

POMPA: Publications of the Mississippi Philological Association

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2014



Parker Family Barn near Stringer, Mississippi

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Assistant Editor, Seth Dawson
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Editor's Note

By Seth Dawson

I'm pleased that Lorie asked me to write the editor's note for this, the thirty-first volume of the *Publications of the Mississippi Philological Association (POMPA)*, as my alma mater, Mississippi State University, served as host for the 2014 conference. Held in Starkville, February 21-22, for the first time in a number of years, conference organizer Dr. Greg Bentley put together an outstanding program that included a plenary talk by the esteemed W. Ralph Eubanks in the Colvard Student Union Ballroom, along with a dinner provided by university catering services. Support from the English Department and the College of Arts and Sciences aided Dr. Bentley's preparations. The participation of multiple faculty members and students not only made the conference run smoothly (from helping with registration and refreshments to moderating panels), but also showcased the institution's commitment to the humanities and intellectual talents with their engaging presentations.

Despite the mess blighting attendees' view of the northern end of the Drill Field from Swalm Hall, seeing the progression of renovations to Lee Hall stirred my Maroon & White spirit (particularly, the discovery that my former office no longer served as a construction trash-chute). With renovations now complete and the English Department returned from its two-year exile, as of the fall 2015, reclaiming a place on the Drill Field, Mississippi State again hosts the 2015 conference.

In true *POMPA* form, the works which follow provide thought-provoking discussions on a broad range of subjects. Direct all gratitude toward Lorie Watkins

for her work as editor of this publication. It's my pleasure to work alongside her.

Thanks to all the conference participants, contributors whose work appears in this volume, and everyone's continuing support of the Mississippi Philological Association.

2014 Program



**Welcome to the 2014
Mississippi Philological Association Conference
MPA 2014 – February 21-22, 2014**



Friday, February 21

Registration (200 Swalm)

12:00 Executive Council Meeting (215 Swalm)

1:00-1:30 Panel A: Teaching America's Veterans: An MPA proposal by JB Potts
(Mississippi College)(215 Swalm)

1:00-2:15 Panel B: Identity Constructions in Small Places: The
Postcolonial Caribbean (110 Swalm)

Moderator: Andrea Spain

Antoinette Hayden (Mississippi State University) "An Ant enclosed in a Circle: The
Functions of Identity and Space in

Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*"

Hannah Humphrey (Mississippi State University) "Violence and Colonial Re-
identification in *Cereus Blooms at Night*"

Kimberly Madsen (Mississippi State University) "Racism's
First Tongue: Colonial Language and the Postcolonial Subject"

1:00-2:15 Panel C: Creative Writing 1 (200 Swalm)

Moderator: Joe Taylor

Christopher Hornbacker (University of Southern Mississippi)

Christina Hopper (Mississippi University for Women)

Kayla Pearce (Mississippi University for Women)

1:00-2:15* Panel D: *Gilgamesh*: Biblical Parallels and Freudian
Psychology (140 Swalm)

Moderator: Patsy Daniels

Nedrick Patrick (Jackson State University) "Fearfully Heroic:
Denial and Death in *Gilgamesh*"

Jacqueline Evans-Bolden (Jackson State University)
"Gilgamesh and Enkidu"

2:30-3:45 Panel A: Discourses of Place and Gender in Short Fiction (140 Swalm)

Moderator: Seth Dawson

Kim Whitehead (Mississippi University for Women)

"Prostitutes in Kate Chopin's Short Fiction and *The Awakening*"

Craig Albin (Missouri State University) "Motion, Stasis, and the 'Place' of Women
in Tim Gautreaux's *Same Place, Same Things*"

Tabitha Sheffield (Mississippi State University) "The Exorcism of Dr. Martin
Hesselius: Exorcising Medical
Discourse from *In a Glass Darkly*"

2:30-3:45 Panel B: Creative Writing 2 (110 Swalm)

Moderator: Allison Chestnut

Rusty Rogers (University of Central Arkansas)
Katie Barber (Mississippi State University)
Brianna Warner (Mississippi University for Women)

2:30-3:45 Panel C: Representing Queen Elizabeth I: History, Gender, and Film (200 Swalm)

Moderator: Mica Gould

Ansahare Antoine (Grambling State University) "Wearing the Pants Under her Royal Robes: The Embodiment of Male and Female Traits in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I" Rufus Martelly (Grambling State University) "Queen Elizabeth I: The Ignorance of Patriarchy and the Ability to Lead"

Kameron S. Berkley (Grambling State University) "The Truth of the Boleyn Whores: Arguing the Accuracies and Inaccuracies of *The Other Boleyn Girl*"

4:00-5:15 Panel A: Shakespeare: Reinterpreting Love and Knowledge (140 Swalm)

Moderator: Greg Bentley

Megan Cannon (Mississippi University for Women) "Fight or Flight: The Forgotten Context of Falconry in *The Taming of the Shrew*"

Eleanor Prewitt-Thomas (Jackson State University) "*Hamlet* and *Oedipus*"

Laura Purl (Mississippi State University) "Paulina's Rejection of the Traditional Pauline Woman in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*"

4:00-5:15 Panel B: Nineteenth-Century America: Diagnosing Identity (110 Swalm)

Moderator: Craig Albin

Alan Brown (University of Western Alabama) "The Art and Science of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper'"

Kate Stewart (University of Arkansas at Monticello) "'The Gaze of Anonymous Strangers': Public Scrutiny in 19th-Century American Literature"

Jeffrey Pusch (University of Southern Mississippi) "*Hope Leslie* and the Theater of Resistance"

4:00-5:15 Panel C: Creative Writing 3 (200 Swalm)

Moderator: James Fowler

Joe Taylor (University of Western Alabama)

Peter Malik (Alcorn State University)

Kendall Dunkeberg (Mississippi University for Women)

5:30-6:45 Panel A: Perspectives on Shirley Jackson's Female Protagonists in Fiction and Film (140 Swalm)

Moderator: Helen Crump

Melanie Anderson (University of Mississippi) “‘The ghosts were after me’: Women and the Supernatural in Shirley Jackson’s Fiction”

Lisa Kröger (Independent Scholar) “‘And it will be a blue cup full of stars’: Shirley Jackson’s Enduring Female Protagonists and the Problem of Imagination”

Shari Hodges-Holt (University of Mississippi) “The Tower or the Nursery? Robert Wise’s Patriarchal Re-vision of Hill House in *The Haunting*”

5:30-6:45 Panel B: Negotiating Contemporary South Africa in Transition (200 Swalm)

Moderator: Antoinette Hayden

Greg Marcus (Mississippi State University) “Determining the State of Bodies in J.M. Coetzee’s *Digraace*”

