criticism illuminates the critic. Eliot's controversial critique of Milton's poetry[1] defines Eliot, the poet-critic, more than it does Milton's poetry. Eliot initially concedes that Milton is a great poet, but he remains perplexed by Milton's genius. Eliot obviously abhors Milton's personality, his morality, his theology, his politics--everything that defines Milton as a man as well as an artist.[2] Eliot condemns Milton for "writ[ing] English like a dead language" and denounces his convoluted syntax and Latinate diction for stifling lesser talents and stymieing the development of the English language ("Milton I" 261). Ultimately, Eliot negates Milton's artistic achievement to a pernicious legacy: "Milton's poetry could *only* be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever" ("Milton I" 258-59). It is always disturbing when one gifted artist summarily condemns another gifted artist, especially when they share a common heritage. Eliot revels in the artistry of the seventeenth century, yet he disdains its most towering literary figure. One wishes that Eliot would have felt rapport with his eminent predecessor and acknowledged the affinities of their rigorous classical education, their profound commitment to Christianity, even their pugnacious sense of integrity. Yet Eliot distances himself from Milton like a jealous rival, belittles his greatness, and denies him any artistic relevancy for the twentieth century. Why does Eliot spurn Milton? Eliot obviously wishes to redefine English literary tradition, but why? to justify his own poetry? if so, how does Milton threaten Eliot's poetic identity? Eliot's seminal essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," shows his preoccupation with the concept of literary tradition as both an artist and a critic. Eliot reveres Virgil as "a poet of unique destiny" at "the centre of European civilization," as one who commands the vast linguistic resources of the most sophisticated culture in the West during that culture's apogee ("What is a Classic?" 129, 128). Milton, too, values Virgil as the preeminent poet of western civilization and models his literary career after Virgil's own to ultimately create *Paradise Lost*, his epic masterpiece that out-Virgils Virgil. In repudiating Milton, then, Eliot sears his rival's laurels to challenge his status as Virgil's greatest heir.

Virgil is the standard against which Eliot measures all literary achievement in western civilization, including his own poetry, because Virgil remains the only "universal classic": a supremely gifted poet who perfects the "common style" that "realizes the genius of the language" and expresses the character of his culture comprehensively ("What is a Classic?"

116, 123-24, 128). Eliot contends that Virgil overshadows Latin literature because he "exhausted" the Latin language, altering it irrecoverably by impressing his greatness upon it ("What is a Classic?" 125). All Latin poets after Virgil "lived and worked under the shadow of his greatness" ("What is a Classic?" 125); they could contribute nothing to their poetic medium, could add nothing to his achievement, so the Latin language solidified, lost its elasticity, and Latin literature inevitably declined.

England, however, has never had a Virgil. Eliot refuses to compare Milton (or even Shakespeare) with Virgil and grant him "classic" status because he has not explored every possibility of the English language: English has proven to be a living, inexhaustible language with variety, vigor, and vision ("What is a Classic?" 125-26). Eliot's charges against Milton, that his language is "*artificial* and *conventional*" ("Milton I" 260), that his poetry inevitably exerts an inimical influence, bewail the establishing of a false tradition. Eliot condemns Milton for attracting legions of poetasters who imitate his style so despicably, but Eliot willfully refrains from drawing this obvious conclusion: Milton's influence on his successors, especially during the eighteenth-century, resembles Virgil's domination of Latin literature. Milton set the standard that other poets aspired to, but could not equal; therefore, English poetic language became stodgy until the Romantics instigated the next poetic revolution by exalting common speech and common themes. Although Eliot absolves Milton for attracting inept disciples in "Milton II," he never recants disparaging Milton's style: Milton's "style is not a *classic* style, . . . not the elevation of a *common* style, by the final touch of genius, to greatness," but "a personal style" in which "every idiosyncrasy is a particular act of violence," "a perpetual sequence of original acts of lawlessness," inflicted on the long-suffering English language. Eliot denounces Milton as "the greatest of all eccentrics," as a violator of the English language, as a malcontent who rebels against English literary tradition ("Milton II" 268). Milton refuses to surrender his individual talent to Eliot's conception of literary tradition, so Eliot judges his poetry as inferior. To Eliot, Milton's personality overwhelms his art, obliterating its significance for the valid literary tradition.

As a critic, Eliot envisions himself as the heir of Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Matthew Arnold--men who dictated the cultural mores of their times. Eliot defines criticism as an exercise of intelligence and states emphatically that "the critic must not coerce, and he must not make judgments of worse and better. He must simply elucidate: the reader will form the correct judgment for himself" ("The Perfect Critic" 56). Yet Eliot flaunts his intellectual hegemony before the English Association in 1936 to defame Milton as "antipathetic" and "unsatisfactory" and to anathematize his legacy ("Milton I" 258). Eliot underscores Milton's physical blindness to stress his "*mental* blindness, the lack of *insight*" in his

work (emphasis original; Frank 190), but Eliot's eclectic quotations and haphazard commentary cause one to question his critical integrity. Why, for example, use *visual imagery* as a touchstone for a blind man's poetry? Why quote *Macbeth* to gauge the supposed feebleness of Milton's "visual imagination" ("Milton I" 259)? Milton *consciously* restricted Shakespeare's influence on his style by choosing Spenser as his mentor; furthermore, if Eliot wishes to concentrate on drama, why not discuss *Samson Agonistes* instead of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*? Eliot's panache wears thin: rather than "an act of wanton iconoclasm" ("Milton I" 259), Eliot's critique of Milton seems merely peculiar, an odd mélange of personal animosity, fragmented prosody, and inappropriate conclusions.

On March 26, 1947, Eliot presented a paper on Milton to the British Academy which eventually became known as "Milton II." Many critics initially judged "Milton II" as a recantation of Eliot's 1936 essay, now known as "Milton I." Eliot, however, is a remarkably consistent critic, and scholars who have probed both essays find no substantial difference between "Milton I" and "Milton II" apart from Eliot's professing that Milton's influence is not inevitably derogatory[3]: "Eliot's 'recantation' is less a change of opinion than a change of attitude" deriving from a more "sympathetic assessment of the conditions and limitations of human capabilities" (Frank 197). Eliot couches "Milton II" as a "reassessment" of his earlier critique because he has reached a crossroads in his literary and critical careers. Eliot persists in caring neither for Milton the man, nor for his art, and his essential criticism of Milton remains intact. Eliot only concedes that a *great* poet may profit from studying Milton now, for only a *great* poet can direct Milton's revolutionary tendencies to a positive redefining of contemporary poetry ("Milton II" 268, 273-74) .

As a poet, Eliot seems to be reevaluating his status in 1936: he had forayed into drama with *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935); he published his *Collected Poems, 1909-1935* (1936); and he had begun the arduous task of composing the *Four Quartets* (1936-42). Eliot never asserts his claim to Virgil's legacy directly when assessing his own work, but his ambitions and the breadth of his syncretic vision match Virgil's own. By 1947, one year away from winning the Nobel Prize for Literature (1948), Eliot had turned from lyrical poetry to dramatic poetry, and thus was outside the province of Virgil, who never experimented with drama. Milton, however, remained a threat because he, too, had become a dramatist after an extensive poetic career.[4] Only two English writers have mastered all of the major literary forms prevalent in their eras: Chaucer and Milton. Eliot seems never to have considered Chaucer as a national standard; perhaps medieval culture and Middle English were too provincial to be a reliable gauge for other eras. Milton, then, becomes the inevitable choice for an English cultural standard, the national equivalent for the universal Virgil. Eliot maintains that the artist

is the most reliable critic ("The Perfect Critic" 53), but in grappling with Milton's legacy, Eliot betrays his own "technical schizophrenia"--the tension between his roles of poet and critic (Frank 189). Milton provokes Eliot because of "the practical difficulties he encountered in his own creative work"; "for Eliot, the critic, Milton's language was 'dead' because it was stifling to Eliot, the poet" (Frank 193, 194). Where Milton is concerned, Eliot the poet subverts Eliot the critic--the practicing poet who creates literature bedazzles the scholar who defines and interprets literary tradition. Eliot's criticism of Milton's poetry is suspect, superficial, because Eliot can neither disassociate the art from the man, nor his own art from his critical interpretation.

Notes

[1]Eliot presented his initial critique, "A Note on the Verse of John Milton," before the members of the English Association in 1936 and published it that same year in *Essays and Studies*. On March 26, 1947, Eliot presented the "Annual Lecture on a Master Mind" to the British Academy on the subject of Milton. (Eliot read this paper once again on May 3, 1947, at the Frick Collection in New York.) Eliot retitled his initial essay "Milton I" and his "Master Mind" lecture "Milton II" for publication in *On Poets and Poetry* (1957).

[2]Herbert Howarth conjectures that Eliot despised Milton as a reaction against his formidable distant relative, Charles W. Eliot, who was an ardent Miltonist and the president of Harvard during Eliot's undergraduate years. Refer to "Eliot and Milton: The American Aspect," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 30 (1960-61): 150-62.

[3]E. P. Bollier provides the most detailed comparison of "Milton I" and "Milton II" in "T. S. Eliot and John Milton: A Problem in Criticism," *Tulane Studies in English* 8 (1958): 165-92. Armin Paul Frank supports Bollier's conclusions in his extensive discussion, "Eliot on Milton: Tone as Criticism," *Miscellanea Anglo-Americana: Festschrift Für Helmut Viebrock*, eds. Herausgegeben von Kuno Schuhmann, Wilheim Hortmann, and Armin Paul Frank (München: Karl Pressler, 1974) 184-201. B. Rajan concurs with Bollier and Frank and analyzes how Milton influenced Eliot's poetry in "Milton and Eliot: A Twentieth-Century Acknowledgment," *Milton Studies* 11 (1978): 115-29.

[4]Although there is no scholarly consensus on the date of composition for *Samson Agonistes*, most critics agree that this closet drama is a mature work, begun perhaps during the Interregnum, and revised after the Restoration.

Works Cited

Bollier, E. P. "T. S. Eliot and John Milton: A Problem in Criticism." *Tulane Studies In English* 8 (1958): 165-92.

Eliot, T. S. "*from* Milton II." *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*. Ed. Frank Kermode. San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt; New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975. 265-74. Rpt. of "Milton." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 33 (1951): 61-79.

---. "Milton I." *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*. Ed. Frank Kermode. San Diego:

Harvest-Harcourt; New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975. 258-64. Rpt. of "A Note on the Verse of John Milton." *Essays and Studies* 21 (1936): 32-40.

---. "The Perfect Critic." *Athenauem* 23 July 1920: 102-4. Rpt. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*. Ed. Frank Kermode. San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt; New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975. 50-58.

---. "Tradition and the Individual Talent" *Egotist* 6.4 (1919): 54-55; *Egotist* 6.5 (1919): 72-73. Rpt. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*. Ed. Frank Kermode. San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt; New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975. 37-44.

---. *What Is a Classic?* London: Faber & Faber, 1945. Rpt. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*. Ed. Frank Kermode. San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt; New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975. 115-31.

Frank, Armin Paul. "Eliot on Milton: Tone as Criticism." *Miscellanea Anglo-Americana: Festschrift Für Helmut Viebrock*. Eds. Herausgegeben von Kuno Schuhmann, Wilheim Hortmann, and Armin Paul Frank. München: Karl Pressler, 1974. 184-201.

Howarth, Herbert. "Eliot and Milton: The American Aspect." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 30 (1960-61): 150-62.

Rajan, B. "Milton and Eliot: A Twentieth-Century Acknowledgment." *Milton Studies* 11 (1978): 115-29.

The Question of Moral Intelligence in Flannery O'Connor's "The Life You Save May Be Your Own"

Nancy S. Ellis
Mississippi State University

In "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," Flannery O'Connor caricatures both in appearance and speech her central figure, Tom T. Shiftlet. As clearly as we see Irving's Ichabod Crane, O'Connor makes us see a seemingly harmless tramp, dressed in a "town suit" and "brown felt hat" as he wanders into the yard of Mrs. Lucynell Crater carrying his toolbox. When he removes the hat, he reveals "long black slick hair" that parts in the middle and covers the tops of his ears, a forehead more than half the length of his face, and "features . . . balanced over a jutting steeltrap jaw" (145, 146). These details are clear but less remarkable than the fact that Mr. Shiftlet is missing half his left arm. Having sketched Mr. Shiftlet's appearance, O'Connor wastes no time rounding out his figure with gestures and with habits of speech. She makes Mr. Shiftlet--and he is always *Mr.*--seem rather gentlemanly through polite gestures such as tipping and then removing his hat, or offering chewing gum to the women on the porch. She presents his conversation as quiet and controlled, full of broad observations and outwardly friendly when he makes the acquaintance of Mrs. Lucynell Crater and her idiot daughter Lucynell, an acquaintance that results in his finding a temporary home in exchange for doing repairs on the farm.

O'Connor matches her quick caricature of Mr. Shiftlet by deftly drawing the two Lucynell Craters. The mother, who is "about the size of a cedar fence post" (146), wears a man's hat and stands with her hand "fisted on her hip"; the daughter, who plays "with her fingers," stamps and points, making "speechless sounds" (145).

Rounding out the visual caricature, O'Connor captures the cadences of rural Southern speech along with the habits of asking superficially friendly and impersonal, yet nosey questions and of making broad moral assertions. The frequent *anyways* and *nowadays* in Mr. Shiftlet's and Mrs. Crater's speech sound as often as double negatives and incorrect verbs. "That car ain't run in fifteen year" rings as true as the abbreviated and pointed questions "You from around here?" and "You ladies drive?" (146).

O'Connor's initial exposition establishes a feasible, but obviously comic scene with her typically grotesque twist--in this case, a one-armed man and an "afflicted girl." But the comic devices and physical deformities, as in all of O'Connor, are not merely details of exposition; rather, they are integral, ironic means leading to a moment of anagnorisis in the tragi-comedy of which O'Connor is a master.

In "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," O'Connor begins her

tragi-comedy with broad caricature and then complicates it through the philosophy, actions, and reactions of Mr. Shiftlet as well as through her choice of central image and through Biblical allusions. Like many of her characters, Mr. Shiftlet mouths platitudes that thoughtlessly pass for reasonable, insightful judgement about the operations of the universe. Mr. Shiftlet's repeated take on the world is that "nothing is like it used to be," that "the world is almost rotten" (146), and that "nowadays, people'll do almost anything anyways" (147). He says that "people don't care how they lie," that innocence (in this particular case, sexual purity) is lost, that "nobody care[s] or stop[s] and [takes] any trouble" (150). He makes these moral assessments as he talks with Mrs. Crater who never bothers to nod agreement or add a comment to support or refute his observation, but he is no more deterred by her lack of assent to his ideas than she is by his avoidance of her direct questions. In fact, he seems quite comfortable talking in broad judgements while he assesses his surroundings. To account for his moral perspective, several times he remarks, "I was raised thataway and there ain't a thing I can do about it. My old mother taught me how to do" (152).

As he meets the Craters, two things capture his attention. The first is the 1928 or '29 Ford which has been rusting in Mrs. Crater's shed for fifteen years. The second point of attention is not an object, but an accidental pronouncement that tumbles thoughtlessly from his mouth while he keeps his eyes on "the automobile bumper that glittered in the distance" (149). The pronouncement, as he tries to impress Mrs. Crater with his ideas, is this: "I got . . . a moral intelligence!" When he hears himself say these words, O'Connor writes, "he *stared* . . . as if he were astonished himself at this *impossible* truth" (149, emphasis added). It is the idea of "moral intelligence" and its impossibility as truth that lies at the heart of O'Connor's story.

To say that O'Connor gets lots of mileage out of the rusted old Ford that captures Mr. Shiftlet's attention is to make a bad pun; nevertheless, it is accurate, for O'Connor uses this realistic detail--the rusted old Ford--as both comic image and spiritual symbol. Part of the fun she has begins with Mr. Shiftlet obviously fixating on the car while he thinks he is cleverly avoiding Mrs. Crater's questions with questions and comments of his own. Another part of O'Connor's fun with the car is using names associated with driving. The name *Shiftlet* suggests the need to shift gears, of course, long before the shiftiness of character is unmistakable.[1] The name fun continues when Mr. Shiftlet suggests he might be lying about who he is. Aaron Sparks and George Speeds, two of the other three possible identities he offers for himself, quite obviously connect with cars, with *Sparks* suggesting spark plugs and *Speeds* speaking for itself. That each of the four identities hails from a different state suggests the kind of rambling a tramp like Mr. Shiftlet

might be familiar with as well as being emblematic of the later idea that man's spirit is "always on the move."[2]

The old Ford provides Mr. Shiftlet with a place to sleep during the week he stays at the Craters' and soon he is boasting he could make it run just as he is repairing other broken things around the farm. O'Connor makes his agenda--to get the car running--just as obvious as she does Mrs. Crater's, for Mrs. Crater is "ravenous" to grab this possible son-in-law/handyman combination (150). Their bartering over the car-for-marriage deal is the point at which O'Connor begins to leave the car as comic image and to actualize it as spiritual symbol.

She makes the transition by having Mr. Shiftlet bemoan that modern production methods in the automotive industry--"a man for a bolt" (150)--are impersonal, thus illustrating to his own satisfaction part of the "rottenness" of the modern world. After this critical observation, O'Connor begins to address the spiritual. When Mrs. Crater proposes a Saturday marriage to her daughter and bluntly reminds Mr. Shiftlet of the reality "there ain't any place in the world for a poor disabled friendless drifting man" (152), Mr. Shiftlet responds, "Lady, a man is divided into two parts, body and spirit. . . . The body, lady, is like a house: it don't go anywhere; but the spirit, lady, is like a automobile: always on the move, always" (152).

Thus, in this story, in Mr. Shiftlet's own words, the car becomes an explicit symbol of the duality of man's nature. When Mr. Shiftlet goes on to state that "a man's spirit means more to him that anything else" (153), he sounds morally responsible and aware, but the context of his statement tinges it with the telling irony that he intends to move on, especially if he can get his hands on the car. O'Connor lets her reader begin to see why Mr. Shiftlet astonished himself when he pronounced, "I got . . . a moral intelligence" (149).

Associating Mr. Shiftlet with the car--one of the most revered symbols of twentieth-century America--is not O'Connor's only way to present the duality of man's nature and to emphasize that Mr. Shiftlet's "moral intelligence" is an impossible truth. Another way she reveals this is by filling the story with allusions connecting Mr. Shiftlet with Jesus Christ: Mr. Shiftlet is an itinerant carpenter; he poses questions about the human heart and the nature of man; he is dissatisfied with the law (he says, "the law . . . don't satisfy me" [153]); he even represents hope of rescue or "salvation" to Mrs. Crater and her daughter.