Field Brown (Mississippi State University) “Carving a Way Out from Within: Ilse’s Deontological Victory in Behr’s Tragic Smell of Apples”

Robin Walden (Mississippi State University) “‘As was the case with millions of people; I was no exception: Highlighting Private/Public Reconciliation through Community in Ndebele’s *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*”

5:30-6:45 Panel C: Literary and Popular Narratives of Discovery and Recovery (110 Swalm)

Moderator: Ben Fisher

Nancy Hargrove (Mississippi State University, Emeritus) “A Recovered Modernist Masterpiece: Hope Mirrlees’s *A Poem*”

Jermaine Thompson (Mississippi State University) “Check the Rhymes: Discovering the New Rhetorical Trope of Suspended Metaphor in Hip-Hop Music” James Tomek (Delta State University) “Narrative Theology and Breaking Bad”

7:00 pm Banquet and Plenary Speech—Union Ballroom: Talk by W Ralph Eubanks

Saturday, February 22

9:00-10:15 Panel A: Women’s Voices, Women’s Spaces (140 Swalm)

Moderator: Allison Chestnut

Candace Chambers (Jackson State University) “For Her People: Exploring Margaret Walker’s Vision and the Racial Struggle”

Helen Crump (Jackson State University) “The *Bodied* Voice in Literary Coming-of-Age Narratives: Examining the Intersectionality of Growing Up in Contemporary Black Women’s Fiction”

Candis Pizzetta (Jackson State University) “Expanding Boundaries: The Language of Custom, Female Agency, and the Origin of Abolitionism in the United States”

9:00-10:15 Panel B: Creative Writing 4 (145 Swalm)

Moderator: Kendall Dunkelberg

Will Dawkins (Northwest Mississippi Community College)
Allen Berry (University of Southern Mississippi)
Deanna Graves (William Carey University)

9:00-10:15 Panel C: Latinos/as: Literary Forms and Identities (Swalm 105)

Moderator: Preselfannie Whitfield McDaniels

Tracee Thompson (Jackson State University) "A Struggle for Identity through the Words of Two Latina Poets" Delilah Dotremon (Alabama State University) "The Tradition of Robin Hood Lives on in Border Ballads"
Ruben Gonzalez (Alabama State University) "The Genius of Nicanor Parra: The Birth of Antipoetry"

9:00-10:15 Panel D: Black Authors: Hope, Despair, and Songs of Salvation (115 Swalm)

Moderator: Patsy Daniels

Seth Dawson (University of Mississippi) ". . . though I was free from Angola, Angola would never be free of me': *From the Bottom of the Heap*, the Southern Prison, and the Contemporary American Slave Narrative"
Jeanna Graves (William Carey University) "All in the Family, The Misogyny of Bigger Thomas"
Allison Chestnut (William Carey University) "Langston Hughes and Jean Berger: Four Songs of Paradise, Politics, and Persona"

10:30-11:45 Panel A: Lost Voices, Sacred Silences (140 Swalm)

Moderator: Stacy Kastner

Preselfannie Whitfield McDaniels (Jackson State University)

"Completing the Journey of Healing, Interpretation, and Reflection: A Survivor's Examination of Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*"

Patsy J. Daniels (Jackson State University) "The Power of Silence: The Sacred Word in Native American Literature"

Emma G. B. Richardson (Mississippi School for Math and Science) "'A Poor Unwanted Teacher and Unmarried': The Spinster Schoolteacher in Mississippi Writing"

10:30-11:45 Panel B: Creative Writing 5 (145 Swalm)

Moderator: Will Dawkins

Joseph Holt (University of Southern Mississippi)
Rachel Wolfe (Mississippi State University)
Mike Spikes (Arkansas State University)

10:30-11:45 Panel C: Modern Drama: Power and Gender (105 Swalm)

Moderator: Jeffrey Pusch

Laura Purl (Mississippi State University) "Deception and the Struggle for Male Power in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*"

Whitney Knight (Mississippi State University) "'I'm the artist here': Subversion of Identity in Hwang's *M. Butterfly*"

Greg Bentley (Mississippi State University) "Hedda Gabler and the Geometry of Desire"

Lunch, 11:45-1:30 (directions/suggestions provided in packets)

1:30-2:45 Panel A: Southern Geographies of Desire and Development (140 Swalm)

Moderator: Ted Atkinson

Jessica Burton (Mississippi State University) "To Farm or Not to Farm, That is the Unanswered Question: The

Unsolved Agrarian and Industrial Conundrum in James Still's *River of Earth*"

Carol Hogan (Mississippi State University) "Navigating the Rapids: Confronting Change in *River of Earth*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Streetcar Named Desire*"

Tabitha Sheffield (Mississippi State University) "Metamorphosis of the Southern Belle Mythology: Conceptions of Desire in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Rich in Love*"

1:30-2:45 Panel B: Queen Elizabeth I: Religion and Psychology (145 Swalm)

Moderator: Mica Gould

La'Tigre Stokes (Grambling State University) "Queen Elizabeth I: A Catholic or Protestant Queen"

Dalicia McHenry (Grambling State University) "The Men behind the Virgin Queen: The Psychological Damage of an Icon"

1:30-2:45 Panel C: Creative Writing 6 (105 Swalm)

Moderator: Allen Berry

Allison Chestnut (William Carey University)

James Fowler (University of Central Arkansas)

Craig Albin (Missouri State University)

3:00-4:45 Panel A: Animality, Apartheids and Practices of Art for Life (110 Swalm)

Moderator: Field Brown

Andrea Spain (Mississippi State University) "Jane Alexander: the South African Mirror and Contemporary Global Apartheids"

Shannon Strickland (Mississippi State University) "Animal

Being and Bare Life: Elizabeth Costello's 'Report to an Academy'"

Izzy Robinson (Mississippi State University) "Creating Nietzsche's Truth within the Tiger's Gaze"

3:00-4:45 Panel B: Form and Persona in Nineteenth-Century British Literature (105 Swalm)

Moderator: Shalyn Claggett

Stephen Coleman, Jr. (Mississippi College) "A Journey from Darkness to Light: The Portrayal of the Victorian Orphan Child in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Great Expectations Through the Film Adaptations of David Lean"

Kenneth Mitchell (Southeastern Louisiana University) "Wordsworth's Letters: Literary Persona and Business Persona"

Ben Fisher (University of Mississippi, Emeritus) “Rossetti and the Ballad”

3:00-4:45 Panel C: Creative Writing 7 (115 Swalm)

Moderator: Brianna Warner

Karen Knox (Jackson State University)

Cassandra Hawkins-Wilson (Jackson State University)

Yvonne Tomek (Delta State University)

Creative Work

Poems

By Allen Berry

By His Own Troops

One of the City's most prolific crooks
Allen waits patiently on a rural road in Chelsea.
Allen Leaps out! James Realizes he has to use his gun.
Miraculously the bullet ricochets off his suspender buckle.
Mr. Fenno isn't going to put up with this.
Allen is tried and sentenced to 20 years.