But all the allusions are skewed in some way. As a one-armed carpenter, Mr. Shiftlet is clearly physically handicapped in his trade, and O'Connor demonstrates his spiritual handicap, his spiritual inadequacy, when he stretches out his arms and forms a "crooked cross" (146) and again when he lifts his left arm "*as if* he could point with it" (149, emphasis added). His insight into the human heart confuses spiritual and physical

knowledge and takes on the comic absurdity of comparing studying a human heart to studying a "day-old chicken" (147). Though asking questions such as "what is a man" and "what a man was made for" (148), he offers no answers. Instead of proclaiming truth, he raises questions about his own truthfulness. Instead of saving the daughter, he marries her for a car, violating the sanctity of marriage,[3] then takes her away and abandons her.

These skewed New Testament allusions, along with the delicious irony of his astonishing himself with the idea of having "moral intelligence," continue to complicate the comic possibilities Mr. Shiftlet first offers and move the story increasingly in the direction of tragi-comedy. When he says "I got . . . a moral intelligence" (149), his astonishment mimics a tiny epiphany, suggesting that perhaps a greater moment of self-recognition--even a moment of grace--will occur later. But this never happens to the protagonist in "The Life You Save," unlike in some other O'Connor stories. Rather than awakening in him an awareness of things moral, this early moment feeds his pride and adds momentum to carry him to the story's climax.

O'Connor allows her readers to enjoy Mr. Shiftlet's tiny mock epiphany, to see the astonished man fairly clearly, but then she begins to work her magic. She stuns us with the events that unfold in order to show Mr. Shiftlet's "moral intelligence" is *impossible* as truth. Our response to the story eases out of neutral when O'Connor presents the bartering between Mr. Shiftlet and Mrs. Crater--Mrs. Crater finances the repair of the car, and he marries her daughter in return, both of them operating with the coldness of professional con men. We are stunned that the two are seemingly indifferent to the fact that their exchange involves a totally dependent, handicapped woman.

Then we are stunned a second time. Having married Lucynell and struck out in the car for Mobile, Mr. Shiftlet abandons his simple-minded new bride at a roadside diner miles away from home, from anyone who knows her. And he does so without a trace of bad conscience, telling the counterboy that she is a hitchhiker he picked up. Back behind the wheel of the restored Ford, Mr. Shiftlet--and the readers--continue the journey. Lonely and depressed, Mr. Shiftlet watches for a real hitchhiker because, ironically, he believes "that a man with a car [has] a responsibility to others" (155). As he drives, O'Connor adds, "occasionally he saw a sign that warned: 'Drive carefully. The life you save may be your own'" (155).

As readers we are stunned for a third time at the climax of the story which arrives when Mr. Shiftlet picks up a boy whose "hat was set on his head in a way to indicate that he had left somewhere for good" (155). Mr. Shiftlet begins to talk to the boy with the same kind of cliché he used when he met Mrs. Crater, this time starting with the topic of a mother's influence:

It's nothing so sweet . . . as a boy's mother. She taught him his first

> prayers at her knee, she give him love when no other would, she told him what was right and what wasn't, and she seen that he done the right thing. Son, . . . I never rued a day in my life like the one I rued when I left that old mother of mine. . . . (155)
>
> My mother was a angel of Gawd. . . . He took her from heaven and giver to me and I left her. (156)

To this, the sullen hitchhiker turns and responds angrily, "My old woman is a flea bag and yours is a stinking pole cat" (156), before he leaps from the barely moving car.

The insult causes us to smile at its childish petulancy, and it stuns Mr. Shiftlet (the barely moving car represents how thwarted his spirit suddenly is) in a way that assaults his control of his world. This climactic moment should provide Mr. Shiftlet some sort of anagnorisis but actually fails to do so. Instead, feeling "that the rottenness of the world was about to engulf him," Mr. Shiftlet prays aloud for the Lord to "break forth and wash the slime from this earth" while ironically dropping his arm on his chest in a *mea culpa*-like gesture (156).[4] O'Connor then ends the story with a "guffawing peal of thunder," sudden rain, and Mr. Shiftlet--with "stump sticking out the window"--"step[ping] on the gas," speeding toward Mobile (156). His homeless, lost spirit is on the move again.

Watching the car disappear, we are left to ponder what the story is really about, and that is how O'Connor stuns us a fourth time and creates the actual moment of anagnorisis in this tragi-comedy--for it is *us*, her readers, not the character Mr.Shiftlet, she wants to bring to a point of self-knowledge.[5] The hitchhiker's insult, seemingly a rebellious remark by a disgruntled runaway, rings true. It disparages the very source Mr. Shiftlet has repeatedly credited with this knowledge of right and wrong--and the one he just admitted leaving. What we the readers can come to see through O'Connor's story is that *knowledge*--or "moral intelligence"--is not enough. To know is not to do. One needs instead a moral *conscience*.

Thus the story itself, as we ponder its meaning in order to sort out our emotions, becomes a sign on the road of life; it is Flannery O'Connor's way of reminding us to "Drive carefully. The life [we] save may be [our] own."

Notes

[1] The naming fun here may be even more suggestive, for, as Miles Orvell points out, Shiftlet (as well as The Misfit and Manley Pointer) spring in part from "the familiar comic folk hero" like "the drifter, the jack-of-all-trades, mean Sut Lovingood, [and] crafty Simon Suggs" (54). Orvell overlooks, perhaps, that Shiftlet's name connects directly to Simon Suggs, when one recalls that the Captain's motto was "It's good to be shifty in a new country."

[2] This is reminiscent of the opening paragraph of "Good Country People," where O'Connor describes Mrs. Freeman at length with term after term that connects with driving.

[3] Dorothy Walters comments that this story "examines the spectacle of an evil which views matrimony not as a divinely sanctioned union but as an opportunity to realize its own selfish aims" (39).

[4] Jill Baumgaertner, interpreting Shiftlet's plea as his recognition of himself as "slime," says, "his moral intelligence has begun to assert itself" (42). She thinks that he meets himself in preaching responsibility to the hitchhiker, convicts himself, and thus takes the first steps to salvation.

[5] Miles Orvell assesses O'Connor's purpose for, or manipulation of, her readers as two-staged. "The first effect of her fiction is emotional" but "for the experience to take hold, contemplation is an essential afterthought" (38).

Works Cited

Baumgaertner, Jill P. *Flannery O'Connor: A Proper Scaring*. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1988.

O'Connor, Flannery. "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." *Flannery O'Connor: The Complete Stories*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988. 145-56.

Orvell, Miles. *Flannery O'Connor: An Introduction*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1991.

Walters, Dorothy. *Flannery O'Connor*. Twayne's United States Authors Series. New York: Twayne, 1973.

Knock The Rock: Early Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll, 1955-1960

Anthony V. Baltakis
Louisiana State University at Eunice

This paper investigates the opposition that arose against rock 'n' roll in America during the years 1955 to 1960. Rock engendered hostility for three distinct, but interrelated, reasons. Rock gave birth to a youth culture heretofore nonexistent, and threatened to weaken the control society wielded over its youth. As such, political, religious, and media leaders denounced it for promoting delinquency, sexual licentiousness, and iconoclasm among adolescents. Secondly, as an offshoot of black rhythm and blues, rock violated the segregated nature of the music industry and American society. White adults feared that rock's "musical" integration could eventually lead to "social" integration. Finally, opposition to rock arose within the established business industry. With assured profits, and many artists under long-term contracts, the music industry worried about the possible loss of profits that rock 'n' roll represented.

During the 1940s, the blues dominated black music; country blues soon replaced it. Later, with an increasingly urbanized black population, came the evolution of the rowdy uptempo city blues. This new music added electric guitars, saxophones, and a beat, creating rhythm and blues.[1] In 1951, Cleveland disc jockey Alan Freed launched a series of rhythm and blues reviews at the Cleveland Arena and drew capacity crowds. At one of these reviews, Freed made history when he dropped the term rhythm and blues, substituting it with rock 'n' roll, so as to better describe the manner in which people danced.[2]

While teenagers willingly adopted rock 'n' roll, adults fretted over the music and its implications. With a message aimed exclusively at youth, many recognized rock 'n' roll as a radical departure from the past. Rock promoted a jargon that slowly emerged as a language that defined a new youth culture. In the past, popular music had reflected the interests primarily of adults; now youth associated with a culture alien and therefore menacing to adults.

Initially, the opposition to rock 'n' roll centered on the lyrics. In 1955, *Variety*, a weekly tabloid and recognized spokesperson for the entertainment industry, warned that such words as "hug and squeeze" in songs would lead to a total breakdown of all reticence about sex. They advised that if the industry refused to monitor itself, organized religion and government might be forced to do so. Besides, *Variety* charged that rock led to delinquency and a subsequent reduction of parental control.[3]

Some in the music field took direct action. In Boston, radio station WVDA drew up a code to regulate lyrics after editorials in *Pilot*, the

Catholic archdiocesan magazine, and other papers complained about rock 'n' roll lyrics.[4] King Records, an independent label (known as an indie), responded by agreeing to reject any tune that in its opinion was unsuitable for teenagers.[5] Most important of all, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI), the licensing agent for the majority of rock 'n' roll records, agreed to establish a committee composed of a cross-section of the population to monitor the music.[6]

Singer Elvis Presley suffered undue criticism. On stage he seemed to personify the worst of rock 'n' roll---a white man, dressed like a hood, singing like a black man, and dancing wildly. Jack Gould of the *New York Times*, criticized Presley's performance on *The Milton Berle Show* writing that, "Popular music has reached its lowest depth in the grunt and groin antics of one Elvis Presley. He gave the kind of exhibition that was suggestive and vulgar, tinged with the kind of animalism that should be confined to dives and bordellos."[7] One reporter labeled Presley a male burlesque dancer and warned that if he refused to drop his "Elvis the Pelvis" routine, more people would drop him.[8]

The attacks on rock 'n' roll continued with a new emphasis, linking the music with delinquency. In March of 1956, a disturbance broke out in Cambridge, Massachusetts during a rock concert. Afterwards, the Cambridge City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting entertainment presided over by a disc jockey. Disturbances involving rock were reported in Fayetteville, North Carolina as well as Newport, Rhode Island.[9] In London, the rock 'n' roll film, *Rock Around the Clock*, was banned after continuing outbreaks of disorder involving teenagers dancing and "jiving."[10]

A few reports attempted to link racial problems with rock 'n' roll. At a Fats Domino concert in Houston, Texas, attended by 400 whites and 1000 blacks, disagreement broke out over which part of the audience, white or black, would be allowed to dance. One white officer announced that only whites could dance on the floor.[11] Another report blamed a stabbing in New York City, after a concert, on the "Negro youths."[12] Some places such as Jersey City, Newark, and Bridgeport handled the problem by simply banning all rock concerts.[13]

While such reports equated rock with rebellion, the media attempted to drive the nail into the coffin with vivid accounts bemoaning the dismal quality and sexual nature of the music. *Time* magazine characterized rock as an "unrelenting syncopation that sounds like a bull whip"; a saxophone sounds like a "honking mating call"; and the vocal group "shudders and exercises...violently to the beat." *Time* concluded by ominously comparing rock concerts to the mass meetings of Adolph Hitler.[14]

Racism, however, still remained an issue. The industry itself overtly worked to the detriment of black artists. While many performers had trouble obtaining lawyers, managers, fair contracts, and royalties, blacks

suffered more than their white counterparts. For example, standard publishing rights and royalty practices worked against black artists in the business. Record companies, including the majors such as RCA and Columbia, as well as the indies, usually combined publishing and record making. As a result, they could license the song to their own record company at any rate. The normal ongoing rate, at the time, was one cent per record. Black performer Little Richard received one-half the normal rate on some of his records.[15]

Another tactic that undermined the earnings of black artists concerned the practice of "cover" versions of records. If a rhythm and blues song started to sell big, many of the major labels would put out a version, or "cover," with a well-known white artist. Pat Boone easily deserves the title "King of the covers" for having more than any artist built his reputation on recording the music of others. Fats Domino's "Ain't That a Shame" and Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" are good examples. Bumps Blackwell, of Specialty Records, related an appropriate anecdote. After Pat Boone covered "Tutti Frutti" and sold over one million records, Bumps stated, "we decided to up the tempo on the follow-up and get the lyrics so fast that Boone wouldn't be able to get his mouth to do it."[16] Unfortunately for Little Richard, Boone's cover sold over a million because white radio stations refused to air his original version. Sometimes even their own labels worked against black artists. Art Rube recorded many of Little Richard's hits, but since he owned his own publishing company as well, he, not Little Richard, profited when Pat Boone covered a Little Richard hit.[17]

Technology also eroded the position of black artists. During the late 1940s, the major record companies commenced production of 45 and 33-rpm records. As late as 1957, many black indie labels continued to produce shellac-based 78s. If a record showed evidence of crossing over to white audiences, indies often attempted a separate 45-rpm pressing, although the cost was prohibitive for poorly capitalized smaller companies. Recording on indies with small distribution, cheated by promoters, and denied access to the majority of radio outlets, blacks suffered for the pervasive racism that characterized the music industry, and American society in the 1950s.[18]

Ironically, the fate of two Caucasians furnished one of the most significant examples of racism. While Alan Freed and Dick Clark both promoted rock 'n' roll, the imagery they projected differed greatly. Freed, known as the "Father of rock 'n' roll," popularized rhythm and blues for white audiences as emcee of the *Mood-Dog Rock 'N' Roll House Party*, on radio station WJW in Cleveland, Ohio.[19] Unlike other white disc jockeys, Freed refused to play cover music, labeling those who did so as "anti-Negro."[20] Often mistaken for a black man himself, due to a raspy voice, "jive-talk," and rapid-fire delivery, Freed recognized rock's commercial

potential and initiated a series of rock concerts in Cleveland. Whites and blacks attended the concerts, a fact that disturbed older citizens in America's largely segregated cities.

Freed moved to New York City, becoming a disc jockey at radio station WINS. After a fight broke out at one of his concerts and several people were mugged, Freed was charged with inciting a riot and the unlawful destruction of property. Soon afterward he quit WINS for what he called their "wishy-washy attitude and failure to support him."[21] In late 1959, Alan Freed became immersed in the growing payola scandal. One of the charges alleged that he had been given the rights as a co-writer on the song, "Maybellene" if he would plug it.[22] Freed was found guilty of commercial bribery and given a six month sentence with a $300 fine. In 1964, the IRS charged him with income tax evasion. Broke and unemployed, he entered a hospital in early 1965 and died two months later at the age of forty-three.[23]

By way of contrast, Dick Clark enjoyed much success. With his pleasing demeanor, boyish good looks, and beguiling charm, Clark and his show, *American Bandstand*, furnished an image that counterbalanced the prevailing stereotype of rock 'n' roll music. Whereas Freed openly supported rock as an art form, regardless of the artist's race, Clark was more circumspect and attuned to American societal values and carefully cultivated an image of himself guaranteed to find acceptance with the public. Until the 1960s, *American Bandstand* remained segregated, even though Philadelphia (where the show originated) had a large black population. Clark also enforced a strict dress code and demanded proper behavior from his teens while on the show. Thus, parents watching the show approved of Clark, a youth mentor, almost teacher, carefully monitoring and most important of all, controlling the young people. Clark gave the public evidence of a softer side to rock--nonviolent and white.

The payola investigations, however, temporarily sidetracked Dick Clark. Ample evidence indicated Clark's guilt. Investigators revealed that Clark owned thirty-three companies connected with music, including three record companies. Between 1958 and 1960, he made over $500,000 in salary. One of his companies owned and managed guitarist Duane Eddy. Clark played Eddy's eleven records 240 times over the air during this period. The *New York Times* estimated that Clark would owe twenty-five million dollars for advertising fees at ABC's going rate. But, unlike Freed, Clark escaped. While ABC forced him to divest himself of many of his holdings, Clark retained *American Bandstand*. At the end of the payola Congressional hearings, the committee chairman congratulated Clark as a "fine young man."[24]

So, Dick Clark survived and Alan Freed fell. Equally guilty, why did Clark's activities receive approbation while Freed earned condemnation?

Clark succeeded for three reasons. First, Clark projected a favorable image of rock, one that older white Americans, while still doubtful about the music, deemed unobjectionable. In contrast, Freed represented the seamier side of rock, one associated with rebellion and violence. Additionally, ABC felt compelled to protect Clark, whose show *American Bandstand* generated annual proceeds of twelve million dollars; in contrast, Freed's show produced only $200,000 per year.[25] ABC supplied Clark with the best legal advice; Freed had to fend for himself. Finally, while probably not a racist himself, Dick Clark understood contemporary views concerning integration. Throughout the 1950s, though originating from a city with a sizable number of blacks, viewers of *Bandstand* saw only smiling, clean-cut, well-dressed, submissive white teens, dancing discreetly under the watchful gaze of rock mentor, Dick Clark. His image fit nicely into the trend of the late 1950s that gave birth to a "kinder and gentler" rock 'n' roll. By contrast, Freed disturbed Americans. An alcoholic, he projected a poor image, often acting impulsively. Freed's support of black artists linked him with integration at a time when American society was not ready or willing to desegregate. With rock's new image, Freed seemed out of place, a caricature of early rock.

Formerly adjudged as music that sired deviance and unruliness among youth, by 1960 rock 'n' roll had undergone a metamorphosis. As many of the early artists and promoters vanished from the music scene, they were replaced by a legion of white crooners singing mostly romantic ballads, thereby making the music seemingly less raucous and offending for adults. Rock cleansed itself in the public's eye with the payola investigations that anointed Dick Clark and condemned Alan Freed. Racism waned as black influence and presence within rock 'n' roll diminished in the late 1960s. Even the established music industry grudgingly accepted rock as profits continued to mount. *Life* magazine reported that rock alone produced $125 million in annual record sales.[26] By 1957 several companies, among them Ralston Purina and Coca Cola, recognizing the commercial impact, had incorporated rock music in their commercials.[27] Likewise, Elvis Presley in one year generated $2.75 million in record sales.[28] Hollywood also acknowledged rock's influence on entertainment when it made the film *The Girl Can't Help It*. The first rock 'n' roll movie in color, it starred Jayne Mansfield, had a big budget, and a director who did Jerry Lewis films.[29] Rock truly had transformed itself.

At the time, few realized the extensive influence rock had on American society and culture. Rock 'n' roll gave birth to a youth culture that in turn created a gap between young and old in America. Heretofore, adults usually assumed that the young would accept or adopt many of their traditional beliefs. But attitudes and values for the young underwent changes as a youth culture emerged at the end of the 1950s. Defiance of

authority grew as the young questioned long-held beliefs of American society on sex, marriage, the family, and racial relations. These stirrings in the late 1950s eventually exploded in revolt as American youth in the 1960s demanded change and rejected materialism. Although black presence ebbed in the late 1950s, rock 'n' roll introduced black culture to a wide white audience. Slowly over a period of time, rock lowered racial barriers common to an older generation. While racism remained, rock 'n' roll honed many of its rougher edges, thereby sensitizing a new generation to the racial inequities that permeated American society.

Likewise, rock altered the music industry. As interest grew, rock 'n' roll branched out into sub-forms of music, increasing its influence and eventually dominating the field. Rock 'n' roll passed into the mainstream, becoming the province of established corporate interests rather than that of the renegade visionaries of the past. Once lit, the fire could not be snuffed out. The birth and evolution of rock 'n' roll coincided with the explosive urbanization of America in the post-World War II era. The rapid development of electronic media, the demographic shift toward a younger population, and the emphasis on newly acquired leisure time, all contributed to the rise of rock 'n' roll. It is no wonder that this music moved the body and soul of a generation and all who came after!

End Notes

[1]This term *rhythm and blues* was first coined by Billboard in 1949. Incredibly, before that the music was simply called *race music*. See Steve Chappelle and Reebe Garafolo, *Rock 'n' Roll Is Here To Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977) 231.

[2] Nick Cohn, *Rock From The Beginning* (Stein and Stein, 1969) 12-13.

[3] *Variety*, 23 February 1955, 2; 2 March 1955, 49.

[4] *Variety*, 30 March 1955, 49.

[5] *Variety*, 16 March 1955, 45.

[6] *Variety*, 9 March 1955, 49, 60.

[7] *Variety*, 13 June 1956, 51.

[8] Ibid.

[9] *New York Times*, 4 November 1956, 20; 19 September 1956, 4.

[10] *Times* (London), 9 September 1956, 4.

[11] *Variety*, 15 August 1956, 1.

[12] *New York Times*, 15 April 1957, 6.

[13] *Variety*, 30 March 1955, 54.

[14] "Yeh, yeh, yeh, yeh baby, Rock and Roll," *Time*, 18 June 1956, 54.

[15] Charles White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard: The Quasar of Rock* (New York: Harmony Books, 1984)58-59.

[16] Ibid., 45.

[17] Ed Ward, Geoffrey Stokes, and Ken Tucker, *Rock of Ages: The Rolling Stone History of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Rolling Stone Press, 1986) 149.

[18] Chappelle and Garafolo, *Rock 'n' Roll Is Here*, 241-242.

[19] Gene Busnar, *It's Rock 'n' Roll: A Musical History of the Fabulous Fifties* (New York: Julian Messner, 1979) 27.

[20] White, *Little Richard*, 82-83.

[21] *New York Times*, 7 May 1958, 49.

[22] Howard A. DeWitt, *Chuck Berry, Rock 'n' Roll Music* (Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1985) 25.

[23] Busnar, *It's Rock 'n' Roll*, 27.

[24] Chappelle and Garafolo, *Rock 'n' Roll Is Here*, 62-63.

[25] Ibid.

[26] "Rock 'n' Roll Rolls On," *Life*, 22 December 1958, 37.

[27] *New York Times*, 23 February 1957, 12.

[28] Ibid.

[29] White, *Little Richard*, 81-82.

Works Cited

Busnar, Gene. *It's Rock 'n' Roll: A Musical History of the Fabulous Fifties*. New York: Julian Messner, 1979.

Chappelle, Steve and Garafolo, Reebe. *Rock 'n' Roll Is Here To Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry.* Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977.

Cohn, Nick. *Rock From The Beginning*. New York: Stein and Stein, 1969.

DeWitt, Howard A. *Chuck Berry, Rock 'n' Roll Music*. Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1985.

Life. "Rock 'n' Roll Rolls On." 22 December 1958.

New York Times. 4 November 1956; 19 September 1956; 23 February 1957; 15 April 1957; 7 May 1958.

Time. "Yeh, yeh, yeh, yeh baby, Rock and Roll." 18 June 1956.

Times. London. 9 September 1956.

Variety. 23 February 1955; 9 March 1955; 16 March 1955; 30 March 1955; 13 June 1956; 15 August 1956.

Ward, Ed and Stokes, Geoffrey and Tucker, Ken. *Rock of Ages: The Rolling Stone History of Rock 'n' Roll*. New York: Rolling Stone Press, 1986.

White, Charles. *The Life and Times of Little Richard: The Quasar of Rock*. New York: Harmony Books, 1984.

King MacLain's Transcendence: Walker Percy and *The Golden Apples*

Brannon Costello
University of Southern Mississippi

In their discussion of Eudora Welty's beautifully-crafted story cycle *The Golden Apples*, critics have given much attention to the mysterious character of King MacLain, an enigma wrapped in a riddle wrapped in a white linen suit. Though King appears in the flesh only a handful of times and speaks only a smattering of lines, his presence--specifically his sexual presence--hangs over the entire work. Critics have understood King in a variety of ways: King represents Pan, or Zeus, a godlike figure who descends to terra firma only to take his pleasure with a woman; or, King embodies patriarchal oppression, a long-standing masculine domination of women. However, though critics have ascribed to King a broad range of symbolic values, few have sought to understand King as a person, as an individual in search of a way to enter and survive in everyday society, to live his life in a place. To this end, the theories of novelist and philosopher Walker Percy may provide a theoretical starting point for just such an examination.

Percy theorizes that humans typically exist in one of two problematic states: immanence or transcendence. In his extended work of nonfiction *Lost in the Cosmos*, Percy defines immanence as the state of the "organism-in-an-environment" (110), the nearly unconscious realm of stimulus and response, labor and consumption. Immanent beings have no real awareness of themselves as entities separate and distinct from the rest of the world. They take on the role of the "compliant role-player or consumer" (113). Conversely, transcendent individuals achieve consciousness of themselves as existing in a "singular and godlike abstraction" (150) from the rest of the world. However, though transcenders may benefit from their elevated state and from a fellowship with a community of other transcenders, they eventually tire of this abstraction and seek reentry. As Percy puts it, the "launch of self into the orbit of transcendence is necessarily attended by problems of reentry" (142).

Percy offers several potential methods of reentry, among them genital sexuality. Indeed, Percy contends that "heterosexual intercourse is the very paradigm of the reentry of the ghost-self back into the incarnate world whence it came" (150). Although Percy develops this option only briefly in *Lost in the Cosmos*, he gives it a more thorough working-out through the character of Dr. Sutter Vaught in his novel *The Last Gentleman.* Welty's King MacLain may even have affected Percy's creation of Sutter: both wayfaring Southerners possess an unrestrained promiscuity and both have a peculiar predilection for woodland trysting spots. The most

significant delineation of Percy's theory comes in the form of Sutter's casebooks, in which Sutter explores the ability of sexuality to function as a link between immanence and transcendence. Although it may seem presumptuous to identify Sutter so closely with Percy himself, the fact that Percy couches Sutter's philosophical systematics in the same vocabulary as his own Lost in the Cosmos certainly implies a particularly direct connection. Sutter's casebook reveals that he has found himself elevated to a "point over and against world" (*The Last Gentleman* 271). In order to facilitate this process of reentering the realm of the "physical, therefore real" (*The Last Gentleman* 221), Sutter advocates what appears to him as the only mode of reentry left--sexual intercourse. Sutter writes that "fornication is the sole channel to the real" (293). For Sutter, "Genital Sexuality" (50) remains as the last viable method of reentry. He believes that "the relation of skin to skin and hand under dress" (220) must be the only way to escape the sphere of abstraction and alienation; women exist as "pure immanence to be entered" (271).

However, Sutter's casebook also describes the unfortunate fallibility of this method of reentry. Although the world abounds with women--potential portals to immanence--the act of reentry through sex merely aggravates an already maddening problem. In the terse, broken language of his casebook, Sutter writes that man reenters immanence "via orgasm, but post-orgasmic transcendence 7 devils worse than first . . . since reentry coterminus c orgasm, post-orgasmic despair without remedy" (271). Through experience, Sutter has learned that sexual intercourse acts as a futile and temporary bridge to immanence, rendering the transcendence that follows even harder to bear.

Percy's theories provide an interesting and valuable critical standpoint from which to examine the character of King MacLain. Percy has often connected his theories of transcendent/immanent sexuality with the literary life of Eudora Welty. He cites Welty as the only twentieth century writer to avoid this "transcendence of abstraction" and its attendant problems of reentry. Instead, she possesses the ability "to enter into an intercourse with the society around her as naturally as the Chartres sculptor, to appear as herself, her self, the same self, both to fellow writer and to fellow townsman" (*Lost in the Cosmos* 146-147). Further, Percy holds up Welty's example as hope for the genitally preoccupied American novelist:

> The time is coming when the American novelist will tire of his angelism--of which obsessive genital sexuality is the most urgent symptom, the reaching out for the flesh which has been shucked--will wonder how to get back into a body, live in a place, at a street address. Eudora Welty will be a valuable clue ("Eudora Welty in Jackson" 223).

Although Percy's theories are certainly as applicable to Welty's work as

those of any other philosopher or critic, his curious investment of salvific potential in her lifestyle makes an extension of his theories to her fiction seem all the more appropriate and natural.

Welty's mysterious King MacLain has become a legend in his own time, a semi-divine lothario who appears periodically in Morgana only to ravish some young girl with priapistic glee and vanish again. As one cuckolded husband says to his wife, "You done heard what he was, all your life, or you ain't a girl. . . . He's the one gets ever'thing he wants" ("Sir Rabbit" 105). However, according to Percy's theories, perhaps this pattern of action does not become a freewheeling rake but rather a transcendent man in a struggle to attain reentry to the immanent world. Indeed, the transcendent realm poses some problems for King. Though he wanders and rambles throughout the nation, presumably lassoing tornadoes and catching bullets in his teeth, King always returns to Morgana, perhaps seeking to enter the "pure immanence" of his wife and of other women. Yet he cannot bring himself to enter the world entirely; as Katie Rainey points out, he does not even go to his house to "lie down easy on a good goosefeather bed" with Snowdie, but instead gives her a summons to meet him in the woods before disappearing again ("Shower of Gold" 4).

In this sylvan setting, Welty reveals much about King's character as she describes his seduction of Mattie Will in "Sir Rabbit." Welty describes King as familiar with the town, but somehow also above it, on a symbolically transcendent hilltop from where he "could see all Morgana . . . and he probably could have picked out his own house" (103)--the same house (and symbol of the immanent world) that Old Plez saw him have such trouble entering. Plez reports that rather than face his wife and family, King chose instead to run "right up over the banister and ferns, and down the yard and over the fence and gone" ("Shower of Gold" 16). King apparently favors his woodland trysting spot as a place both of Morgana but apart from it; although Welty places it above the town, the residents--particularly the female ones-know it with uncanny familiarity, as Katie Rainey points out when she says, "We would any of us know the place he meant, without trying--I could have streaked like an arrow to the very oak tree" ("Shower of Gold" 5). In this purgatorial setting, King can make the transition from transcendence to immanence. When he decides to attempt reentry to the immanent world via Mattie, pressing "his whole blithe, smiling, superior existence" on her, Welty says that Mattie "was Mr. MacLain's doom, or Mr. MacLain's weakness, like the rest" (108). This assessment fits perfectly into Percy's theoretical framework. True, Mattie, Snowdie, and "all the rest" of the women that King has had sex with provide him with an entry to the immanent world; however, as Sutter's casebook reveals, the immanence lasts only as long as intercourse does, and then the transcendence that comes after orgasm feels "7 devils worse than first." King becomes an immanent

"organism-in-an-environment" only in the few consciousness-dissolving moments of sex. He can never happily reenter the immanent world because each time he reenters via a woman, he finds himself even more alienated and apart than before. He then vanishes, returns only when the transcendence and feeling of "abstraction" become too much for him, samples a few brief moments of flesh-to-flesh reality, then vanishes again, propelled by an ever-increasing feeling of transcendence.

However, King's cycle does not last forever. In "The Wanderers," set some years after the events of "Sir Rabbit," Welty reveals that Snowdie MacLain's "flyaway husband had come home a few years ago, at the age of sixty-odd, and stayed" (246). Although one might hope that King has finally found a satisfactory way to enter the sphere of immanence and become happy, Welty quickly dashes those hopes with her descriptions of King's behavior. When he arrives, he evinces obvious dissatisfaction with his surroundings: "he fumed, and went back to visit the kitchen" (253). He revealingly comments to kindred spirit Virgie Rainey that "I'd come and I'd go again, only I ended up at the wrong end, wouldn't you say?" (253). While the rest of the immanent people at Katie's funeral unconsciously and unthinkingly respond to the funeral environment-ritually expressing sympathy, singing timeworn hymns--King makes "a hideous face at Virgie, like a silent yell. It was a silent yell, a yell at everything" (257). This horrific visage stands as the emblem of King's utter frustration at the impossibility of becoming part of the immanent world again. Seeing the ultimate futility of his quest for immanence through sex, King has given himself up to semi-immanence as a henpecked husband, living in the realm of the immanent world but never fully part of it, eternally frustrated by his separation from the people amongst whom he lives. Although his sexual escapades only increased his feelings of despondence and alienated transcendence, he now lives trapped, practically controlled by Snowdie, who cautions the disgruntled King that he "should remember to keep off rich food" (259) and even questions his memory (246). King has realized that "we are doomed to the transcendence of abstraction" (The Last Gentleman 278), that "there is no reentry from the orbit of transcendence" (271).

In this final respect, the most extreme theories of Sutter's casebook fail to apply to King. Sutter asserts that above all, "I elect lewdness over paltriness" (230). Rather than live, as King does, as a lone transcendent individual trying futilely to meld with the stimulus-response world of immanence, Sutter turns his "back on the bastards and [goes] into the desert" (243). Instead of putting up an immanent facade while transcendent, Sutter rejects the world entirely, choosing to be alone with his lewdness and his constantly increasing feelings of alienation. By setting this other course for his latter-day King, Percy implies that King's decision represents only one option. However, Sutter's resignation into alienation hardly seems a better

choice (although Percy leaves his final fate somewhat up to the reader). King, however, cannot face this solitude; he lets his wife lead him "down a divergent path" ("The Wanderers" 259) as an individual among organisms, eternally alone and eternally frustrated, lost forever in a silent scream.

Works Cited

Percy, Walker. *The Last Gentleman*. New York: Ivy Books, 1966.

-----. *Lost in the Cosmos*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1983.

-----. "Eudora Welty in Jackson." *Signposts in a Strange Land*. Ed. Patrick Samway. NY: Farrar, 1991. 222-223.

Welty, Eudora. *The Golden Apples*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947.

Josephine Humphreys and the Problem of the New South

William G. Chernecky
Louisiana State University at Eunice

No close observer of the American scene would suggest that the same cultural entities that informed and influenced past generations of Southern writers still hold great currency with contemporary Southern writers. The conditions that gave rise to the Southern Renaissance of the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and even the 1950s do not seem to be with us anymore. With the generation of Faulkner, Wolfe, and Caldwell, it was generally accepted that the South was the defeated, failed, poor, and unprogressive part of the country. Ironically, this legacy of defeat and guilt served the Southern Renaissance writers quite well. This generation of Southern writers came to realize like the rest of the world, but not with the non-southern parts of the United States, that things do always work out. The Southern writer born near the turn of the century attained a knowledge of his inherited historical consciousness and a tragic sense that the non-Southern writer did not possess.

Southern writers in the 30s, 40s, and 50s attempted to corral and define the Southern Temper, the Southern Mind, to essentially capture the Southerner and the Southern ethos before it slipped away and was gone with the wind. Hence, the generation of Southern Renaissance writers paid great attention to the past, accepted the notion of man's finiteness, the penchant for failure – a tragic sense which seemed more inchoate with Southerners than other Americans. Their quite varied characters still grappled with the South's religious sense, "their closeness to nature, their attention to and affection for place, their close focus on family, and a preference for the concrete and a rage against abstraction" (Hobson 3).

The succeeding generation that included first Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, William Styron, and later Willie Morris (*North Toward Home*) and Larry King (*Confessions of a White Racist*) formed a watershed where positive thinking, not contrition, was dominant. With historical backdrops that included Little Rock, Birmingham, and Selma, the assumption of Southern writers after the 60s was that the South had endured its crisis and triumphed over itself. This generation after the Renaissance realized that Southern barbarism had been exposed and Southern traditions and mores had been challenged, but their homeland had in fact come through. The self-congratulatory believed the South had cast off the old lodestone of segregation, and with the arrival of the new Sun Belt and its new propriety, the South no longer seemed to be the defeated, failed, poor, guilt-ridden, tragic part of America.

Interestingly enough, the Baby Boomer generation of Southern

writers are confronted with an entirely different cultural composition. These writers who have made or are making their legacies in the 70s, 80s, and 90s examine a suddenly Superior South that is optimistic, forward-looking, and in some tangential ways more virtuous and now threatening to become more prosperous than the rest of the country. Like the contemporary American writer the contemporary Southern writer lives in the postmodern world where order, structure, and meaning--including narrative order, structure and meaning--are constantly called into question. Contemporary Southern writers like Barry Hannah, Richard Ford, Bobbie Anne Mason, Jayne Anne Phillips, James Alan McPherson, Josephine Humphreys, and Connie Mae Fowler generally accept rather than invent their literary worlds. They immerse their characters in a world of popular culture, and their characters' perceptions of place, family, community, and even myth are greatly conditioned by mass culture, television, movies, rock culture, and so forth.

Josephine Humphreys was born at the very end of World War II in Charleston, SC, and is the great-great granddaughter of the secretary of the treasury of the Confederacy. She studied at Duke with Reynolds Price, and like William Styron, Fred Chappell, Anne Tyler as well as Price, studied under William Blackburn. After graduate work in English at the University of Texas and Yale, she married, returned to her native Charleston, had two sons, taught briefly, and did not publish her first novel *Dreams of Sleep* until she was nearly forty. Like her first work, *Rich in Love* and *The Fireman's Fair* are set in Charleston or the South Carolina Low Country. But *Dreams of Sleep* remains her most critically acclaimed work. In fact, Fred Hobson in *The Southern Writer in the Postmodern World* claims that "perhaps no other recent novel by a younger writer holds in better balance the interests of the contemporary South and those of its predecessor, and none is more concerned with the relationship between the two" (59). The work meditates on time, the ethos of progress, change, futurity, the relationships between North and South, self and community, men and women, money and history. But, oddly enough, *Dreams of Sleep* is a novel of conscious social commentary usually associated with Southern male authors, from Mark Twain through Walker Percy, and even to Richard Ford.