James' health rapidly deteriorates.
He becomes obsessed with the MAN.
In the face to face exchange, he writes a memoir of his life.
Soon after, he succumbs to tuberculosis in a final shocking twist.

Take a minute to indulge, share with friends, it only takes
A little bit of time for the perfect escape.
The Strikers are unstoppable! That hasn't changed.
The universe in a bowl! Excellence in Flight! Get Cozy! 1999!
Toast knowing your strengths! You look great! Keep off the Pole!

James Allen dies in prison leaving a legacy.
He hopes to secure his place in history, particularly bound.
Skin from a highwayman's back is removed, tanned,
used by a local bookbinder, courtesy of A.K.A. George Walton.
Hic Libre Waltonus Cute Compactus Est!
I cannot be killed by Yankee bullets!

Rumors of his invulnerability spread throughout the ranks!
Once more, he is in grave danger, but emerges unscathed.
Is the prophecy true? This battle scarred sword?
What the Ho Ho Heck are you thinking? Listen to the voice.
Luxury intelligently priced! You're the one I choose.
Six ahead, it isn't the same; inside jokes, strangers, cigars,
refuse purely out of respect, "I prefer to stay."
The Palmetto sharpshooters are shocked and dismayed,
the prophecy was in fact true. The young rising Confederate star
lies dead.

From the Travel Channel's "Mysteries in the Museum"

Her Death

In the early aftermath,
her death became a cell
and I a monk,
recording her life in
gradual deliberate script,
by the light of a candle.

In time her death
became a holy relic
a charm around my neck
that I would hold out
to ward off the darkness,
proof that she once existed.

Now her death is a portrait
hanging over the mantelpiece
of my life. Ever present, yet
unremarked upon, until a passing
guest pauses before it,
ponders, and asks its story.

Reflection

There is an old saying:
If you sit by the river
long enough,
you will see the body
of your enemy
come floating past.

I sat for a long time,
waiting.
Looking into
the mountain stream,
I saw my own reflection.

Satisfied,
I rose,
And made my way
home.

Poems

By Will Dawkins

Barcelona

Pressing humidity, intrusive even—
The kind that sticks to and beads upon
The skin.
That and the sheer stagnation and pungent odor of the air
Is what I first notice upon stepping out
Of the shell of the plane and into
Barcelona.

But it's the people, too.
There's a certain gait, swagger, a tense, emotive
Pull that at once calms and soothes,
Arouses and invigorates.
I think humidity
(And maybe more so humanity's incessant need to use artificially cool air,
To always have something going and running)
Does this to people—
Makes them live louder, livelier, lovelier,
Rawer.

Sweat, alcohol, fish, pork,
Loud, wild, mysterious, beautiful,
Gritty, gnarly, nasty, tasty,
Pure, dark, gothic,
Visceral,
Sexy.

A world where people immerse, even relish
In their own sweat and raw, human odor
And in the sweat and raw human odors of others,
Where human beings come together with
Their lust,
Their beauty,
Their attitude, and
Drink, no, gulp,
Life.

Always moving, always bustling, and then
Reapplying beauty, reapplying healthiness,
Only to begin the living, the sweating, and thus
The beauty again.
Tomorrow.
Perpetuating an appetite for life that is never
Quenched.

It Was You

It was you, of an earlier generation—
My parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents—
Who enslaved the African so that you could get rich.

It was you who not so long after
Slashed our great land to build a highway system
For the convenience of your gas-guzzling cars.

It was you who fled the inner city
Because you couldn't bear to live beside
The African whom you had for so long enslaved.

It was you who continued to make a Waste Land of our
Great Land, as you built cities around cities, sprawling suburbs
Littered with all those things that are the ruin of our landscape and our health.

It was you who polluted the earth
With gas and garbage and waste
And strip malls and preservatives and commercial agriculture.

It was you who wielded the earth to your own benefit
Providing you and your family with an oversized home
And a lawn and cars and a pool (full of water).

It was you who devised a ruinous system of life,
One suiting your own needs, your own purposes,
Without any notion of its cost to the future of mankind.

It was you who never knew the concept of Sustainability,
And now it is we who must teach you.

Kenton Park Monuments

Are these Kenton Park Monuments
Eroding the park's east side, or
Beautifying it, in their own strange, degenerative way?
Or is it I who's doing the eroding?

Whose wasteland is this, anyway?

Pondering, dreaming, I
Stroll our pug-mix by these
Paintless, rusted, smelling, filthy
Park monuments, these
Homes-on-wheels, rotting,
Decaying with the stains and smells
Of last night,
Of yesterday,
Of a week, a month, and a year ago.
And I wonder:
Is it I who is living,
Or is it they?

Why is it that as I daily glide past
These monuments of Kenton Park,
These markers of forgotten people
And forgotten lives,
I think of mortality?
Is it I who am forgotten and am dying,
Or is it they?

Slow to Spring

"Is that a bud, or are we hallucinating?" I ask.
"It's a bud," she replies.
Simultaneously, regretfully, we mumble, "No, we're hallucinating."
We are in fact hallucinating, too eager for
Yellow, Green, Pink, and White.
Too eager for color, for life here in
Oregon.

It's late April, and, since our previous hallucinations,
There have been three more weeks of rain,
Making us wonder if the smiles of Spring will
Ever arrive.

“Is that a bud, or are we hallucinating?” I ask.
“It’s a bud,” she replies.
Simultaneous, gleefully, we shout, “It’s a bud! So many of them!”
Countless buds—from plants, flowers, shrubs, trees,
So many that our eyes race across the landscape, unable to focus.
Countless birds, gliding, twittering, loving one another
And loving us
As they, too, sing about the slow Spring.

We are, all of us—
The buds, the birds, the bums of this world—
Waiting,
Watching,
Wondering,
Whispering.
Wiser that Spring is slow,
That she doesn’t arrive of our accord
But of her own.

We wait—impatiently, even angrily, yet gratefully.
For as Spring slowly arrives,
We of this great land
Know
That we will soon be rewarded,
That we will soon receive the long-awaited gifts of
Slow Spring: Patience, Wisdom, Love.