The principal characters in *Dreams of Sleep* teeter on a great precipice of history with the old Jim Crow environment and George Wallace standing before the administration building at the University of Alabama. But they also recall the effervescence of Kennedy's New Frontier and the opening of polling places to the disenfranchised, and so Humphreys' characters tend to view Charleston through the bifocal lens of past and present.

But what most interests Humphreys is the here-and-now in light of the past. Her characters question the constituent cultural elements of the New South, this post-air conditioning, post-civil rights place where

mysterious, unknown, non-Southern money and interests fill-in centuries-old rice fields and construct shopping centers. Subdivisions ring Charleston where good Southern azaleas and oleanders are uprooted for easy-to-care-for junipers from the Midwest. The old cultural sureties of the Old South were dismantled by spiritless, tasteless entities that followed the Low Country's woodlands for straight boulevards populated by McDonalds' and Burger Kings.

The plotline revolves around Will and Alice Reese, who are thirty-something professionals in the mid-80s. Will is a gynecologist, who is also a misogynist, has forfeited his interests in writing poetry and reading literature for the safe-track route in medicine. He writes fatuous poetry only to his office manager, Claire, with whom he is conducting a rather lackluster affair. Even here, Humphreys wonders, "Why do philosophers in the South so often end as newspapermen, poets as doctors?" (12). Perhaps this New South no longer has the cultural stuff to ignite the poetic mind any longer. The romanticism of poetry has been forfeited for the yuppie lifestyle.

Alice is a Phi Beta Kappa mathematician and now a full-time mother who is rather detached and remote from her two young daughters. The point of view shifts alternately between Will and Alice, two solitaries "for whom love is not a natural state" (32). The novel begins and concludes in Alice's mind. She has, on the one hand, a passion for order, a bent for abstraction not customarily seen in Southern women in fiction, but she is, as well, a disordered and confused soul, aware of her husband's affair with Claire, but paralyzed by inaction, deeply disappointed about life, obsessed with nothingness and virtually incapable of hope until the end.

Alice is thin, frail, disoriented, and prone to long, melancholy strolls through some of Charleston's most precarious neighborhoods. She does not yearn, as one of her Southern predecessors in marital unhappiness had, for an awakening (Humphreys' title employs the same metaphor, although differently, and seems an ironic twist on Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*), but rather longs for the dreams of sleep, or escape, she once had in abundance.

Alice is very cognizant of her domestic and child-rearing shortcomings and hires Iris Moon, a sharp, seventeen-year-old white girl who lives with her alcoholic mother in an otherwise all-black housing project. Iris is streetsmart and can shift for herself and takes dutiful care of the Reeses' two small girls while Alice silently pines away, thinking about her husband's affair and luxuriating in her foggy dream world. Iris' hapless father, a product of the peckerwood South, who now has another family and children in rural Florida, pays regular visits to his former wife.

But Humphreys not only writes a novel of clever satire, but in *Dreams of Sleep* comes close to the Southern novel of ideas associated with Warren and Percy. Certain characters seem to be formulated at least in part to express ideas. For example, Alice's newspaper-editor father, with his

Princeton degree in philosophy and his skepticism, "claims that the world was not improving: what looks like progress is only change" (135). And this is perhaps the thematic crux of the novel. Humphreys is both repulsed and intrigued by the post-civil rights Sun Belt. She waves about and virtually flaunts this euphemistic, clinical term "Sun Belt" that smacks of referencing only a geographical territory, and hints at the innuendo and cultural baggage embodied in the old term "The South."

For Humphreys, the Southland is being rapidly separated from its cultural and historical moorings. At one point Alice muses about her mother-in-law Marcella, who is remarried to a land investor from Ohio. Marcella drives a Cadillac bearing the vanity plate of REALTY, and for this older couple the Southland is simply a venue for business opportunity. Alice claims that the New South around her is simply "Ohio warmed over" (47). She claims that "Ohioans love what they think is the South. Boiled shrimp, debutantes, the Civil War--they're gaga over every bit of it, fueling the tourist industry in Charleston and Savannah and New Orleans and every town that has a plaque or monument" (Humphreys 47).

Will Reese laments that real Southern history is in places like Fort Frederica, the first English settlement in Georgia or in the Bloody Marsh, but these landmarks are not visited and remain concealed forever by underbrush. His new stepfather meanwhile wants to tear down part of the Low Country shoreline to build a pirate theme park. After all, he claims it's not like Disneyland, pure fantasy; pirates once haunted the marshy estuaries and inlets. Will is disappointed that history in the New South must be tourist dressed in theme park plastic.

The concept of place has little import in the New South. The Reeses live just north of Charleston's great Battery district, that austere place where great antebellum homes still stare haughtily out at Ft. Sumter and the confluence of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers. But the Reese residence was once in a Jewish section of town. But the Jewish families have moved to more modern homes outside Charleston, and the Reese home is still a private dwelling amongst other great century-old homes that have been divided and hacked to create apartments. The district no longer retains its old name and has no identifying features any longer and is lost in the flux of urban activity.

Alice informs readers that Blacks once lived on the northern periphery of the city proper. Today, metropolitan Charleston has engulfed the Black area of modest homes and public housing – what she calls "this hidden world almost certainly doomed" (132). Many middle class Blacks have opted to move into subdivisions outside the city. As Alice reflects on Charleston's manifold changes, she extends her thoughts to the South in general where "the old colored towns are now gulped into the city and lost behind stores and hotels" (133).

Alice experiences an epiphany during one of her long walks. She claims that home should be "a certain place, a territory marked and held" (133). But as she glances at some poor whites in the streets, she realizes that unlike her family or the Reeses, poor whites are "unburdened by a sense of history of home" (133). Years ago their ancestors moved off hardscrabble tenant farms and earned their bread with their backs and wits in the city, trying to remain one step ahead of the bill collectors. For them, history is an unpleasant past that needs to be eradicated. Place was only where you hung your hat. The poor whites are not commemorated by plaques nor interred in the August Old Magnolia cemetery in the city. Theirs is not a legacy one could readily investigate in the library. And then she ponders out loud, "What has happened to poor whites in the South? Where do poor whites live now in the South?" (135). Certainly not among the bankers and lawyers in Mount Pleasant and other middle class enclaves that ring the city.

In a moment of sheer angst, Will pays an unanticipated visit to the Old Magnolia Cemetery where his father is buried and where his remarried mother will someday be laid to rest. Will arrives beside the cemetery's stone wall and thinks , "Beyond the junkyard the old cemetery was hidden, a secret garden the developers had not been able to touch. Graveyards may end as the last undeveloped land left to us" (168). But Will Reese will be cut off from even the legacy of his prestigious old family because the family plot only has room for his mother. So for him in this August place where Confederates were buried besides statesmen and poets, the graves seem sterner and lonelier because he would never be buried there. The here and now has vanquished his links with his own past.

On one of her walks through a Black neighborhood, Alice suddenly wonders whether the South is ultimately experiencing real progress or just change. She suddenly realizes that "you can see that at least the intent of the world was something different from what worked out" (201). Alice considers the concept of progress in light of the promise of the Sun Belt:

> What will happen to all these black people, now the civil rights movement is dead, and their heroes tucked away in public offices? Was the whole civil rights movement nothing but a minor disturbance in the succession of years? White people have started telling jokes again. Blacks and whites live further apart than ever, like the double curve of a hyperbolic function, two human worlds of identical misery and passion but occupying opposite quadrants, nonintersecting. In a way equal, but separate. (134)

At one piqued moment in the narrative Will discovers that while he has been conducting an affair with his office manager, Claire, so has his life-long friend Danny, also a gynecologist who has been thrown out of his home by his wife. Danny lives in a new apartment complex rather conveniently called the Old South. It is a modern, rambling, glass and brick

place that is the temporary home to itinerant students, drug addicts, and divorcées. As he waits in the bushes hoping to catch Danny and Claire together, his feet shuffle over the topsoil, and where the dirt is broken, he discovers two nails, half a hinge, and a piece of blue and white china. It is then he realizes that history holds no valence in this land that looks forward to the next glittering moment. The current South is hardly even Janus-faced, but poised just like the rest of America for the next exciting sound bite, the next new shining event and he concludes sadly, "Dead men's trash lies everywhere under this city" (190).

Alice's father, who has been editor of the evening paper for twenty-six years, did not believe in progress, and he claimed to be in a position to judge, doing daily business with world events on a scale that ran from fillers to headlines. Alice claims that all her schooling suggested the world was improving. "Trace the steady growth," the tests said, "in the rights of Americans from the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights through the subsequent Amendments and the Current Civil Rights Movement" (135). But her father said the world was not improving: "What looks like progress in only change, he said. Without telling him, I held onto my own girlish trust in a trend for the better" (135).

Dreams of Sleep offers no final mediation between the fading past and the encroaching present. But there is some modest sense of catharsis between Will and Alice Reese. Will leaves Claire behind to his own personal history and decides he is best off with Alice, his two daughters, those sundry shields from the world offered by domesticity. Will and Alice do finally fall back upon another and let the world continue on its own ineluctable way, and they will stoically try to live comfortably with each other. At the close of *Dreams of Sleep*, Will stoically contemplates his lost past and the world of diminishing expectations around him in a forlorn manner that is hauntingly like the final two lines of Frost's "The Oven Bird": "The question that he frames in all but words/ Is what to make of a diminished thing."

Works Cited

Hobson, Fred. *The Southern Writer in the Postmodern World.* Athens: U of Georgia P. 1991.

Humphreys, Josephine. *Dreams of Sleep.* New York: Penguin, 1984.

Sula: Existentialist Heroine

John T. West, III
Grambling State University

Sula was published in 1973, and it was Toni Morrison's second book. Nonetheless, critics immediately regarded it as a major work. From the time of its publication, the book has been dealt with from practically as many different perspectives as there have been critical appraisals. *Sula* has been read as, among other things, a lesbian novel (B. Smith), a black *bildungsroman* (Stein), a novel of heroic questing (Wessling), even as an anti-war novel (Reddy). Interestingly, the text will support all these readings, and more. No doubt, the book's structure has much to do with the multiplicity of interpretations it receives. The novel is nearly a third over before its focus turns to Sula, and another fifteen percent of the book takes place after Sula's death. This type structure is not totally unusual, particularly in recent years as post-structuralist criticism begets post-structuralist construction. Nevertheless, when a novel titled *Sula* has its alleged protagonist on stage no more than fifty percent of the time, the question inevitably arises regarding whether Sula, the character, is indeed the central focus of the book. Many critics have, as I already noted, made their case accordingly.

I don't question the validity of their interpretations, some of them at any rate. But I am interested in Sula, the character, in the sort of person she is, as presented by Toni Morrison over the course of 173 pages. Of course, I am hardly the first to render judgments regarding Sula's character. Joseph Wessling calls her a narcissist in an admittedly pejorative sense of the word. In one of the earliest reviews of the book, Barbara Smith measures her in terms of her wickedness. More than a few feminists label her a lesbian, though in order to make their case they are prone to define lesbianism so loosely as to include any girl-girl friendships. They also conveniently ignore significant parts of the primary text, such as the statement that “the Peace women simply loved maleness, for its own sake” (41). Valerie Smith, Alisha Coleman, and numerous others view Sula and her friend Nel as partial characterizations--two halves of a single character--each requiring the other in order to constitute a whole self.

Ms. Smith cites a Morrison interview, in which the author says "she lived out her days exploring her own thoughts and emotions, giving them full rein, feeling no obligation to please anybody unless their pleasure pleased her. . . . Like any artist with no art form, she became dangerous" (Stepto). And another of the feminist/psychoanalytic critics, Deborah McDowell, plays off the same Morrison interview and Smith's article, making the observation, "Without art forms, Sula is the artist become her

own work of art" (83). And in the course of proclaiming Sula a feminist heroine, Victoria Middleton says, "Sula lives an 'experimental' life and exemplifies [Simone] de Beauvoir's conception of existential heroism"(368).

Sure she does and sure she is her own work of art, because she is an existentialist.

Defining my terms: existence precedes essence; this is the first principle of the existentialist doctrine. Yet, there are shelves of books by professional philosophers attempting to explain what these three words mean, or what they meant to Sartre or Camus or Heidegger, or what they mean today in light of what some call the present context. One contemporary philosopher approaches the matter of defining an existentialist thusly:

> What, then, is the existentialist attitude? Ultimately it is undefinable . . . it is, rather, a philosophy of existence, which attempts to view man in his immediate, his original relationship to the universe, in all his concrete plenitude--and problematic ambiguity. Thus no two existentialists would have the same understanding of the human condition. (Spanos 2)

The same writer suggests possible stances for the individual to whom he would allow the possibility of being an existentialist. One stance is to "insist in maintaining his unique consciousness in the face of the overwhelming pressures to conform--that is, as being a man-in-the-world" (6-7). Thus the existentialist refuses to be a "man-in-the-world"; he insists he is a "man-for-the-world," a self-defining man. And this is Sula. She always defines herself, and usually she does so as a matter of conscious choice.

Christian existentialist J. Rodman Williams calls the true existentialist an "authentic man" and makes it clear that defining oneself, or taking action, is the first requirement of the existentialist.

> He is a man who in a given situation is not the theorizer, the dabbler, or the half-hearted, but is one who throws himself into it with all his energy. Being is doing, and therefore the man who is not willing "to get his hands dirty" in the affairs of life is not one who acts foolishly or irrationally, but who, wthin a given situation, exploits its possibilities to the fullest. In Sartre's mind, to become such an authentic man is the goal of human existence. (143)

It is also of the utmost importance for the authentic man, or existentialist, to be conscious of himself, his predicament, and of the implications of his actions. This self consciousness is so important that in *Being and Nothingness*, John Paul Sartre devotes the first section to explaining consciousness.

Having established a working definition of "existentialist," I turn to my close examination of Sula, the character, as presented by Toni Morrison

in *Sula.* In the novel, she first appears on page 50. She and her lifetime friend, Nel, are seen walking down the main street of Medallion, drawing appreciative glances from the menfolk: "twelve in 1922, wishbone thin and easy-assed, . . . a heavy brown with large quiet, eyes . . . gold-flecked eyes, which to the end, were as steady and clear as rain" (52-53). Later, Sula and Nel are in imminent danger of molestation at the hands of four white boys until Sula saves them. At age twelve, she will not be defined by others. She makes a conscious choice, thereby defining herself.

> Sula squatted down in the dirt road and put everything down on the ground: her lunchpail, her reader, her mittens, her slate. Holding the knife in her right hand, she pulled the slate toward her and pressed her left forefinger down hard on its edge. Her aim was determined but inaccurate. She slashed off only the tip of her finger. . . . Sula raised her eyes to them. Her voice was quiet . "If I can do that to myself, what do you suppose I'll do to you?" (54)

This is a key incident in the delineation of Sula's character. The boys are attempting to reduce Sula and Nel to object in several ways: as a female reduced to a sex object and as a member of a social group assigned to a subordinate status. Sula will not have this. Her graphic self-mutilation shows the *pour soi,* the self-defining individual, totally victorious over the *en soi,* the individual defined by others.

This is not the only scene involving Sula at age twelve, nor is it the most lengthy. Much more text is devoted to two other violent events. In one incident, Sula and Nel are accidentally responsible for the drowning of a young boy. In the other, Sula sees her mother burn to death. These two events, the drowning and the burning, have been interpreted variously by numerous critics. They are usually regarded as formative, traumatic events that shape Sula's character. No doubt, this is true to some extent. Events of this nature would have some effect on anyone. I maintain that these two events are not ultimate determiners of Sula's grown-up character, and one is well-advised to view her character with the childhood events firmly in the foreground, but not as necessary determiners of said character. For the best look at the adult Sula, it is most fruitful to look at the section of the book that deals with the adult Sula.

Sula leaves town when she is seventeen, shortly after the marriage of her friend Nel. She returns to her home town in 1937, ten years later. She isn't rich; she isn't repentant; she isn't vindictive; she just comes back home. She is, however, always somewhat defiant. As soon as she is in the same house with her grandmother, she makes her first clear-cut statement of her position.

> Grandmother: "You ain't been in this house ten seconds and already you starting something."
> Sula: "Takes two, Big Mamma."

Grandmother: "Well, don't let your mouth start nothing that your ass can't stand. When you going to get married? You need to have some babies. It'll settle you."

Sula: "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself." (92)

This is truly an existential statement. And the argument goes on. Sula reminds Eva that she burned her own son, and Eva strikes back. "You watched your own mamma. You crazy roach" (93).

Several exchanges later, Sula attacks Eva again, referring to the incident wherein Eva allowed herself to be run over by a train, losing a leg in the process in exchange for a lifetime pension.

"You sold your life for twenty-three dollars a month."

Eva: "You throwed your life away."

Sula: "It's mine to throw." (93)

Not once, but twice, Sula indicates that her primary concern is Sula. More important, when this scene is viewed as a demonstration of her existential attitude, she is conscious that she is making a choice. She knows she can shape her life. She always knew.

Following this encounter, Sula settles down in Medallion. She renews her friendship with Nel and, without malice aforethought, steals Nel's husband, at least temporarily. She also has Eva committed to a sanitorium. For these and other, mostly imagined, transgressions, Sula is roundly condemned by the townfolk. To them she becomes, literally, a devil-figure and, as such, therapeutically useful to them as a scapegoat. The social strata of Medallion and its complex dynamics have attracted the attention of numerous competent scholars, but what has been missed or misinterpreted is the description of the way Sula coped with her situation. Two of the traumatic events of her childhood are referred to: the time Sula heard her mother say that she loved Sula but didn't like her; and the other, occurring the same day, the accidental drowning of Chicken Little by Sula and Nel. Of the events, it is said in the text, "The first experience taught her there was no other that you could count on; the second that there was no self to count on" (118-19).

As I have shown earlier, there is no such thing as existential dogma. But when philosophers who have been regarded as existentialist have contemplated the human condition, an essential aspect of this condition--existential man's at least--has been that he experiences dread. One contemporary philosopher describes the universal situation, analogous to the one I just described in *Sula,* as follows:

> For Sartre it is the free resolve itself that is dreadful, since it carries with it the awareness that, unjustifiably and absurdly but inevitably, I must of my own single self create--or have created--the values that make my world a world. Hence the nothingness in the face of which

> dread rises is, though not death, just as genuinely a kind of annihilation or negation; it is the utter disparity between the bare facts that are there and something that is not, but which, without the comfort of divine sanction or material necessity, I in my agonized liberty must fashion of them. "Man is condemned to be free," that is, continually to make himself other than he is, and deep dread accompanies the awareness of that destiny. (Greene 53-54)

When her mother says that she doesn't like Sula, this teaches Sula that others cannot be depended upon. Later the same day, Sula accidentally drowns Chicken Little, and herself is also proved fallible. This unexpected occurrence, along with her own ambivalent feelings towards it, causes self-doubt, the inevitable by-product of the never-ending tug of war between the *pour soi* and the *en soi.* To Sartre, human existence, insofar as it is thoughtful, is a constant struggle between the side of oneself that strives for freedom and self-determination and the side that craves the security of a fixed role and identity.

The drama that is Sula's life has one more major scene. It occurs three years later. Sula is on her deathbed. She has been estranged from Nel, but when Nel hears of Sula's plight, she goes to see her. They talk frankly. In an exchange that, to me, reveals more of Sula's nature than any other in the book, Nel chides Sula and Sula explains herself:

> "You still going to know everything, ain't you?"
>
> "I don't know everything; I just do everything."
>
> "Well, you don't do what I do."
>
> "You think I don't know what your life is like just because I ain't living it? I know what every colored woman in this country is doing."
>
> "What's that?"
>
> "Dying. Just like me. But the difference is they dying like a stump. Me, I'm going down like one of those redwoods. I sure did live in this world."
>
> "Really? What you got to show for it?"
>
> "Show? To who? I got my mind. And what goes on in it. Which is to say, I got me."
>
> "Lonely, ain't it?"
>
> "Yes. But my lonely is *mine*. Now your lonely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Ain't that something? A secondhand lonely." (142-43)

What follows is anticlimactic, at least as far as the characterization of Sula is concerned. Somewhat overwhelmed by Sula, Nel exits and a few minutes later, Sula dies.

The novel goes on. Over twenty-five pages follow Sula's death. *Sula,* the book, though quite brief, is a multifaceted work and can be

interpreted in a great variety of ways. There is, in this novel, a well-drawn character named Sula. From girlhood Sula is aware that she can, if not shape her destiny, shape her character. From girlhood, she consciously chooses what she will be. When she apprehends the implication of her decisions, and that her self is fallible, that it cannot be relied upon to make wise choices, she experiences dread. Nonetheless, throughout her grown-up life she continues to make conscious choices, aware of herself and also all the time somewhat frightened of decisions that face an existentialist. She can be regarded as good, or she can be regarded as bad, but to do either is to misunderstand her. Qualitative judgments regarding her character are irrelevant. She is just Sula, an existentialist heroine if there ever was one.

Works Cited

Coleman, Alisha R. "One and One Make One: A Metacritical and Psychoanalytical Reading of Friendship in Toni Morrison's *Sula.*" *College Language Association Journal* 37 (1993): 145-55.

McDowell, Deborah. "'The Self and the Other': Reading Toni Morrison's *Sula* and the Black Female Text." *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison.* Ed. Nellie Y. McKay. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988. 77-90.

Middleton, Victoria. "*Sula:* An Experimental Life." *College Language Association Journal* 28 (1995): 367-81.

Morrison, Toni. *Sula.* New York: Plume Books, 1982.

Reddy, Maureen T. "The Tripled Plot and Center of *Sula.*" *Black American Literature Forum* 22 (1988): 29-45.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness.* Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square, 1975.

Smith, Barbara. "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism." *Falling into Theory: Conflicting Views on Reading Literature.* Ed. David Richter. Boston: Bedford, 1994. 186-93.

Smith, Valerie. "The Quest for and Discovery of Identity in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon.*" *Southern Review* 21 (1985): 721-32.

Spanos, William V. *Casebook on Existentialism.* Vol. 2. New York: Thomas Crowell, 1976.

Stein, Karen. "Toni Morrison's *Sula:* A Black Woman's Epic." *Black American Literature Forum* 18 (1984): 146-50.

Stepto, Robert B. "'Intimate Things in Place': A Conversation with Toni Morrison." *A Chant of Saints: A Gathering of Afro-American Literature, Art, and Scholarship.* Ed. Michael S. Harper and Robert B. Stepto. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1979, 229.

Wessling, Joseph H. "Narcissism in Toni Morrison's *Sula.*" *College Language Association Journal* 31 (1988): 181-98.

Williams, J. Rodman. *Contemporary Existentialism and Christian Faith.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965.

Sam Shepard's Anti-Dialectics in *True West*

Harksoon Yim
Dong-eui University

Most conflicts in Sam Shepard's plays are on the circle around which characters must revolve. Since the conflicting forces are moving in opposite directions, they keep meeting and departing. There is no lasting solution as we shall see in the example of the contending forces of *True West.* In most of his plays, Shepard locks his characters in that circle without allowing for any forward momentum at all. Because they offer no compromising point or synthesis of two opposing forces, Shepard's plays do not suggest a dialectical development as some critics claim they do (Hall 102; Riemer 44; Schvey 20).

The plot of Shepard's third play in his family trilogy, *True West*, revolves around the struggle between two brothers, Austin and Lee. While the sibling rivalry "evokes archetypes such as Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, or Jacob and Esau" (Smith 331), it also evokes other conflicts: on the metaphorical level, the two brothers' struggle suggests a conflict between Eastern civilization and Western savagery; and, on the psychological level, it also offers a conflict between two opposing natures in a single self.[1]

The sibling rivalry between Austin and Lee appears to be the most recognizable conflict in *True West*. Two brothers meet in their mother's house in a southern California suburb while their mother is having a vacation in Alaska. Austin, the younger brother, takes care of his mother's house and works on a screenwriting "project" for a Hollywood producer, Saul Kimmer. Lee, the older brother, who has lived in the Mojave desert, stops to visit while taking "a little tour" to scrounge up some money. Their confrontation shows that they have quite opposite personalities from each other. Austin, Abel-like, is amiable, cordial, and even effeminate, while Lee, Cain-like, is violent, rustic, and undisciplined.[2]

Presenting the two brothers trapped in the sibling rivalry, *True West* stresses the incompatibility of American Eastern civilization and Western savagery, with Austin representing the former and Lee the latter.[3] Shepard's view on the American frontier is directly opposed to that of Frederick Jackson Turner, who sees the frontier in terms of the process of American civilization, which produced a distinct American entity from the confrontation between East and West (34). Shepard's *True West* does not suggest Hegelian dialectical development toward a meaningful synthesis.

The opposition of East and West is suggested through the two brothers' appearances. Shepard notes, "The costume should be exactly representative of who the characters are" (3). Accordingly, Austin is in "light blue sport shirt, light tan cardigan sweater, clean blue jeans, white tennis

shoes," while Lee is described through the following images:

> filthy white t-shirt, tattered brown overcoat covered with dust, dark blue baggy suit pants from the Salvation Army, pink suede belt, pointed blank forties dress shoes scuffed up, holes in the soles, no socks, no hat, long pronounced sideburns, "Gene Vincent" hairdo, two days' growth of beard, bad teeth. (2)

Along with the visual suggestions about character types, the two brothers' behaviors and occupational identities reveal their opposing cultural roots: Austin, an Ivy League trained writer, represents the sophisticated Eastern culture; Lee, who has lived in a desert, represents the rustic Western culture. [4]

The dichotomy is also suggested by their conflicting views on each other's script idea, although each claims that his own story is based on real or true life. Regarding Lee's "story off the tongue," Austin bursts out, "There is no such thing as the West anymore! It's a dead issue! It's dried up" (35). Austin's own romantic story, which, by candlelight, he tries to fashion into a screenplay, is no more real either. It is a love story associated with the Eastern seaboard "forefathers" who established the Ivy League schools in another era and clung to their European heritage. In contrast, Western terrain is the setting of Lee's story. In it, a man chases another who has slept with his wife:

> So they take off after each other straight into an endless black prairie. The sun is just comin' down and they can feel the night on their backs. What they don't know is that each one of 'em is afraid, see. Each one separately thinks that he's the only one that's afraid. And they keep ridin' like that straight into the night. Not knowing. And the one who's chasin' doesn't know where the other one is taking him. And the one who's being chased doesn't know where he's going. (27)

When Saul, a film producer, chooses Lee's story over Austin's, it seems the conflict between the Eastern mind and the Western mind is over. But Lee's idea needs Austin's help to be transformed into a screenplay. Later Austin agrees to collaborate on the condition that Lee takes him to the desert.[5] Their collaboration, however, fails. When Mom returns from Alaska with her delusive fantasies, Lee begins to realize that he too lives in an illusory world. His growing awareness, conveyed by dramatic pauses, lies wedged between snatches of dialogue

> AUSTIN: We're gonna' be leavin' here, Mom!
> *(pause)*
> MOM: Oh.
> LEE: Yeah.
> *(pause)*
> MOM: You're both leaving?
> LEE: (*looks at* AUSTIN) Well we were thinkin' about that before

but now --

AUSTIN: No, we are! We're both leaving. We've got it all planned.

MOM: (*to* AUSTIN) Well you can't leave. You have a family.

AUSTIN: I'm leaving. I'm getting out of here.

LEE: (*to* MOM) I don't really think Austin's cut out for the desert do you? (55)

Lee returns to reality. He perceives that Austin cannot survive in the desert and that therefore his idea of the West is essentially incompatible with Austin's. It therefore follows that Lee cannot be a writer. The switched identities between two brothers do not bring forth a whole person. In the temporary role reversal, they take each other's cultural identity while discarding their original nature, signifying that, though the geographical meeting point of the East and West has gone, the conflict does not merge two opposing cultures to bring out a new one.

The role reversal in *True West* is a variation of Shepard's earlier transformation techniques. In his earlier plays, characters try to escape from confining situations by transforming themselves into something or someone else in their fantasy or hyperbole. Their transformations are presented as their subconscious eruption, an effort to escape. *True West*'s Lee and Austin also try to escape their situations which lock them in. But unlike some of Shepard's earlier characters, they make a conscious effort to free themselves.

Austin and Lee's role reversal is based on their misunderstanding or illusion:

LEE: . . . I always wondered what'd be like to be you.

AUSTIN: You did?

LEE: Yeah, sure. I used to picture you walkin' around some campus with yer arms fulla' books. Blondes chasn' after ya'.

AUSTIN: Blondes? That's funny.

LEE: What's funny about it?

AUSTIN: Because I always used to picture you somewhere.

LEE: Where'd you picture me?

AUSTIN: Oh, I don't know. Different places. Adventures. You were always on some adventure.

LEE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I used to say to myself, "Lee's got the right idea. He's out there in the world and here I am. What am I doing?" (26)

Neither Lee nor Austin is what each thinks the other is. Later, Lee declares that the desert life is not what he chose: "Hey, so you actually think I chose to live out in the middle a' nowhere? Do ya'? Ya' think it's some kinda' philosophical decision I took or somethin'? I'm livin' out there 'cause I can't make it here! And yer bitchin' to me about all yer success!" (49). Unlike the old West, the desert cannot provide enough means for Lee to survive. He has to make "a little tour" to the periphery of civilization to steal something.

But Austin's concept of desert life is based on the myth of the West.

Austin is not a successful artist as Lee thinks. He writes scripts according to formula for a movie producer, Saul. He admits that he works on a "project." All he can do is comply with the public demand. Feeling that he is a slave, he discards his Ivy League values and asks Lee to take him to the desert. He steals toasters in order to break from his life of conformity and to prove that he can survive on his own in the desert, which he thinks can give him the primal strength to achieve true freedom.

Lee also wants to escape from his condition by becoming a screenplay writer. Although he previously despised "the Hollywood blood money," he thinks the legal way to support himself as a writer gives him freedom from being a desert rat and petty thief. Lee fails as a writer; screenwriting is not what he thought it to be. Austin and Lee's reciprocal transformation fails, creating not satisfaction but only more frustration.

Lee and Austin have illusions about each other's way of life. Austin, a failed artist, cannot lead Lee to the way of the true artist. Lee, a failed Westerner, cannot show Austin how to live in the desert. The role reversal suggests the stalemate of two brothers' lives.

Another conflict we can observe in *True West* is a psychological one. Considering Lee and Austin's longing for each other's way of living and the presentation of two opposing traits in each brother, we can consider Lee and Austin as one person with a divided psyche, an archetypal figure of Janus. Shepard notes,

> I wanted to write a play about double nature, one that wouldn't be symbolic or metaphorical or any of that stuff. . . . I think we're split in a much more devastating way than psychology can ever reveal . . . . It's something we've got to live with. (Orbison 517)

Besides this note from the author, the text suggests this point when Austin and Lee confess that each has "wondered what'd be like to be" the other. Austin, with his script idea rejected and with an offer to help Lee in screenwriting, scornfully laughs at Lee who tries to concentrate on writing: "[Saul] thinks we're the same person . . . . Thinks we're one and the same" (*True West* 37). This theme of a double nature or divided self suggested through the two brothers strongly supports the point that the conflict of these oppositions cannot be resolved through dialectics because opposing natures are considered in one inseparable entity.

Human beings are born with opposing natures. These two opposite natures exist in a circle, revolving without being mixed up. Sometimes one side looks stronger than the other, as Austin knocks down Lee with the telephone cord. But the conflict between the two opposite natures is perpetual, as suggested in the last scene of the play:

> AUSTIN *considers, looks toward exit, back to* LEE, *then*

makes a small movement as if to leave. Instantly LEE *is on his feet and moves toward exit, blocking* AUSTIN'S *escape. They square off to each other, keeping a distance between them. Pause, a single coyote heard in distance, lights fade softly into moonlight, the figures of the brothers now appear to be caught in a vast desertlike landscape, they are very still but watchful for the next move, lights go slowly to black as the after-image of the brothers pulses in the dark, coyote fades.* (*True West* 59)

Most of the time one of two psychic forces in an individual is subdued, but these forces sometimes meet in their revolving movement and fight each other until one of them is subdued. There is, however, no evolution, no synthesis arising to displace conflicting values, nothing created to generate a new dichotomy that will lead to a new cultural maturation.

On the psychological level, *True West* dramatizes the never-ending battle of two conflicting natures in a single person. Austin and Lee are locked in a perpetual conflict, without showing any solution or synthesis. They mimic the action of the two antagonists of Lee's story, in which mortal enemies are trapped in an endless chase scene. Although Vanden-Heuvel contends that "there is a sense that the very act of their transformation holds out the hope for the necessary momentum, if not the direction, in their quest for another kind of life" (222), the two brothers' escape efforts through role reversal end as a mere attempt; the play suggests that their escape attempt is an impossible one in the first place and that there is no middle ground for the conflicting natures to be merged. Without merging of the two, no momentum exists for forward movement. As the last scene repels any hope of escape, it does not show any sign of "a lurching toward a new kind of order and energy" (Vanden-Heuvel 222). Shepard's true West, suggested in *True West,* is neither Mom's devastated kitchen nor the desert nor the prairie; it is a mythic map of the perpetual confrontation of two opposing persons, fundamental forces, or incompatible ideas. Showing that there is no solution or escape, *True West* then negates the long-held dialectical views on the phenomenal world.

True West probes the psychological conflicts between brothers who are on fate's circle, which does not provide any momentum for forward movement; therefore, *True West*, along with most of Shepard's plays, does not suggest any Hegelian solution to the conflicts in which his characters are locked, the conflicts that exist between any contending forces generally. Shepard's characters, and by extension, his audience, are all sucked into this cyclical and perpetual motion machine, and in it they can find no possibility of escape to another kind of world.

Notes

[1]Lee and Austin's arguments about the absent father and their character traits establish the conflict between the patriarchal order and the matriarchal order in Lee and Austin respectively. Richard Wattenberg explains that "the children of an apparently broken marriage . . . inherit certain traits, attitudes, and problems from their parents [who] . . . can be seen . . . as representing the failure of the marriage of civilization and savagery" (233).

[2]Critics seem to agree that the archetypal sibling rivalry between Cain and Abel is reflected in the relationship between Lee and Austin, Lee as a Cain and Austin as an Abel. But Jeffrey Hoeper contends that Lee is an Abel figure and Austin is a Cain figure because Lee is associated with the sacrifice of animals as Abel is in Genesis while Austin is associated with vegetation as Cain is.

[3]Some critics see Lee as a representative of the old West (Kleb 123; Orbison 509). Lynda Hart's view also shows the typical conclusion on the relationship between Austin and Lee. Hart thinks that the sibling rivalry suggests "the conflict between the claims of the past and the realities of the present" (89). But the "dramatic clash of cultural abstractions" in *True West* is quite different from that of *The Unseen Hand*, in which three cowboy brothers from the last century are opposed to the Kid, a representative of the perverted all-American civilization.

[4]Tucker Orbison, suggesting the Western cowboy myth on one of the mythic levels in *True West*, explains that Shepard presents Lee as a cowboy in an ideal West, the desert, contrasted to a real West exemplified with Los Angeles suburbs full of junk. Orbison argues, "The desert, for Shepard, is a condition of the soul, a life-giving place. . . . A man like Lee can live there untrammeled by the perverted values of Los Angeles. The desert is Lee's mental home" (509). *True West*, however, does not present the desert as a new West which provides "a life-giving" force; it is futile like Weston's desert land from which Weston can bring only some artichokes in *Curse of the Starving Class*. Lee can hardly survive on it. Moreover, the play's point is not the loss of the true West or its cowboy. Unlike Orbison's contention, it captures an "elemental conflict" between different forces.

[5]Luther Luedtke seems to argue that Austin and Lee agree upon the one goal of their collaboration. They plan "to use the proceeds from their screenplay to make arrangements for their old man, who has holed up somewhere in the Southwestern desert. There is a prophecy that if alter egos could agree on their script, could unite the demonic outcast and the disciplined artist within themselves, the father too would be saved" (155). But at one point of the play, Austin expresses the impossibility of getting their father out of the desert and rejects the idea. The intention of each brother in their agreement of collaboration is directed to the opposite way from the other's, not to the same direction.

Works Cited

Hall, Ann C. "'Fire in the Snow': Shepard's Female Saviors." *"A Kind of Alaska": Women in the Plays of O'Neill, Pinter, and Shepard.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1993. 91-115.

Hart, Lynda. *Sam Shepard's Metaphorical Stages.* New York: Greenwood, 1987.

Hoeper, Jeffrey D. "Cain, Canaanites, and Philistines in Sam Shepard's *True West.*" *Modern Drama* 36 (1993): 76-82.