Origin

By Deanna Graves

“I was hired to do a job; that is all I know.” Well, I know more than that, but I’ve already said way too much. It is hard to focus when you are going to die. I am here in this dank dark cellar being interviewed about what I know and how much I know and when I knew what. He says his name is Cray, and he is a “good” vampire. Cray doesn’t look like your typical vampire. He is fortyish with salt and pepper hair and could have been a farmer in life. Well, big boy over in the corner must be a “bad” vampire because his name is Rian, spelt all special and he looks to be pushing two hundred and fifty pounds, with a barrel chest and bald. Every hair he has is sticking out his chin as a flaming red goatee. He has already said he would rather just kill me. I want to punch Big Boy in the mouth. I can’t be as afraid as I should be in this situation because I can’t help but think who do they think they are discussing and what are they going to do with me? I was trying to help those people! I am so angry, I just want to scream and cry and cuss. I have been told my best chance is speaking with Balin. Balin is supposedly in charge. Balin might just get off his high horse and listen to me and if he will, I might get out of this alive and with some answers of my own.

The heavy metal door opens with a scraping gust and this tall pale wraith comes in. His eyes are blood shot and his lips match the bluish tint of his skin. Balin comes sauntering in and takes a seat across from me. He doesn’t look well, and he doesn’t look happy to see me. He looks at me like the other two did. “Who are you exactly?” he asks. Well isn’t that the question?

“I am Anna Reynolds and I am an anthropologist.”

Balin says, “Tell me how it is you came to know about us and why I shouldn’t kill you Anna, the Anthropologist?” He sounds remotely interested and a tiny bit snarky. The other two move around behind Balin like I am about to put on a show. I am not sure where he wants me to start. Balin says, “Start wherever you like; I have plenty of time.”

You asked for it Dracula, I begin, “Well, to make extra money when I was interning after college, I did research for law firms and court houses. I looked for beneficiaries for estates and trusts. My specialty was family lineages and histories. I was hired by a man, Phillip Landry, who offered me a rental property on his land at a huge discount while I did some work for him. He wasn’t any different than any other client except that he wanted to know more about any existing family members that might still be alive. Now, I have done numerous family trees, and I assumed that he didn’t know or didn’t have contact with his family. Either way, it wasn’t my business. In my research I came across pictures from the family’s past, records of births and deaths- the normal things you find when doing a family tree; however, I often came across records and pictures that suspiciously reminded me of Phillip. After many interviews and late night dinners, Phillip and I got to know each other and I told him about my life. I eventually told him about my suspicions, and he told me that he would have to kill me. Thus confirming what I already knew: he wasn’t human and that was that. If you knew about my childhood, you would know that, growing up the way I did, I know nothing is impossible and I don’t shock easily. In the beginning, I’m not sure why he didn’t kill me or feed from me or turn me into his

pet, but I tried to find some peace in knowing that I wasn't crazy for always believing in the supernatural and that Phillip and I were friends-well, kind of."

The only way I can tell Balin is even listening to me is his eyes are moving from one of mine to the other, like he is trying to catch me not telling the truth.

"When was this?" he asks.

"Twenty years ago, maybe longer. I can't remember for sure but when the job for him was over he was reluctant to allow me to go back to my life. I told him that I would never tell anyone about him and I never did. About a year later Phillip asked me to meet with him. He told me that there were feuding factions in the vampire race and that it was because of their differing beliefs in their origins. He said that some vampires knew about me and that I could show good faith by helping him out. I didn't understand at the time if he was using me or trying to help me; but I didn't need or want to know what might happen to me if I didn't. He needed my help researching a story about the origin of vampires. Alone, he had been finding information about the vampire myths and collecting data from all over Europe and Asia dating back a thousand years. Old letters and notes, maps and family Bibles filled with names and connections just waiting to be investigated. He could not access some information or visit certain sites because of the logistics of travel and exposure to the sun. He told me that this was where I came in. I didn't care about vampire problems; I had plenty of my own. Phillip began telling me why I should care. Apparently my working for him wasn't a coincidence. He told me that he had always known who I was and that I was of great interest to him. Apparently he had followed my life since I was a child. My mother died in an institution when I was

twelve and I had never known my father. My Aunt Rachel took me in until I was sixteen when she left me with one of her boyfriends and ran off. I ran away, got a job as a waitress and eventually went to school. Phillip, however, knew enough of the details to convince me he knew more about my life than I did. It appears by Phillip's account that my father was an important man and was slumming by being with my mother. She got pregnant with me but my father wouldn't marry her and wanted her to get rid of the baby. She wouldn't and that was the end of him. She had always been strange. She was into divination and tarot; believed she could talk to the dead, cast spells and all that crap. She was a drinker and lost custody of me when she was committed. She committed suicide while in the asylum. Phillip said that he had been a friend of my mothers and kept up with me simply out of loyalty to her memory. I asked him why he hadn't helped my mother more. If he had been such a loyal friend, why could he not have done more; he was a vampire for God's sake. What is the use if you can't enthrall a young woman into sanity or convince her that she should want to live because she had a child in the world that needed her?"

Balin speaks up, "So you were able to just accept all this as fact without any proof? Phillip knew you and your mother, he was a vampire, your mom died in an asylum?"

I continued, "Look I've seen stuff most people can't imagine, like when my mom would stir things up on a Saturday night-things I still can't explain. If you think you are the only supernatural thing out there you got another thing coming. People used to come and go from our house at all times of the day and night. I had no reason to question Phillip; he had always been kind to me and what few details he

gave me were more than any one had ever shared with me. Phillip showed me the information he had gathered about the vampire origins. I began to look closer, to find clues and other leads I could follow. Phillip was convinced that if he could show proof of a tie between the vampire clans, he could prevent killings that he believed would lead to war between your kind. The research was nothing I had not already done a hundred times before. It was several weeks before I found connections between old records in the states and records in Europe, the Netherlands, Russia, the Middle East and Egypt. Sometimes it was just pieces of stories or lists of names; but the further back we went, the trail became smaller and smaller. Egypt was mentioned the most, and after doing language analysis for the better part of a month, I was relatively sure I was on the right path. The origin story, as the vampires knew it, was a convoluted mash up of creation myths from ancient cultures. Sumerians, Akkadians, Phoenicians and the Semites had creation myths based on glorious rulers who rose from their mortal tombs to cast off mortality and rule their kingdoms. Officially vampire origins were vague and ran the gamut of blood disorder to god with no real record of a beginning. Vampires had to be so secretive throughout history making accurate research impossible. The Akkadians and Phoenicians created the first written alphabet, and most ancient writings could be traced back through the lines of proto-alphabet and hieroglyphs. The writings brought me to several spots in Egypt. Dendera, at the Temple of Hathor is where I found Lemuret, the oldest name I could find in reference to a vampire. In life Lemuret had been some sort of record keeper but may have transformed several prominent vampires that had gone on to posterity in the Middle Ages. In life, he had been a scribe,

probably for a royal house, which would explain why he had been taught to read and write. These hieroglyphs were close to 4000 years old and were a recording of his name, not his death. This information was important because ancient Egyptians would not keep a record of an Akkadian. The city of Akkad and its people had died out 2000 years before, leaving us a pre-proto alphabet.

I found what could possibly be a mention of Lemuret at Komombo in an ancient city in the southern Nile valley. The temple, one of the first erected in antiquity, is located in the City of Gold in Nubt. The reference was small but confirmed earlier information from the temples at Karnak and Luxor. This man may have been a vampire, one of the first. I kept Phillip informed of all my findings, and he would make sure that travel and lodging were ready for me to and from each destination. It wasn't until I reached Napta Playa in the west that I really started to be able to put all the pieces together. Ancient warriors and clansmen on the plains and lushness of Africa had erected great pillars with very distinct glyphs. These glyphs alone were incomprehensible but put with the research from Dendera, Komombo, and Karnak, plus all the stories and legends from Europe a theory unfolded. The funerary rituals in ancient Akkad involved interring all the king's wealth for his afterlife and so the king's remains would be safe, two of the strongest and bravest soldiers from the king's army would be buried with him. These guards would be fed from small shafts built into the complex tombs. Over time and after many kings passed, successive soldiers began to need less and less food. They had no way to communicate with the outside world and in the darkness they began to change. Their eyes were able to adjust so that they could see in the dark. Their senses

heightened and they were able to put themselves into a trance like sleep for long periods of time. Their aging process slowed. Their need for nourishment in the beginning wasn't very strong but once they could leave the tombs and the supply of blood grew, so did their appetites. Many tomb robbers met grisly ends in the beginning. In modern times, remnants of tombs would be found filled with the remains of rats and snakes. Tombs that could only be opened from the inside and offerings left years after the king died could now be explained. As the practice went on and priest reopened some tombs to bury other family members, they would find soldiers that appeared to be dead. The bodies would be removed from the tombs and upon exposure to the sun, burst into flames; thus over time the ancient Egyptians would say that tombs were cursed and began using the opening of the mouth ceremony to enable the king to speak, after death, to his guards and warn others to stay away from his chambers.”

Cary and Rian have squatted against the wall but Balin is stick straight in his chair. I don't know if I should keep talking, so I don't. I sit quiet and take a moment to allow the weight of my experiences to level back down on my shoulders. All I've done is move from one job to another, always trying to do better and get ahead. Other people's problems are not my concern. I simply thought that if I could find the information Phillip was looking for that it would help him help them. Why does any of this matter now? It has been twenty years and I have moved past my time in Africa. I have gone on to other research and teach full time at the university. I have a great house in New Orleans and am relatively happy with this life. The smell in this

cellar reminds me of machine oil, and the rumbling hum of a turbine is muffled behind the wall. I wonder where I am.

From the time Rian grabbed me on the street till we got here was about forty minutes, so I think I am still in the city, maybe the quarter. The repetitious rumbling sounds might just be the motor of the carousel in the Hotel Monteleone, which would explain the smell of old oil and grinding gears. The hotel was built in 1886 so the cellar is old but the Carousel Bar wasn't installed until 1949. I'm really tired and rambling. I would rather go home now. My little house in the Magazine District seems a long way away. Balin is looking at me like he is trying to choose something from the menu. He says, "Well, go on."

"I was in Europe and Egypt for over a year. I couldn't be sure that all the information I found was accurate or that I had interpreted correctly. There was no one for me to show it to or ask for their opinions. I had no way of knowing for sure that I had found the truth. Phillip was waiting for me when I got back home. I spent the next few days showing him everything I had found and explaining how it all went together. The chain of facts and evidence was precise and I kept perfect records of when and where and what was found. I left him with the information, cashed my check and went on with my life. The fall of the next year, I received a client who had been referred to me by Phillip, but I never heard from Phillip again. I was in a car accident a few years later and when I recovered, I found the little house in the district and have set up house there for about fifteen years. Now, could you please explain what the hell makes a forty-year-old human, unmarried anthropologist such a danger to you and yours? How about letting me get back to my life?"

Balin turns in his chair, facing me and I catch the scent of carnations and creamer. He begins low and steady like what he has to say might set off a bomb. “I have been in the South since before the war. I liked the climate and New Orleans was a good choice with its night life and historic district. I am not your typical vampire; I like books, museums and art. I don’t kill if I don’t have to and I am not a glutton when it comes to a meal. I like being around humans. Most vampires believe that they are better than humans and even better than some of their own kind. When you see yourselves on lunchboxes and tee shirts, you lose a bit of your supernatural appeal. Vampires have become a cliché. Now, your mother, she was an extraordinary person.”

“My mother, how did you know my mother?” I suddenly have this sinking sick feeling like I am falling. “Jesus, can we open a window or something, I can’t stand the air down here.” I am just before panicking. I have this feeling like I know what he is going to say but I don’t want to hear the words because if I hear them, it will make things real and I can barely live with the little truth I know now. I am conflicted because I want him to answer all my questions but I am scared of the answers. There is a thick layer of turmoil on the back of my throat. I think I am going to throw up and pass out, that would be easier.

“Get her some water, and turn on some air.” Cray, the nice one, tells Rian. A few sips and a minute of deep breathing and I am back eye-to-eye with Balin. He continues, “Your mother was interesting. She believed she could talk to the dead, and I had seen her with the tarot cards, an aura professional. She was beautiful and intelligent and attracted the attention of a vampire. Her dalliance was notorious in

our world because she had no fear. She put herself in danger by being with him and he put himself in danger by being with her. He was stubborn but not stupid. When his ranking and wealth, which included his children, were threatened, he left your mother. The vampire officials were still not entirely happy with his slap on the wrist and set out to destroy him. Your mother, on the other hand, had been enthralled and hypnotized to the point of insanity but somehow was able to keep the fact she was pregnant from her aggressors.”

“Who is my father, and what am I?” I am going to be sick. This can’t possibly be true. “Who was the person who hurt my mom?” Suddenly I remember those few short years before my mom was taken away. She would sit for hours watching me, like she expected me to do something special. She would drink herself into oblivion and repeat spells of protection until she passed out. I always thought her crazy and that she never loved me, but she was trying to protect me the best way she knew how. She died in that hospital not knowing if I was okay.

“Your mother called your father when she was put into the asylum. She left him a message about you asking him to do something for you. You were with DHS by then. A vampire was sent to take care of your mother and your father. Your mother didn’t commit suicide; she was murdered. Our father followed her shortly thereafter,” Balin says this with real grief in his voice.

Did you say “Our father?” I can’t understand this. How is it even possible and I remembered I have already answered this question. Vampires come from humans. Genetically it could happen. But I am nothing special, I can’t see in the dark, I don’t

drink blood and I am forty for God's sake. "Who was my father and who killed my mother, Balin?"