Kleb, William. "Worse Than Being Homeless: *True West* and the Divided Self." *American Dreams: The Imagination of Sam Shepard.* Ed. Bonnie Marranca. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1981. 117-25.

Luedtke, Luther S. "'From Fission to Fusion': Sam Shepard's Nuclear Families." *New Essays on American Drama.* Costerus 76. Eds. Gilbert Debusscher and Henry I. Schvey. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989. 143-66.

Orbison, Tucker. "Mythic Levels in Shepard's *True West.*" *Modern Drama* 27 (1984): 506-19.

Riemer, James D. "Integrating the Psyche of the American Male: Conflicting Ideals of Manhood in Sam Shepard's *True West.*" *University of Dayton Review* 18.2 (1986-87): 41-47.

Schvey, Henry I. "A Worm in the Wood: The Father-Son Relationship in the Plays of Shepard." *Modern Drama* 36 (1993): 12-26.

Shepard, Sam. *True West. Seven Plays.* New York: Bantam, 1981. 1-59.

Smith, Molly. "Beckettian Symbolic Structure in Sam Shepard's *True West*: A Jungian Reading." *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 10 (1989): 328-34.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History.* New York: Henry Holt, 1920.

Vanden-Heuval, Michael. "The Landlocked Geography of a Horse Dreamer: Performance and Consciousness in the Plays of Sam Shepard." *Performing Drama/Dramatizing Performance: Alternative Theatre and the Dramatic Text.* Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1991. 193-229.

Wattenberg, Richard. "'The Frontier Myth' on Stage: From the Nineteenth Century to Sam Shepard's *True West.*" *Western American Literature* 24 (1989): 225-41.

The Rhetoric of Agronomic Communication: An Effective Technical-Writing Style

Bin Xie
Louisiana State University

The U.S. agricultural industry has taken the lead in agricultural advances. By the same token, the rhetoric of the agronomic fields has developed its unique qualities together with the advance of agricultural science and technology. The present article provides some interpretations of agronomic texts in their particular social context that will help us to understand how texts produce agronomic knowledge and reproduce the cultural values of that profession. This close examination is meant to elucidate rhetorical aspects such as ethics, journalese[1] and effectiveness in the form and content of agronomic technical writing.

Ethical Issues in Agronomic Writing

Traditionally, the questions of practicality and ethics in professional communication are often viewed as questions of ethos--of conflicting professional qualities.[2] However, recent studies indicate a new interpretation of ethics within the sciences, industry, and businesses. Evidence for the importance of the ethical element in technical communication comes from both the historical record and the present investigations.[3]

Though the recurring criticisms of professional humanists in academia, as Russell states, are that they often "ignore the practical to the detriment of the public good," more and more individuals and professional communities realize the importance of connecting their own interests to the public interests and establishing a "Common Community" of economic and ethical origins.

In the above social context, the agronomy institutes and agricultural businesses have distinguished themselves by their focus, traceable in their rhetoric products, on serving the public good and farmers.

Take, for instance, the column "Perspective" from *Louisiana Agriculture* published by the Agricultural Experiment Station, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center. The authors of "Perspective" never fail to express their ethical intention:

> The settled purpose of *Louisiana Agriculture* magazine is to provide to the people of Louisiana a general overview of Experiment Station research projects and to report the results of significant experiments to the people of Louisiana and to agricultural producers and scientists. Our intention is to publish a periodical that reflects the high level of professional competence of our scientists and

importance of our scientific studies to the welfare of our people. . . .[4]

The objective of the publication to the welfare of Louisiana people in general is highlighted in this discourse. Furthermore, the ethical claim of the rhetoric is made clear at two levels: first, plant producers and scientists are consumers of agronomic science and technology; second, the scientific advance produces profits for the people and the state. Another quotation exemplifies the multiple levels of the ethical claim:

> In this issue we focus our research efforts on rice bran utilization. Last year the gross farm income from Louisiana produced rice was $196 million with an additional $59 million in value-added. By developing new uses with new markets for rice products, the rice farmer as well as the state stand to benefit. For the last few years, with supplemental support through the Louisiana Board of Regents, "Louisiana Education Quality Support Fund," the so-called "8g" program, a multi-disciplinary team of Experiment Station food scientists, nutritionists and engineers has investigated problems inherent in processing rice bran for human consumption. Results to date are promising and are summarized in this issue. . . .[5]

Here, the statistical figure is provided to emphasize the financial benefit from the rice bran research. The topic of human consumption is also closely related to the nutrients in the new product. From the above texts, the voices from VIPs (the directors of the Experiment Station) are heard, persuading the audience that significant research is done and that it is for the public, or at least, Louisiana's good.

Ethical value is also realized in correcting the misconception concerning environmentally hazardous agricultural practices. It is not unusual that agronomic scientists use the journal to fight complaints against new or old technology. For instance, in response to farmers being accused of contaminating surface and ground water with phosphates from fertilizers and animal manures or from soil erosion, a scientist noted that the University of Kentucky concluded that (i) the phosphate from non-point agricultural sources of phosphate deserves a low priority for national concern; and (ii) the USDA's Soil Conservation Service should obtain "ground truth" of the validity of its newly developed "phosphorus index."[6] Similarly, the technical writing also points to the popular misconception that delays or stops new technology. With regard to the conventional opinion that activities to produce high yields are detrimental to the soil resource and to the environment in general, agronomy researchers try to use their study of the effect of balancing nutrients on corn yields and nutrient efficiency to prove that high-yielding crops produce healthy, vigorous root systems that

more thoroughly explore the soil profile and reduce the amount of nitrates left in the soil at the end of the cropping season. It is, therefore, self-evident that the traditional misconception is not only weak ethically but also detrimental to the economic well-being of the public.

Agribusiness companies capture the attention of their farm consumers in advertising and popularizing their commodities. A small pamphlet from LB Warnamaker Seed Co., South Carolina about a feed grain named NUDA ONE OATS for Southeastern farmers divides into four parts: 1. Introduction; 2. Advantages of NUDA ONE OATS; 3. Graphics about nutrient composition and yield results; 4. Key facts about production. The writer's ethical claim, established in the introduction, is basically concerned with the sincerity in choosing the specific information to convey.

> Without a doubt 1993 will be remembered as one of the worst years in history of Southeastern agriculture. While all farmers have been affected by the heat and drought, corn farmers and others who rely on producing a good feed grain crop have been severely hurt. Losses include not only the cost of preparing and seeding the land, but also the cost of fertilizer added to the soil but unused by the crop. The most significant loss may yet be felt as growers are left without grain to feed or sell!

The serious situation facing the crop growers leads to the thinking before decision-making: Are there any remedies for us to take? Naturally, the farmers are supposed to be alarmed enough to act spontaneously to lessen the impact of their losses by planting NUDA ONE OATS. While giving the new information about this kind of seed grain, the old information about the seeds Coker 227, 820 and 716 Oats bred by the same oat breeder is mentioned so as to establish the dependability for the newly-introduced seeds. Immediately following are the nine advantages of NUDA ONE hulless oats:

> 1. Inexpensive to grow; 2. A trouble free crop; 3. Earliness; 4. Wide adaptation; 5. Heavy test weight; 6. Dollars for straw; 7. There is a market; 8. No effect on farm programs; 9. Yield.

Rhetorically, the use of active voice and the sentences with the second person as the subject (5 times) or as the object (2 times) also help to emphasize the good intention of the communicator for the consumers, and, in the meantime, narrow the distance between the writer and reader. In addition, the nutrient composition table and yield results table not only provide the dependable indexes of NUDA ONE OATS, but also prove that it is the best choice to make.

Carefully designed is the rhetorical strategy about market competition before the end of the writing. "They [Canadian and Scandinavian oats] have stolen our market. Let's get it back!" The warning and slogan are intended to stir up the personal indignation and the patriotic

passion which may possibly result in the agreement between the information sender and receiver and help to attain the goal of the present technical writing.[7]

In sum, agriculture, as a traditional industry, contains a lot of humanistic and cultural characteristics. Naturally, the agronomic technical writing cannot but resort to the emotional and ethical elements in order to shape its scientific knowledge and cope with the cultural and psychological appeal of the consumers of its information.

Technical Journalism in Popularizing Agronomy Science

Technical journalism in agronomic writing refers to a plain narrative style that conveys both information about the techniques of daily agricultural activities and clarification of the role of nature in applying and inhibiting these techniques.[8] Agronomy, as *New Illustrated Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (1992) defines it, is the application of scientific principles to the cultivation of land; scientific husbandry, especially in production of field crops. Therefore, it is an applied science by nature. The seven major journals[9] offer not only the latest information concerning today's agronomic or agricultural research but also the practicing aspects of applying today's research. That is also the case with about one hundred ten books, monographs, and special publication series between 1994 and 1995. In regard to the technical writing in agronomic communication, its journalistic style of popularizing the scientific knowledge and methodology as well as the new information become self-evident. This kind of technical journalism is expressed in its educational orientation, cultural implication and stylistic preference of everyday speech.

The popular science of agronomy first functions as an educational means to extend the new knowledge to the researchers at the local station, the professionals in the county agents' office, and the farmers in particular. Every state agricultural experiment station publishes its magazine, newspaper, and manual books such as *Louisiana Agriculture*, *California Agriculture* (magazines), *Louisiana Farmers*, and *Delta Farm Press* (newspapers). Additionally, there are a large number of periodicals or pamphlets from universities, private institutes and industrial companies, such as *Ag Retailer*, *Tennessee Farm and Home Science*, *Better Crops*, etc. As the publishers of *Delta Farm Press*, *Southeast Farm Press*, and *California-Arizona Farm Press* express in regard to their Cotton Technology Advancement Program, "The objective is to promote technology that has been developed by researchers, Extension, consultants, industry, and growers to help American cotton farmers produce more profitable, higher quality crops--while demonstrating a concern for the environment."[10] Agricultural work and farming are busy professions that leave people without much time outside of their daily work. Their average education level is comparatively lower than that of many other professions.

Thus their exposure to the technical writing of agronomy, to a certain extent, helps to shape their knowledge and becomes an important part of their re-education.

The popular style in the agronomic field also displays strong cultural implications, national, regional or professional.

> WE FEED THE LAND THAT FEEDS THE WORLD
>
> Agriculture is American's largest industry and an extraordinary food and fiber production story. Our farmers and the vast agribusiness sector are successfully supporting the changing world with its food supply needs. IMC Fertilizer, Inc. supports efforts aimed at improving farmer efficiency, profitability and stewardship of the land. We are dedicated to helping farmers and agribusiness with agronomic and technological advances which continue to make American agriculture the role model for nations worldwide. Our rewards are in producing the highest quality and safest food supply anywhere in the world.[11]

The message carries not only national pride and patriotic spirit, but also corporate culture. The simple language makes a close link among fertilizer, land and food, and conveys the power of logical thinking. In another piece of writing from *Agronomy News*,[12] the simple design of the rhetoric in the shape of a hygrometer produces a sense of professional identification. Similarly, in the form of the information service,[13] the recommendation of a publication about the use of soil nitrate tests for crop production in the American South is presented together with the corn image, which distinguishes the aspect of the soil science as a rural culture.

Agronomic writing also reflects how the style of technical journalism mirrors everyday speech. As M.A.K. Halliday speculates, with the emergence of cultures based on agriculture rather than hunting and gathering, there developed a need for permanent records which could be referred to over and over. This was the initial stimulus for the emergence of a new form of language--writing. Halliday's assumption[14] attaches some importance to the function of agricultural activity in the development of written language. Agronomic writing, unlike many other types of technical language, keeps a close relation with the spoken language. Firstly, it is applied primarily for action and activity. Among the numerous magazines, newspapers, handbooks, and bulletins published in agronomy, many of them work as directions for certain agronomic practice. This type of language is characterized by its tendency to use words of action, verbs or verbal phrases. It prefers simple sentence structure, too. For instance, the basic linguistic structure of articles and handbooks about crop production, soil and plant analyses, exemplifies a clean style to obtain its communicative goals. Besides, agronomic technical writing is primarily for information. Its audience, especially the farmers, have no time to read long texts. What they

most desire is the short information in a familiar style and new concepts or counterintuitive ideas presented with proper explanations.[15]

Effectiveness of Agronomic Writing and Visual Presentation

A consideration of agronomic writing as a form of objective communication also has to touch upon the topic: what constitutes an "effective" writing style of agronomy? Let us first consider Jack Selzer's summary of the stylistic development of the technical writing: "Advice about style in technical writing derives from two sources. One--the long tradition of the plain style had influenced the style of technical writing since Bacon and the scientific revolution. The second--readability formulas--has influenced technical writing much more recently."[16] I would like to interpret the "readability formulas," or, to put it more simply, the "effectiveness" of the agronomic writing from the aspects of comprehensibility, applicability and testability. Then, how does this type of writing obtain its comprehensibility? As we know, agronomy science, in general, covers crop and soil research, and its technical communication largely deals with "What to" and "How to" processes. In order to be easily understood, this instructional language often functions with various means of visual presentation. For instance, in a directory book about how to identify the symptoms of potassium deficiency in soybeans, corn and alfalfa,[17] the comprehensibility of the instruction is partly achieved through the presentation of color photos together with some brief explanation. The photos help a reader perceive the appearance, size, color and stage of the deficiency symptom. Therefore, the confusion that comes from purely descriptive language is much cleared, and the plant growers and specialists are on safe ground to take appropriate measures for their plant.

The agronomic writing also relies on the applicability of its technical knowledge to achieve its effectiveness. For example, the LECO Company presents a figure for operation of a Nitrogen Analyzer, a sophisticated machine for the analysis of nitrogen and protein contents in plant tissue samples. This kind of figure plays an essential role in the regular maintenance of the machine. The figure usually hangs in the front of the machine, so that the operator may fix or unfix the parts of the machine while following the directions in the manual. Moreover, with the help of the visual aid, the operator can also follow the instructions from the engineers of LECO over the phone when he is unable to solve the problem. Presumably, the applicability of agronomic writing can be better proved by the sample manual *Fertilizer Management of Today's Tillage Systems* .[18] The presentation of this system engineering project combines the crop environment, fertilizer management, soil tillage, water reservation and pest control. It is illustrated with 25 photos and sketches of water, soil ecology, various types of mechanics and different patterns of tillage, databases and management decision hardware, and also with 21 tables, graphics, charts and

figures. It also answers why and how this management system should be carried out. In fact, this piece of technical writing may be set as an example to show how an applicable comprehensive description meets the needs of the present-day agricultural science, technology and management.

Finally, mapping with verbal explanation also contributes to the communication style of agronomy in terms of testability and checkability. The crop, soil and agricultural environmental science has much to do with sample gathering on a large scale. The representativeness, accuracy and regularity of gathering samples largely depend on the maps of distribution of soil types and crops. These kinds of maps produced by the USDA make the procedures of sample gathering checkable and testable. With these maps one can learn what soils are in the survey area, where they are, and how they can be used. The soil maps were prepared from aerial photographs. The areas shown on a soil map enable farmers and agronomists to locate their area of interest. This mapping realization in technical communication has at least three advantages: first, the scientists, researchers and farmers can easily decide the location of each plot of the field; second, the comparative studies of the soil samples and crop samples in the same field can be carried out; third, the evenly-distributed rectangles in the map make it possible to set the database for the regular and long-term plan of testing and research, which lays the foundation for the more sophisticated agricultural engineering in the future.

The above descriptions suggest how effectively the combination of the agronomic instructional language with the visual presentation functions within the range of a technical writing style, for it not only copes with the cognitive structure of the majority of its audience, but also reflects the nature of agronomy as an applied science. In the meantime, the linguistic and non-linguistic presentations have enriched the language of agronomy, and also brought vitality to a communicative form that narrates diachronically the long history of agricultural activity and serves synchronically the wide range of social community.

[I would like to thank Profs. Malcolm Richardson, Paul Bell and Freddie Martin for helpful criticism on an early draft of this paper.]

Notes

1. I tend to use the term "journalese" to describe the journalistic tendency of a writing style in popularizing agronomy science and technology.
2. See Donald N. McCloskey's "Why Academics Criticize Each Other" in *Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry* Seminar, 12 Dec. 1991.
3. See David K. Russell's "The Ethics of Teaching Ethics in Professional Communication: The Case of Engineering Publicity at MIT in the 1920's" in *Journal of Business and Technical Writing*, v7, n1, 1993.

4. By K.W.Tipson. *Louisiana Agriculture*. Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, v36, n2, 1993.

5. By Keneth L. Koonce. *Louisiana Agriculture*. Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, v36, n3, 1993.

6. See *Better Crops with Plant Food*. Potash & Phosphate Institute (PPI), v75, n1, 1993.

7. Certainly there are some other important issues affecting the ethics of agronomic publication. For instance, the private companies funding of government research may affect the presentation of results and in what gets researched. It is also observed that the farm press is sometimes too much dependent on their advertisers for their livelihood.

8. See Barry Pegg's conclusion about popular scientific narratives in *The Literature of Science. Perspectives on Popular Scientific Writing*, ed. Murdo William McRae. 1993.

9. The six major journals are *Soil Science Society of America Journal*, *Crop Science*, *Agronomy Journal*, *Environmental Quality*, *Journal of Natural Researches and Life Sciences Education*, and *Journal of Production Agriculture*.

10. *Delta Farm Press*. Argus Agronomics, Friday, Aug. 26,1994.

11. *Ag Retailer*. Doane Agricultural Services Company, Editorial and Advertising Offices. St. Louis, Missouri, Sept. 1994.

12. *Agronomy News*. American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America, May 1993.

13. *Agronomy News*. Jan. 1994.

14. M.A.K. Halliday. *Spoken and Written Language* . Victoria: Deakin University Press, 1984.

15. For instance, the article "How is nitrogen 'lost' from the soil?" in *Tennessee Farm and Home Science*, v171, 1994, answers appropriately the question of the non-science readers. Another example is the article "Why you should harvest 20 plants per field before you pick?" in *Mid-South Farmer*, v1, n9, 1994, which extends the scientific knowledge to the cotton-growers in accordance with their linguistic register.