"Your, well our father's name was Alexander Duprav. He was a good man who loved New Orleans and human women. He loved your mother but was not in a position to help her when she needed it most. As for who killed your mother, that was Phillip. Phillip was and still is trying to rule the clans of the South. He hired you to find information about our origins in hopes that you would find something he could use to gain leverage. Instead you found what most of us believe to be the truth. Your car accident was no coincidence; its timing was when we found your research. Phillip had taken great pride in passing the work off as his own. When we found out that a human completed the research and still didn't leak the information, we had you followed and have watched you from that day till this. *The Times Picayune* posted a story about a local professor who is writing a novel, and, well, we simply had to know what you were going to write. Your notes were found in your home last night and we are content that you had no intention of releasing our information to the public. I decided it was time for you to know the truth as payment for your loyalty and silence."

"You are 100% vampire and I am not. How is that possible if you are my brother? I ask.

"Father turned me; he fathered you. I don't blame him for his misdeeds. I have tried to learn from them, and because of my patience I have been rewarded with loyalty and gratitude. Now I have one last thing to ask of you. How would you

like to do a job for me? I think it is time we find Phillip, don't you?" Balin is standing now as he asks me this.

Author Kurt Vonnegut once said that he felt like a gun was held to his head any time somebody told him that they loved him. He felt forced to reply in the affirmative. I felt a lot like that now, forced to reply in the affirmative. If you could look at somebody rhetorically, that is the exact look I was receiving from Balin.

So I stand in return and say, "I would love to do a job for you, Balin." Cray and Rian drive me back to my little house. I am upright in the back seat as opposed to the trunk like my earlier ride. Rian opens my door and puts out his hand for me, such a different countenance from earlier. I walk inside and turn on my computer and begin searching for anything that might help me find Phillip. It's going to be a long fall....

Dr. Charles Chiplin's Biopoem

By Cassandra L. Hawkins-Wilson

Charles

Accomplished, talented, and gifted

Son of God, educator of many

Who loved writing, teaching, and inspiring

Who craved beautification of his surroundings, motivated his students to want more,
and treasured being of assistance to others

Who feared being unable to share with others, cringed at disrespectfulness, and
daringly wanted students to appreciate the momentous opportunity to casually stroll
the halls of the Charles F. Moore Building, while soaking up knowledge from the
faculty and staff at Jackson State University

Who despised the solemn presence of ignorance, feared that the younger generation
would chose the "fast" life, while losing sight of their significance and purpose in the
world, and dreaded the viciousness of dogs

Who loved God with all of his heart, valued being a lifeline for students in an
imperfect world, and adored his colleagues in Undergraduate Studies

Who exposed to Jackson State, his students, and the world to his esteemed talent as
an author, educator, musician, and playwright, soothed other with his words,
whether orally or written, and encouraged students to reach far beyond their fear of
failure and strive towards their desire for success

Who wanted his students to triumph beyond their inevitable trials and tribulations,
desired to see an end to students taking their education and professors for granted,
and dared students to use writing as a continuous cycle of learning and exploring
who they are

Who infused the significance of a spiritual relationship with the sophisticated ground
of higher education, persuaded students to respect themselves, others, and the power
of education, and encouraged students to rebel against wallowing in a stagnant
existence

Who summarized his life in his motto, "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then
my living shall not be in vain," who proved that a passion for education bridges the
gap between the unknown and self-actualization, and fulfilled his calling by sharing

The Gospel

Born in Vicksburg

Chiplin

The Bonus Merchant

By Christina Hopper

It all started when the phone rang on Friday morning. “Ivie Bridges?” The voice that said her name was familiar, but she couldn’t quite place it.

“Yessuh?”

“Good morning, ma’am,” the voice boomed over the line. “Do you know the Bonus Merchant?” It was the local radio announcer, calling as part of his weekly show. If Ivie had taken a minute to think about it, to realize who he was and why he was calling, she would have cheerily announced that the Bonus Merchant was Turner’s Grocery and she would have won forty dollars.

But Ivie didn’t have time to think, so she just said, “Naw, Ah knows lots a Merchants, but Ah don’t believe Ah knows a Mistah Bonus.” The radio announcer laughed so hard that he accidentally hung up on her. Ivie just shrugged, dropped the phone onto its receiver and went back to her chores.

James Reed was lying on the floor of his mother’s kitchen, fixing the drain on her sink, when he heard it. He chuckled to himself and shook his head. “Mister Bonus,” he said with a grin. “That’s funny.”

On Saturday, Ivie’s name was on everyone’s lips as they opened up their storefronts and the farmers came into town to buy their weekly supplies. The old men who spit and tell lies on the porch of the Courthouse slapped their knees as they told the story over and over. Even the kids were talking about it as they rode the loop and sat on the tailgates of their trucks in the high school parking lot that night.

By Sunday, everyone in the county knew the name Ivie Bridges, and on Monday morning, the owner of the newspaper himself walked up the beaten down dirt path in Ivie's front yard and knocked on her door.

Ivie peeked through the curtains on the kitchen window and saw the man standing on her porch in a stiff-collared cream-colored shirt, starched grey pants, and shiny black shoes. He was tall and skinny, with wavy brown hair and freckles sprinkled across his boyish face. "Lawd," she muttered under her breath, "he must done be at da wrong house." She pulled her hands from the dishwater and wiped them on her apron.

"Mizz Ivie." Ivie turned around and saw eight year old Parris Harris, her neighbor's granddaughter, standing in the doorway between the kitchen and the den with her bare feet spread wide and her hands planted firmly on her hips. "Dey's a man at da do' fo' you."

Ivie had been up since her neighbor's rooster crowed at a quarter till five, but she was still wearing her slippers and had a scarf tied around her hair. She patted her damp brown fingers over the scarf and pulled its knot tight. "Ah'm a cummin'," she said.

"What dat man doin' out heah?" Parris asked, crossing her arms over her purple t-shirt. "Mama done said dat if da man from da carlot come 'round, we ain't supposed to tell him nuttin'."

"Hush, child," Ivie said. "Git on outside and play wit yo' friends."

Parris raised her chin in defiance after being dismissed, but when her eyes met Ivie's she reconsidered, dropped her chin, and lowered her eyes to the floor. "Yessum."

When Ivie walked into the den, the man waved through the screen door. The kids had flung the wood door open wide, but hadn't invited him in, and he was still out on the porch. "Miss Ivie Bridges?"

"Yessuh?" Ivie tugged the door open a little ways, but didn't step aside to allow the stranger inside.

"I'm James Reed," he said, holding his hand out to Ivie.

She shook it, but still stood in the doorway. "Yessuh," she said. "You write fo' da paper."

"Yes, ma'am."

"I done paid my bill, Mistah Reed."

"Yes, I know. That's not why I'm here."

Ivie's large eyes rounded. "Den why is you heah? Dis a good ways from where you stays up on dat hill outside town."

"I want to interview you," James said, pulling a little spiral notebook and a pencil from his shirt pocket. "For the newspaper."

She laughed. "Interview me?" she asked. "What fo'?"

"Well, I just wanted to talk to you," James said, "and I thought I would write about you as the Person of the Week."

"Person of da Week?" Ivie shook her head. "Dere ain't nobody wants to read 'bout me."

“I think they will. You’re a pretty popular person around town lately.”

“You mean dere’s a a buncha folks laughin’ ‘bout me in town, right, Mistah Reed?” Ivie asked. “Ah know dey’s a laughin’. But Ah don’t care. Dey can laugh if’n dey feel like it. Guess it’s good ta have somethin’ to laugh about.”

“So you did it as a joke?”

“Twatt’n no joke, Mistah Reed. Ah’s jest busy, what wit all dees kids ‘round. And Ah’s jest watt’n thinkin’ straight. Ah didn’t know dat wuz da man from da radio, or’s Ah woulda fo’ sho told him dat Turner’s Grocery wuz da Bonus Merchant las’ week. Dat pot o’ money wuz nearly forty dollas. I sho woulda took dat money if’n Ah hadn’t been so busy.”

James looked around at the group of kids playing in Ivie’s yard. “You keep these kids every day?” he asked.

“Sho do,” Ivie said, standing up straighter and smiling. “Specially in da summers. During school too, sometimes, if’n one of ‘em is sick or somethin’.”

“So you run a daycare?” James counted seven kids in the front yard and three little ones on the den floor behind Ivie.

“Naw, Ah don’t know nothin’ ‘bout dat,” she said. “Ah jest keep watch over ‘em while dey mamas is at work. Ah don’t really keep ‘em, jest watch after ‘em a bit.” She looked over at the clock on the kitchen wall and started to push the door closed. “‘Cuse me, Mistah Reed, but Ah’s got ta git ta cookin’ dinner, or’s dem kids gone be thinkin’ dey’s dyin’ a hunger pains soon. Sorry, now, but dey ain’t no story fo’ yo’ paper ‘round heah.”

“Wait,” James said, stepping closer to the door. “Could I come in and talk to you while you cook? I won’t get in the way, I promise.”

Ivie rolled her eyes towards Heaven and shook her head. “Ah reckon so,” she said. “Might as well stay fo’ dinner, too.”

James shook his head. “That won’t be necessary,” he said. “I don’t mean to be any trouble.”

“Tain’t no trouble,” Ivie said. “One mo’ ain’t never gone make no difference, da way Ah cook. ‘Specially one as skinny as you.” She opened the screen door for James and he followed her into the kitchen. She had wide shoulders and hips, and she shuffled her feet when she walked. “You’ll have ta ‘cuse da mess,” she said, even though the little house was spotlessly clean. “Ah hadn’t done my moppin’ yet.” She pulled a chair out from under a little round table that was covered with a red and white checkered tablecloth and patted the top back rung. “Have a seat, Mistah Reed.”

“Thank you.” James sat down and flipped open his notebook.

“Ah read yo’ paper ever week,” Ivie said. “Ah ‘specially like da stories yo’ Mama write ‘bout da Bible.”

James smiled. “Thank you,” he said. “I’ll tell Mama that. She’ll be tickled.”

“Ah used ta work wit yo’ Mama,” she said. “She a real nice lady.”

“Yes, she is.” James watched Ivie put a large black skillet on the stove and turn on the gas burner. She plopped a big scoop of Crisco into the skillet.

“You like fried chicken, Mistah Reed?” she asked.

“Yes, ma’am.”

Ivie smiled. “Ah make da best fried chicken yo’ ever gone put in yo’ mouth,” she said. “Ah don’t like ta brag on myself, but Ah’s proud a my chicken.” She took a bowl of chicken out of the refrigerator and set it on the counter, then pulled a large brown paper grocery sack out of a drawer by the stove. “Yo’ Mama used ta cook some good rolls when she worked at da school wit me,” Ivie said. “Ah ‘member how all da kids would come in da lunch room jest a sniffin’ ‘cause dey smelled ‘em cookin’.”

James watched her dump some flour into the grocery sack. She tossed in a pinch of salt, a few shakes of pepper, and a generous dash of cayenne pepper into the bag before she placed the chicken down into it. “Have you always liked to cook?” James asked.

“Oh, yessuh,” Ivie said. “Ever since Ah was high-tall,” she said, motioning about knee-high. “Ah’d climb up on da stool in my Mama’s kitchen an’ do whatever she did. Could cook by myself by da time Ah’s sebem or eight.” She folded the top of the bag over a few times and gave it a good shake. “Den Ah gots da job at da school, cookin fo’ da school kids.”

She dropped the first few pieces of chicken into the grease and they bubbled and popped and hissed. James grinned when he saw some little faces peering in the screen door behind Ivie. One of the boys, the littlest one, pressed his nose to the screen, closed his eyes, and took a deep breath.

Ivie saw them, too, and she winked at James. “Whatchu doin’ leanin’ on my screen do’ like dat?” she said, turning around and shaking a wooden spoon towards

the door. The kids jumped, but then Ivie smiled and they laughed and ran back into the yard. “Dem two little ‘ens is mines,” Ivie said.

“Your children?”

“Naw,” Ivie rolled her eyes at James and shook the spoon in his direction. “Ah’s too old fo’ dat,” she said. “Dey’s my grandchillen. But dey stays wit me.” She lifted a lid off a large pot of what smelled like turnip greens and stirred them with one hand while she flipped chicken with the other. “Dey Mama’s in Memphis bookooing around, tryin’ ta be a singer or somethin’,” she said. “But dey Daddy’s got hisself a real good job up in Detroit, buildin’ cars.” She nodded towards a framed picture hanging on the wall by the refrigerator. “Dat’s him, dere,” she said. “His name James, like yours.” She smiled. “He been savin’ his money, and he say he gone bring a car a his own down heah when he come at Christmas.”

“That’s great,” James said. “What kind is he going to get?”

Ivie shrugged. “Ah told him to jest pick him out a nice one,” she said. “It’ll be a sight when he pulls up in his very own car.” She lowered her voice a little and grinned. “Ah can’t wait ta see Patrice Riley’s face when my boy comes up in his own car.”

“Who’s that?”

“My neighbor ‘cross da road,” she said. “She act right top-superior, like she better dan da rest of us ‘cause her son went to college an all.” Ivie shook her head. “Don’t git me wrong,” she said, “Ah’s right proud a Eddie, but his Mama... whew.” She shook her head. “But dat’s a story fo’ another day.”