16. See Jack Selzer's "What Constitutes a 'Readable' Technical Style?" in *New Essays*, ed. Paul V. Anderson, 1984.

17. See Appendix III, From *Better Crops with Plant Food*. Potash & Phosphate Institute (PPI), Winter 1990-91.

18. Published by Potash & Phosphate Institute, and Foundation For Agronomic Research, 1993.

POETRY

Joe Amoako
Delaware State University

Examination

written at Commonwealth Hall, University of Ghana
to wish examinees success

Examination
Examination
    the guillotine of students
Examination
    the sorting-house of students

Hei........i........i
There he comes fearsome as an army
    in battle array
Hu........sh
There he comes like a dragon
    with flames of fire issuing out of its mouth
My Lo........rd
He's chasing me like a hungry tiger
    whose cubs have been snatched from it

He threatens me
    to tremble in my shell
He shakes me
    to shiver like a coward
Am I a coward
    to behave cowardly
Oh no
I am valiant
Hence I'll say
The die is cast
The matter is decided
Examination
    the enemy must be faced squarely

What an aluta
What a battlefield
What a waterloo

Ooou
There he lies prostrate
like Goliath conquered by David
Examination
the toothless bull-dog
There it retreats with its tail
thatched in between its legs
like a coward dog

Allow me
Allow me
to do the Marathon race
Allow me
to deliver the good message
to my well-wishers
Rejoice
I have won
Rejoice with me
For examination that enemy
Is conquered for ever
Make merry with me
For examination that bully
Is buried for ever

What song shall I sing
I say
What song shall I sing
I'll sing
My song of victory
I'll sing
My song of success

Oh Almighty Dependable God
It's all gratitude to you
It's all gratefulness to you
It's success
It's victory all the way
It's victory
It's success

Nostalgia

written at University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania
on a postcard to My Wife at Koforidua (K'Dua) in Ghana

Sweet Darling
Sounding in my ears
Is your sweet voice
Vibrating in my heart
Is your sentimental love

Darling Sweet
Dreaming in my dreams
Are dreams of your love
Thinking in my thoughts
Are thoughts of your love

From the white-crowned Kilimanjaro
I see a luring lily smiling along the Volta
I smell a blossom rose blooming across   from K'Dua
You are my lily
You are my rose

Voice me your voices of love
Sing me your songs of love
To dream me your dreams of love
And kiss me your kisses of love
To make me immortal with your kisses

Theodore Haddin
University of Alabama at Birmingham

What happened when mother went

What happened when mother went
the house shut down screens closed
the cat waited by windows for her
who would never come back
sister went in and took the diamond ring
hid the family pictures for herself
confiscated all the furniture
to sell for profits in the town
sold all the china and paintings
brother thought of the property
how much it would bring in the thousands
how he would be on easy street then
but I went in there after the funeral
and found three spoons she stirred with
and one small paring knife that was hers
and these I have learned the habits of
stirring fresh dough for new bread
peeling potatoes for our evening meal
extravagantly the way she did

Pine River Today

(For David Scharmack,
accidentally electrocuted
May 25, 1980)

The flowing of that river on--
when you stopped elsewhere, caught
sudden shock electric lamp
hot flow hit your heart
and you, startled, fell back
your fall muffled by thick insulation
in a hot tight attic
where no one heard a lamp clatter
or saw legs like wires
tangle in a joist
trout lie in deep water
silence prevails here too
a river purling in pools
beavers under logjams
so beautiful this world you knew
one white cinquefoil fallen on the surface
like fingers on a hand

Mrs. Stanberry's Window

The yard is long behind her house
a woods of pines and oaks
and wisteria vines that steal
the life from trees and sunlight
while she keeps watch at her window
a pink dress looking like a curtain
appears slowly then stops still
a person in my yard would not know
unless the form moved back
and light came through her kitchen
how she keeps her post
till she's seen what I've done
buried apple peels and old lettuce
behind the garage her secret eyes
take note of that and spread the news
at church that I'm out there feeding rats
one whole morning I simply gazed about
looked at limbs tested privets
inspected crocus and kept her watching
what I was watching as if I had a plan
what am I to do next if I enter
her woods with my cutter to go
after the wisteria she will shriek
no doubt at first thinking I mean
to cut her pines or wound the redbuds
but in the yard that is mine
I take my time about the earth
and things that grow there
I may wander in circles for days
wondering where to plant seeds
and I may cut her privets back
if they seem to encroach upon
anything that grows wild or dies black

Rabiul Hasan
Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge

In all this rain

Rain: a mirror you can hide behind
and excuse yourself in,
make it your refuge
and not be seen
I loathe it: you are so vulnerable,
so fragile, so delicate
as the innocence of the unborn,
I am afraid, at the mere touch
of my affection, you may invigorate
or shrivel further down.
I have my own world where clouds also gather,
without asking, without notice; and where often
I wish, if you so desire, I could gladly let you in,
when it rains, as it rains, and in all this rain.

Alex Richardson
University of Southern Mississippi

Cat Door

Belly brought a pigeon through
In the dark morning;
I could hardly scold him;
He was so proud, even righteous,
With his wide eyes, tense jaws
Snug around the limp neck,
The shut wings.
I rolled over, hoped it was a dream,
Hoped the intermittent flapping wasn't real,
Or at least that it would end.
When I got up for coffee
And returned to my room
To catch the news
I saw it clearly:
Unpunctured and perfect,
Bloodless above my pillow,
The gift I didn't deserve.

Going with Nets

Down along a petrified dock of wood
We carry cast nets and icy bourbon.
Bare-foot with trousers
Rolled clumsily to our shins
And mosquitoes angling around our tracks,

Four feet follow the line where water
Wets sand white and foamy
Till we reach an adequate spot
For launching wide nets.

Together we begin:
The first toss is merely for practice,
A way of easing into it;
And the three or four minnows
It nets are not kept.

Then over and over, improving routinely:
Swaying our bodies to the sea-rhythm,
Dangling the girth of nets
From our strangely strong hands,

Tasting the salty, weighted rope-ends
Clutched in our teeth,
Released when the rhythm
Is just so, so our nets catch air
Circling seaward,

Hit water and disappear
In the dark green between us and them.
Then holding the rope
We feel its slow descent, its single thud

On the bottom. One yank
Shoreward brings them to us:
Shrimp and silvery minnows
Pulled from cool quickness
Into the light of judgment.

Sidewalk

When I was five I watched them make it:
Dig up the ground and push back dirt,
Squeeze a tree into the thin strip of grass
Between the road and the new walk:
That plop of mortar in cleared space.

For years I measured my walks
By the grids of concrete:
Gumspots, ant-homes, slopes and cracks
Unkempt collecting wash-away dirt and refuse,
Where that tree's roots
Knuckled up pavement.

Now the tree is tall, its limbs run out.
Root and dirt regain the landscape.
Weeds sprout.
Cars and trucks file from town.
The sidewalk is a trace, a vague path
Losing ground to the widening grass,
The widening grass inching
Towards a new field.

Vacation

We rest cross-legged on the silver porch
And talk about ourselves:
You say you have a certain feeling
For our future,
That everything we say we want
Will work its way into our lives.
We fill in the last crosswords together:
Four letters for "Indian garment,"
Seven letters for "Indefinite time,"
And talk some more about what we' ll do
Tomorrow or the next day.
Having said everything twice
We look respectfully to the sea,
Receding from where we sit
Sipping tea and whiskey,
Read tide charts and ocean almanacs,
Occasionally lifting our heads
Towards the perfect flight of gulls,
The windy dives of pelicans
Undulating green.

Patricia Waters
University of Tennessee

el Sueno de la Vida

We shore and we are the stuff of shores,
a *litoral* life, this picnic, this afternoon.

Here you lie in the umbrella's shade,
the book in your hands, your eyes on the sea.

In your pocket is the last letter
addressed to your thirst, to your hunger.

Drink, it is love in this cup.
Eat, the tears in the bread, only salt.

The Daughter of the House Comes of Age

Florence, 1480

The world of women is one cloth,
woof and warp, needle and thread,
wheel and shuttle, rooms
farthest from the street,
kitchens, herbs and store rooms,
drawn meat, the wealth of spice,
childbed, something understood,
voices, the murmurous voices,
their dovelike flutter over the prayers of priests,
and the words of poets, their paradise of love,
as familiar in the catalogue of her days
as which servant has tender hands,
the birdseller’s‘s delicate cages,
figs sweet with the sun.

There is the maze of a suitor’s desires.
Her dreams, a dark forest,
she is the hunted,
running, hiding, fleeing,
only to be brought to earth
by the dogs of carnality.

Say *yes*
and everything seems so simple.
Those poets, their songs,
hard fate of the woman who refuses,
in Dante’s stony rime
six words are repeated like blows:
woman, grass, green, stone, hill shade,
or is it shadow?

Her heart is stone to him, he says.

Her eyes look beyond him
to the green grass,
vivid in the hill’s shade,
she cannot break stone.
But fire, she burns.

Spring, Untitled

1.
How it bursts, first green from bare bark,
spring with its dying eyes,
the mother you will never see again,
the other's return, inevitable surprise.
The crocus persists, that hyacinth,
bridal wreath and forsythia streaming in the wind.

2.
Searching the streets of Paris for one face,
you think to disappear in your desires.
Lenten Paris is cold, you hunch your shoulder
against rain and dread, take a chance on Notre Dame,
its heavy door shuts on a world.

In that created space, hovering over the devout,
the lookers-on, a vast and dusty dim.
Along the nave, the altar
large enough for any sacrifice,
wavering gold tears of massed candles,
the blaze of white vestments.
In its dark stalls the choir shimmers,
one voice let loose upon the air.
What song conjures the bread,
the strong wine of ancient arbors,
those days of rejoicing
what the earth yields, how we endure?

3.
Day breaks you again and again,
What do you hoard from foreign cities,
those strangers and their stories?
What darkness covers you.
what space do you carve with your longing?

In your bed, under the trees that witness your birth,
and will outlive you, you ponder the feral breath of night.
Under their sway, in deep and moonless dark, you sleep.
In the quick and agile fetching that is summer,
that is your dream, you are entire.

FICTION

Lip Music

Jo LeCoeur
University of the Incarnate Word

The old man could make a wondrous noise with his lips, and the child was still young enough to want to learn from the old, still naive enough to think that his great-great uncle Mulray, who had ridden with Forrest long before the child was even born, could bestow upon him that magical talent for calling up the horses, talking to the birds and making Mama dance.

Justice was the boy's name, Spencer Lee Justice, Spencer for his mama's daddy, Lee for her granddaddy. But Justice just seemed somehow to fit. In his sockfeet Justice stood unsteadily in the middle of his great-great uncle's big cast iron bed watching the shirt ripple over the old man's back and shoulder, big arm twist-ing powerfully as he stroked his straight razor on the leather strop hooked to the wall. The bed was quite distant from the wall, from all four walls; the bed was an island in the center of the room, so that the red eyes and bloody bones underneath the house could not slither up the walls and creep out onto the bed. The room had a high ceiling and large floor-to-ceiling windows with wavy lines in the glass, lines that shone sometimes blue, sometimes green in the sunlight. There were waves in the great mirror over Uncle Mul's dressing table too, but those waves did not change color. On the wall over the mirror hung a gray hat and saber. If the child ever touched it, he would die.

Justice was in the old man's room, as every morning, for his lesson. He stood flexing and straightening his knees, flexing and straightening, not quite bouncing, just keeping his balance on the soft feather bed. Light-headed from enormous gulps of air, his child lips puckered to a point, he strained mightily to make that strange and wonderful sound. Learning to make lip music was not easy. Especially with Uncle Mul for a teacher. The old man had finished stropping his razor and stood now beside the bed glowering down--as though taking personally the child's failure to produce that miracle. Justice shifted his weight on the big iron bed, trying to move out of his great-great uncle's shadow, but the old man's shadow, razor in hand, seemed to fill up the room.

Others were aware too of the old man's greatness. The child was grateful when this morning's lesson was interrupted, as often happened when strangers came to the house in a motorcar. It puzzled the child that they did not come to learn lip music, that Uncle Mul never publicly displayed his wondrous talent. Today's visitors wore hats and spectacles, eyeglasses as Mama would say, and Sunday clothes that puckered and strained over their bellies. Mama took off her apron, patted her hair, pinned up the loose ends, and they all sat in the parlor--the dignified visitors in high back chairs,

Justice squeenched way back on the sofa beside Mama, his legs and sockfeet sticking straight out in front of him, Uncle Mul leaning back in his big gray armchair, feet propped on the embroidered footstool. Uncle Mul was allowed in the parlor with his boots on.

Moses held the door wide for Big Hattie to swoosh in with the pewter tea service, her big-eyed girls behind her bringing petit fours, napkins, flowers from the garden. Moses ceremonious-ly began lighting the candles on top of the piano, slowly raising up on tip-toe, not breathing for the long moment before each trembling flame caught and flared, then rocking back on his heels, as each flame settled to steady. In that same slow rhythm, Moses poured tea. And then he blended into the shadow by the piano to stand and wait.

Everyone sat sipping quietly while Uncle Mul took one sip, then set his teacup and saucer on the lamp table without making a sound. He crossed one long leg over the other and told in a low voice about how simple it is for a small band of cavalry to wipe out ten times their number of foot soldiers. He made it seem easy, the way he told it, all leaned back and relaxed, one hand stroking the twill of his trousers, elegant fingers of the other draping his long thigh.

Then he looked Justice in the eye, put both feet on the floor and sat up straight in his gray chair. "When you are outnumbered," he said, "you have no choice but to attack." And his old-man eyes gradually brightened while he talked about how a small army's only chance against a big one is to take out after them "firing and yelling like the Furies, and once you get them running, you stay right on top of them." He sat forward, his voice gaining strength, the pace quickening, "You don't slow down, don't stay even. You push harder, yell louder, fight faster by God faster."

He stood up and jerked his tie loose. He unbuttoned his starched collar and spoke of honor...honor and valor, honor and death...while the visitors sat nodding yes, yes, their spectacles catching the sunlight, the pockets of skin under their chins stretching and bulging like a lizard showing its pocketbook.

Then the blue light came on in Uncle Mul's eyes. Mama got up and glided toward him, but he had twisted around and was shouting as though someone other than Moses was there by the piano. "With all due respect, Sir, it's a grave mistake." Moses shrank back into the crack between the piano and the wall as the white man advanced upon him. "No honor BY GOD in it!" Uncle Mul spat, and Moses almost disappeared in the shadows. "NO HONOR IN SURRENDER." Mama was right behind him, her hand on his shoulder. He whirled and faced her, his eyes ablaze.

She side-stepped, her fingers digging into his arm above the elbow, "Uncle Mul," her voice soft and low, "Mul, dear." He looked at her and then the blue light slowly faded...until his eyes were as dark, his skin as gray, as

when Justice would see him sneaking into the house early of a Sunday morning. Mama guided him back to his chair and sat him down. She smiled at the white-faced visitors, then sat twisting the gray tassels on the sofa arm, chatting about how her granddaddy Lee had spent his old age reliving the war, demanding fatback while the rest of the family ate ham, catfish or chicken, insisting on sleeping out in the fields in the heavy dew under his old army overcoat; and how when he passed away, it was with an order to the troops on his lips.

When she finished, Uncle Mul took his pen from the lamp table. They watched him fill it from the inkwell. Then he made several big circles in the air with his arm, winding up before writing his name with a flourish on a sheet of fancy paper. He presented his autograph to the visitors, and they went away, seemingly satisfied, smiling and wiping their eyes.

Justice crawled up onto the marble table under the stained glass window in the hallway and peeked through a red glass dia-mond to watch the visitors stepping up into their motorcar. He knelt on the cool marble top licking off his sweet white mous-tache that grew when he ate petit fours. He pitied the visitors for having missed the old man's magic. At the same time he felt privileged that he alone could bear witness to Uncle Mul's warbl-ing a wild sweet note, charming birds down out of the trees, making Mama dance. Justice had seen her dance so fast that Moses would back up against the pie safe, Hattie and the girls holding the dishes on the shelves while Mama tossed up the hem of her apron and spun around the kitchen, circling and circling, throwing her apron up over her face again and again, Uncle Mul's fiery eyes following her, making lip music faster and faster until Mama's toes no longer touched down.

Justice stood again the next morning in the middle of the great iron bed, sweat rolling down his face. Learning to make lip music was hard work. He looked down at the polished wooden floor, but the old man's stern feet in dark leather boots compelled the child's gaze to travel up the long gray creased trousers, over the big metal belt buckle, up the stiff white-shirted chest and past the black string tie to the massive head that seemed to defy the blades of the fan suspended from the high ceiling. The boy widened his eyes and lifted his shoulders, filling his lungs, getting dizzy, his lips cramping as he tried and tried.

"*Trying* to do something's just a by God excuse for not *doing* it," Uncle Mul slammed his palm with his fist, quoting Nathan Bedford Forrest. "Don't never *try* to do it, Boy, just *do* it."

Then Uncle Mul grabbed up his straight razor, and the boy's sharp intake of breath sounded like a soft whistle through the space between his front teeth. He grinned and bounced a little on the bed.

"YES! NO!" yelled Uncle Mul. "Do it again, Boy. This time blow out." Justice tried, but only a whooshing sound came out. "Don't *TRY*," the

old man bellowed slashing the air with his razor. The boy's knees wobbled; he caught his breath making a fearful little whistling noise. "NO," thundered the old man, "make a joyful noise unto the Lord. *Joyful*!" The child held his breath then, scared to try, scared not to. He held his breath. He held his breath. And suddenly--Justice did not know how it hap-pened--he did it. Standing in the middle of the great iron bed he made the sound, a loud, frightened, joyful noise.

Over and over then Uncle Mul made the loudest, scariest, most jubilant noise the child had ever heard. Justice wet his pants at the sound, but Uncle Mul did not notice. His old eyes gleamed, veins on his neck stood out purple, vibrating, the primordial sound--WOH-OOUUU-EHYA!--alive on its own, Uncle Mul just an instrument.

"That," Uncle Mul took a bulging breath, "is as close as you'll ever come, Boy, to hearing a by God real Rebel Yell." The old man closed his shining eyes, made a fist and smacked himself just above his belt buckle. "Born in the belly, baptised in the blood," he struck his chest, "powered by the lungs and torn from the throats of MEN!" he bellowed, eyes wide now, striding around the room waving the razor, preaching as though to a multitude instead of to just one small boy standing in the middle of the bed with wet britches.

"*MEN*!" shouted Uncle Mul, his spit flying white, backlit by sunshine pouring in through the windows. "Men of honor! Men who grew up hollering from field to field. Yodeling from mountain top to hollow. Part pig-call, part hunting-cry. A battle-charge, blending righteous by God hatred, pure joyous love of fighting and genuine fear of death." He took another giant-breath and bent down so low that the child smelled coffee on his breath, "Which is why what you just heard was but a close imitation. It can*not* be duplicated outside of battle, Boy," he rasped. "You just can't fake the sound of happy fear."

Uncle Mul reared back suddenly and crouched, arms out, palms down, eyes darting. Justice looked around for red eyes and bloody bones slithering up the walls, but the old man took a step back-ward, pointed to a corner and hissed, "Blue bellies." And the blue light came on in his eyes. "Samuel. Bud. Ezra. You men circle around and flank 'em." He put the handle of his straight razor into Justice's hand, closed the child's fist around it, then strode over and stepped up onto his dressing table, took down his hat and saber from over the big mirror, threw back his head and laughed loud, and then louder.

That laugh got inside the child's blood and filled him up, making him wade across the feather bed, jump down and run around the bedroom. Feeling those burning eyes following him, he ran faster and faster, circling and circling, whooping woh-whooo-eh! his version of that powerful sound of happy fear, while Uncle Mul laughed the louder. And the child Justice,

listening to that thunderous laugh vibrate off the walls, felt that the old man had never really been afraid of anything.

Uncle Mul's laugh became a scream, then a yell as he put on his hat, drew his saber, jumped down off his dressing table and began slashing at his bed. Justice yelled too, ran to the other side of the bed and attacked a pillow with the razor, his arm slashing over and over in a frenzy. "YANKS CALLING FOR REINFORCE-MENTS..." yelled Uncle Mul slicing into his mattress. Justice became aware then of the sound of the big bell out in the yard. Instead of just twice as when calling up the field hands for dinner, it kept on ringing and ringing. "...BUT THEY WON'T GET THIS OLD REB."

Uncle Mul and Justice both yelled then and fought the hard-er, the boy intent now on slicing yankee throats in the mattress. They were yelling and slashing and coughing, the air thick with feathers, when Justice became conscious of another voice screaming his name. His arm still slashing, he stopped yelling, looked up from the blue and white striped ticking. Yanks swarmed all over Uncle Mul. One was behind him trying to pin his arms. "JUSTICE, HELP US," she begged. Justice's arm stopped slashing then. It was Mama. Behind her Hattie and the girls crowded the doorway. Justice stood, razor by his side and watched the old reb break free of Mama and Moses and the field hands to stand slash-ing blindly before looking around. His wild eyes darted, then settled on Justice, and he raised his weapon as though to strike the boy.

Mama screamed.

Uncle Mul turned and charged the mirror over his dressing table, splintering the silvered glass with his saber.

Uncle Mul had to go away after that. It seemed to Justice for a very long time. And when they brought the man, hat low on his forehead (to hide the scar, Mama said) home from the hospi-tal, it wasn't Uncle Mul. Mama said it was, but Justice knew better. It looked like him from the eyes down, but it wasn't. It could not whistle.

Justice splashed his bath water that evening and tried to make that magic sound. He tried again. And again. Then he remem-bered the secret--to not try. He scrambled out of the tub, ran naked and slippery, dripping a wet trail down the hall, but *it* wasn't in Uncle Mul's room. The boy ran outside and circled the house until he found *it* in the chicken yard. But *it* was not Uncle Mul. He told what they said was Uncle Mul to not try to whistle, and it said slowly, "I'm *not* trying, Boy. I'm not trying all the time." And it just sat there day after day in the chicken yard with the hat low on its forehead, the blanket over its knees, not trying to whistle, not trying all the time.

Life in the Trailer Park

Bruce R. Magee
Louisiana Tech University

Sandy took a drag on her cigarette, brushed a long strand of her brownish- blonde hair back from her face, and looked through the curtain of the trailer door. The bright sunlight helped her wake up but also sent stabs of pain through her head. No sign of his truck. Where was that dingleberry? Something seemed wrong as she gazed out on the trailer park, but she couldn't quite tell what. She got a Coke out of the refrigerator, took some Advil, lit another cig. Caffeine, nicotine, and ibuprofen should start to clear the cobwebs from her brain. She drifted around the trailer picking up empty beer bottles and trying to piece together what happened last night. On the kitchen table, she found a good place setting rather than the customary plastic and paper. She used the formal ware only rarely and then only for important occasions, such as birthdays and parental visits. Yet it appeared that yesterday's celebration had consisted of rewarmed Johnny's Pizza and Budweiser.

She took the cup and the utensils to the sink, which was already filled. Dingleberry didn't know how to wash a dish or even how to tell what belonged in the sink from what went in the trash. What did she find so appealing about rednecks who cut the sleeves off their shirts? She removed lids from paper cups, dumped the contents down the drain, and threw the cups into the trash on top of the beer bottles. Next she threw away plastic plates, some with food still in them. She stopped up the sink, poured in some Dawn detergent, and filled the sink with hot water to let the dishes soak. She tied the trash bag shut and started out the door toward the dumpster. The noonday July heat hit her like a wave. What the hell was she doing in Ruston in July anyway? Especially now that her parents had moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She could be on the beach right now, but she had stayed in Ruston to go to summer school. Actually she had stayed to be with dingleberry, but she had to tell the folks something. Anyway, her mom would have made her get a job if she had moved home, and carrying out the trash was almost too much work by itself.

Another bag was on the porch. This one contained clothes. She reached in and pulled out a shirt with the sleeves cut off. So she had thrown him out, at least as far out as the porch. One day she'd make it all the way to the dumpster with his stuff and get rid of him for good. She folded the shirt and placed it and the bag of clothes back inside the trailer. Why'd she put up with him? Oh well, *de gustibus non est disputandum*, as Mike liked to say. "'There's no accounting for taste': that's English for *de gustibus non est disputandum*" he would intone as he mocked her taste in men.

Taking the trash to the dumpster, Sandy stepped over an orange extension cord that stretched from a relatively nice trailer to one that was an eyesore even here. Mike Farmer had had his power cut off again and was "borrowing" power from Nancy Mitchell. Sandy could feel the sweat starting to form on her skin. If she stayed out long, her clothes would stick to her body; sweat wouldn't evaporate in this humidity. Nancy's two small boys, sporting crew cuts and wearing only underwear, rode their Big Wheels back and forth across the extension cord. If they were home, then Nancy was off work, and today would be Saturday. Maybe Sunday. She could ask Mike, who was out painting. With a beer in one hand, wearing double knit shorts and an unbuttoned, sweat-soaked shirt that revealed his oversized belly, he looked like Mr. Humidity. She didn't feel like talking to the old pervert just now. He had an M.A. in English, and had finished the course work for an Ed.D. Instead of finishing his dissertation or even getting a job, he hung around painting watercolors, mostly of naked women. "Pictures of God," he called them. He was basically harmless and had helped with her homework when she had English classes at Tech, the local university. It was just that some of his "pictures of God" looked a lot like her. At least when he was being lecherous, he wasn't complaining about his financial woes, his ex-wife, or his health problems. She walked by a trailer with an old mirror leaning against it. The sun reflecting off it flashed in her eyes briefly, making her eyes water and sending renewed stabs of pain through her head. She made her way to the dumpster.

"Hey, little girl, want to see a picture of God?" he called out cheerfully as she came back from the dumpster.

"Not right now, Uncle Mikey, but thanks," she called back. "Do you have me any candy?"

"*Et ego in Arcadia ero*," he responded.

"Huh?"

"I also shall be in Arcadia." He laughed as though that were supposed to be funny.

"You also? So who else is in Arcadia?"

"Bonnie and Clyde, my dear." His voice slipped into lecture mode. "Police shot Clyde Champion Barrow and Bonnie Parker in an ambush near Arcadia, Louisiana, on May 23, 1934, after a nation-wide manhunt. Since it is the only thing that has ever happened in Arcadia, the locals annually gather to celebrate 'Bonnie and Clyde Days'. They commemorate Bonnie and Clyde's untimely demise by eating caramel apples and funnel cakes until they barf. *Et ego in Arcadia ero.*"

"So you're going to eat funnel cake at Bonnie and Clyde Days? Is that good for your diet?"

"The festival is months away. I'm going to Arcadia because I have a new job there."

"Teaching?"

"Night watchman at the outlet mall. I'll get paid to sit around and read."

"Say hello to Bonnie and Clyde," she called back as she went back toward her trailer. She didn't ask him what day it was. She didn't need him laughing at her debauchery and saying, "That's life in the big trailer park."

Back on her porch, she looked around one more time before going inside. Everything *looked* normal enough. Mike was smoking and painting. Nancy was hooking a hose to a sprinkler that looked like a fire hydrant so her boys could play in the water. That way they wouldn't need a bath. In her previous life, a sprinkler by an extension cord would have brought parents running from every direction shouting about electrocution, but she was becoming accustomed to life in the trailer park. Perhaps Nancy's family barbecue would provide Mike with a new perspective of God's face for his paintings. Still, *something* was definitely out of place. She turned and re-entered the trailer.

She pushed the recliner back to its place by the wall. Somebody--him or her?--had pulled it to the middle of the room. She saw a dirty circle around the chair's mid-room location--ashes. She must have sat here in the dark, smoking, drinking, and spinning in the chair. Not a good sign. What *had* they been fighting about? Looking for more clues, Sandy noticed that she had forgotten to pick up the china plate from last night's celebration. Better let it soak so it would be easier to wash later. As she passed by the CD boom box on the counter top, she jabbed it a couple of times with the index finger of her free hand. When she heard the bass guitar begin to play, she spun around, the plate clattering to the floor. She looked at the boom box as though it might burst into flames, but it sat there calmly adding violins to the bass.

"Oh, shit. It must have been really bad." She never played *that* CD unless it was really bad. As the theme of *Twin Peaks* filled the trailer, she picked the dish up off the floor and stuck it in the sink. (OK, so it only Corelle, but she liked to think of it as china.) Feeling a little queasy, she ran cold water over a dishcloth, laid down on the couch, and placed the wet cloth over her forehead while the red dwarf from *Twin Peaks* danced backward through her head. Ug.

She came to later in the afternoon, feeling somewhat better. She was actually hungry now. The trailer was filled with silence. The CD had finished playing; no sounds drifted in from outside; and even the central air had cycled off for a few minutes. Dingleberry? Still not back. There was nothing here to eat, so she got ready and went out the door. Mike had deserted his post to go start his new job, which was a shame, since now was the moment that the water from the sprinkler shorted out the extension cord. The show was less spectacular than it could have been; Sandy didn't even

notice it. There was, in fact, no barbecue. Nancy was inside and her boys, Will and Mark, were out behind their trailer feeding crickets to the black widow spider that had made a web in a window. They couldn't wait for hundreds of her offspring to emerge from her egg sac and populate the back yard with young black widows. The short in the extension cord threw a circuit breaker, and the only effect of the whole incident was that when Mike returned home the next morning, he found most of the food in his refrigerator had spoiled.

As Sandy pushed the door shut, she suddenly realized what was wrong: a quick look at the TV inside confirmed her suspicions. She might not ever figure out just what had happened, but now she knew he would not be coming back this time: he had taken away his satellite dish. She could just hear Mike laughing at her, "That's life in the big trailer park, my dear."

Bless This Sun

Lana White
West Texas A&M University

On this, the first morning home after a three-day visit with my mother and sister, the sun shines. After three gloom-ridden days, the sun is balm.

The visit was the first time I had been to my late aunt's house since her death eight months ago. My mother and sister have sold all my aunt's belongings in a series of garage sales. Now the house holds them and their furnishings. Cheap to replace antique. Laminated to replace mahogany.

Worst of all the changes is the boarded-in sun porch. The delight of my aunt's life, the spacious glassed-in sun room accommodated riotously healthy pink and white begonias and scarlet geraniums that bloomed throughout the winter months. During my aunt's life, to step into the sun-sparkling porch was to breathe air so oxygen-rich it smelled spring green.

"See how we converted the porch into a bedroom?" my mother asked as she showed me the haphazard carpenter's work. Sheets of plywood filled the spaces where large windows had been. Winter's southern sun had been completely eliminated from the room. The odor of mildew hung in the semi-darkness.

“Maud was so silly to use all this area to overwinter flowers. But she was always silly.” Mother looked at me as if she expected me to retaliate against the words, but I have vowed to remain silent even though I know. I know more than my mother wants me to know. I was the last person my aunt spoke to, and my mother does not know what my aunt said. My aunt's writings were missing from her house when Mother occupied it. She asked if I got them. I did not. Mother is uncomfortable with me and my silence. She pokes and prods to get me to talk about Maud, but I will not.

Now the visit is over, and I stand in my own house and enjoy the miles between me and Mother. In my east window, the geranium leaves spread themselves against the glass to catch every beam of sun. Like a silent Hallelujah Chorus, they lift my spirit. I smell their greenness and bask in solitude, solitude I draw around my shoulders like a protective cape.

Mother put my aunt into a nursing home financed by Medicaid after Maud had fallen a second time and broken the second hip. Maud had accumulated savings to finance her care in a home with more amenities, but Mother hushed Maud's protest against Medicaid with the terse statement, "This nursing home is closer to my house, and if I have to check on you, I don't want to drive forty miles through traffic."

To my protest against the dilapidated facility, Mother stated, "I have the power of attorney. I will use it the way I want."

"Do you think Maud could return to her own home, and we could hire a nurse to care for her?"

"Too expensive. And she needn't think I'm going to heave her up and down. She damned sure never did anything for me. Smarty schoolteacher. Kept her lemons for herself. Always kept for herself." Mother's words were spat out over a year ago.

Lemons were a rarity during the snow-swept months of the winter of 1923 on the northern Texas plains where Mother and Maud lived with their family. The bright yellow fruit contrasted with the dark browns of apple butter and mincemeat pies, provender stored in dark cellars to tide icebound families through months when nothing grew. Those six yellow lemons and the fact that Maud knew too much have eaten a sore spot in Mother's memory.

When Mother was five and Maud twenty-five, Grandpa and Grandma Dawdy lived on an isolated farm. Maud taught second grade in Plainview and came to her parents' farm when school was out. She had never married. During the Christmas holidays of 1923, she brought flour, sugar, dried beans, and precious baking powder along with six yellow lemons.

I have only Mother's side of the story, her voice quivering with self-righteousness pent up for seventy-three years. Maud was keeping the lemons to make a New Year's lemon meringue pie, a treat the Dawdys had never tasted. Mother wanted just one, but Maud refused. Mother swiped the fruit and slipped away to the barn to eat it. Despite the unexpected sourness to an uninitiated mouth, she ate the lemon section by section. She threw the peel into the hog pen and assumed all evidence would vanish in hog jowls.

But just as hogs scorn banana peels, these turned up their snouts at citrus. The telltale bright yellow peel, lying in hog-pen dirt until it was eventually trod under, told family members the answer to the missing lemon.

Like the glaring evidence of the lemon theft, the evidence behind Mother's present discomfort has glared at me for these eight months since Maud's death. Mother knows I know.

When Maud broke her second hip, she was ninety-eight; Mother, only seventy-eight. Physically, Mother had more power. Mentally, Maud was wiser and quite clear of mind. Financially, Maud was dominant, but because Mother was Maud's only living sibling and Maud wanted to save probate costs, Maud had listed Mother as co-owner of all Maud possessed--a house and over five hundred thousand in U.S. Savings Bonds.

Mother, cunningly vengeful, knew that sun, solitude, and flowers

had enabled Maud to live beyond the data of the insurance tables. As Maud's body grew feebler, her being was increasingly sustained by her own little house with its sunlit porch. She had a routine embedded in her life as deeply as the trail trod into her antique Axminster rug. She listened to audio books, knitted with dimmed eyes but sensitive fingers, and in the afternoon poured Coca-Cola over two scoops of ice cream in a frosted goblet. She let the foam subside, carried the treat to the sun porch, sat in a wicker rocker, and imbibed her elixir. "It's the combination," she claimed when she was asked the secret of her longevity. "Sun, solitude, and flowers. Coca-Cola and ice cream."

Before her eyesight had degenerated, Maud had been a writer of copious garden journals, diaries, musings, and family historical occurrences. Before the tragedies of the broken hips, on a May 30th, her birthday, and my last day of teaching during the spring semester, I stopped by her house. As I gloried in my summer freedom, Maud trained a clematis vine up the trunk of a peach tree dead from borers that had riddled its insides. She commented that death, even murder, can be the sustenance of life. The death of one person can create a more nourishing environment for others. Her fingers gingerly spread the delicate tendrils of the clematis so that the sun could quicken their ooze of life.

I looked at her with a question in my eyes. I did not speak. Her ramblings seemed to take a new course.

"I have diaries that date back to 1933. 1 probably need to burn them before I die. Maybe I wrote too much. I know too much."

"One diary in particular," she added, "needs to be destroyed. It serves no good now. All the people, except your mother, are dead. Even the baby is dead."

"Which baby do you mean?" I asked. Two of my baby brothers had died before I was born.

"Jimmy. Born 1937. Died 1937."

"Ah, yes. Born two years after Joe, two years before me. Mother said he died of bulbar polio. She also swore that she would never again be without a car because when Jimmy died she had no way to get to a doctor. Dad had gone to work in town, and she was twenty-three miles out in the country on the farm."

"Yes, he apparently died in her arms. And she blamed your dad. But a finer man than your dad never lived. Jimmy's death was not your dad's fault. But Jimmy's death made such a difference in your life, a difference you could never know."

Maud then fell silent. The silence filled with meaning that neither chose to put into words. I shivered in the May sun.

In the October following this May visit, Maud broke her first hip. Time, therapy, home-care nurses, sun and geraniums healed the first break.

When the second break occurred eight months ago, Mother told me that she would make arrangements for Maud's care when Maud was released from the hospital.

"Those home-care nurses are too expensive," she said.

"Maud has plenty of money," I countered. "Remember she still has early World War II savings bonds bought with the script the school district paid during the late depression days. I'm sure she has over half a million saved if what she has told me is accurate."

"That money she has saved in bonds is also my money," Mother replied. "I'm going to need some to tide me over. Maud is ninety-eight. She has always kept for herself. By God, this time I'm keeping for myself."

So Mother filled out the forms, and Maud became a short-lived resident of the Golden Care Nursing Home.

Mother and my sister quickly moved into Maud's house and began changes. The sun's entry into the house was blocked. The Axminster was replaced with Duro-Carpet. The yard became utilitarian so both the clematis and its peach-tree trellis disappeared. The mowing man could cut the Bermuda grass in less than an hour and no other yard work needed to be done.

The yard and the house adapted to its new inhabitants. All were as if dead. No vibrancy, no light, no color. Only darkness visible and the odor of mildew.

Mother and my sister have their estate newly acquired and refurbished in Early Mausoleum.

I have the words. Words, even those from the grave, can nourish life. Some murders are not easy to prove. My aunt quoted Hamlet in her diary of 1937. "Leave her to heaven."

I will follow Maud's advice.