She pulled the first pieces of chicken out of the grease and dropped in the rest. “You ain’t serious ‘bout puttin’ me in da paper, is you, Mistah Reed?” she asked.

“I am,” James said. “I think people would like to read about you and your cooking and how you watch these kids in the summers.”

Ivie wiped her wide hands on her apron. “Ah really didn’t mean ta say what Ah did, Mistah Reed. Ah’s just so busy, what wit da kids and gittin dinner fixed, dat I just plumb didn’t think about what Ah was sayin’.” She gingerly lifted a piece of chicken to check how brown it was getting, shook her head and dropped it back down into the bubbling grease. “Ah knew dat voice was familiar, but Ah jest couldn’t place it. An’ when he ask about da Bonus Merchant, dat jest wadn’t what was on my mind. You know, we still gots da party-line on dis side a town, an Ah guess Ah jest thought he was lookin’ for da Merchants what live down da road. Ah jest said it and had already hung up an’ was going ‘bout my chores again when Ah saw Patrice Riley cumin up da road a cacklin’ like a hen. Nex’ thing Ah know, everybody was askin’ me if’n Ah knew a Mistah Bonus.” She flipped her chicken over and rested her hand on her hip. “Like Ah said befo’, if’n folks wanna laugh, Ah guess dey can jest go on an’ laugh.” She let a hearty laugh out, as if to make her point. “It is kinda funny,” she admitted. “But Ah sho wish Ah’d got dat forty dollas.”

“What would you have done with the money?” James asked.

Ivie pursed her lips and her big eyes rounded, then she shook her head and laughed. “Don’t matter,” she said. “Tain’t never gone happen, no how.”

“What?”

“Well, Mistah Reed,” she said, “Ah really want ta open me up a restaurant. Ah think Ah’d be real good at it, an’ like Ah said, Ah cook da best chicken yo’ ever put in yo’ mouth.”

“That sounds like a great idea,” James said.

Ivie shrugged. “Jest an old woman a dreamin’,” she said. “Don’t pay dat no never mind.” She took the last of the chicken out of the grease and stacked in on a platter. James helped her carry all her bowls and dishes out to the backyard to the two picnic tables under the big oak tree on the edge of her yard. She put two fingers in her mouth and whistled. “Come on!” she yelled.

Kids appeared from all directions. Each came up to Ivie with their palms out and she checked their hands before she handed them their plates. A few of them got dirty looks and instructions to “git yo’self washed up ‘fore you come up heah fo’ yo’ dinner.” James sat with the kids.

Parris Harris sat beside him, swinging her bare feet over the firmly packed dirt that covered the back yard. “You gonna write ‘bout Mizz Ivie, huh?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Whatchu gone say ‘bout her?”

James shrugged. “I don’t know yet.”

He helped Ivie carry all the dishes back to the house, but she waved him away from the sink. “Yo’ Mama’ll never fo’give me if’n Ah let you git dat pretty shirt stained,” she said.

“Miss Ivie, are you going to let me write about you for the Person of the Week article?” he asked.

She shrugged. “It’s yo’ paper,” she said.

“But I don’t want to write about you without your permission.” Ivie shrugged again and chewed on her lip while she washed the dishes. “Just think about what Miss Riley will say when she sees the paper,” James said.

“She’ll keel over dead,” she said with a chuckle.

“Plus, the Person of the Week gets forty dollars,” James said.

“Really?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

The article appeared in that Wednesday’s paper. James wrote about Ivie’s cooking and how she took care of all the neighborhood kids during the summers. He talked about how she loved to read his mother’s weekly Bible study column. He bragged for two paragraphs about how good Ivie’s chicken tasted. And he ended his article by saying that, although Ivie didn’t know Mister Bonus, Mister Bonus (whoever he was) would be proud to know her.

A framed copy of the article hangs on the wall by the cash register at Ivie’s Place, its edges starting to yellow and the print beginning to fade. People drive for miles just to taste Ivie’s fried chicken. She doesn’t cook much anymore, but she sits on a stool by that register and greets every customer who comes in. Last week, Ivie’s Place was the Bonus Merchant for the local radio station. On Friday, James came in for his plate of fried chicken and turnip greens. His hair is streaked with grey now, and weekly helpings of Ivie’s fried chicken have put a little weight on him, but he still

has freckles splashed across his boyish face. James walked around the counter and hugged Ivie. “Miss Ivie Bridges, do you know the Bonus Merchant?” he asked with a wide grin.

“Naw,” Ivie said, tossing her head back and letting out a hearty laugh. “Ah don’t know no Mistah Bonus.”

Running Away

By Christina Hopper

Mama slapped him for saying “shit.” He had been trying out all sorts of words like that for weeks, but never in front of Mama. I didn’t really understand why she hit him. After all, she was the one that he’d heard say it in the first place. But she did. Then, with a few dirty words of her own, she dragged him down the hall and told him to stay in his room for the rest of the night. I followed on her heels and realized that I was standing on the wrong side of the door the second that she slammed it.

I sat down Indian style under the window and ran Hot Wheels cars over my legs while I watched Jonathan toss cards into a baseball cap.

“I wish we could go to Granny’s.”

Jonathan propped himself up on his elbow and looked down at me from the bed. “We can’t go anywhere,” he said. “Don’t you ever listen, Jess?”

I listened more than any of them knew. I was the only one that heard Daddy tell Mama that he wanted a divorce and that he was going to take me and Jonathan and David away. Daddy caught me crying later, when he came to kiss me goodnight before he went to work, and I told him what I’d heard. He said that Mama loved us, but that she couldn’t take care of us like we needed her to, so he was going to take us to Granny’s big farm where we could run and play and always be safe.

I had dreamed about a big farm that night. The next morning, I woke up when I heard someone banging on the door. David answered it because he couldn’t

wake Mama up. He didn't know I was listening, but I heard the policeman tell him that Daddy had been in a bad wreck.

I heard Mama sneak her boyfriend into the house that same night. I heard him say they would rob a gas station in the next town, and I heard them laughing because they got away with it while they counted their money.

"I listen," I said, pouting and crossing my arms over my chest.

"Whatever." Jonathan fell back across the bed and picked up his baseball and David's old glove. He tossed the ball into the air, dangerously close to the dusty globe on the ceiling fan, and caught it just inches above his face. I didn't have anything better to do, so I started counting.

The forty-sixth time he tossed the ball, something slid in the gravel in front of the house. Jonathan jumped up to look out the window and the ball landed on the plywood floor with a thud. "It's Lenny," he muttered.

Lenny was Mama's boyfriend. He was skinny, with stringy, dirty-looking blonde hair and a long nose. I hated it when Lenny came over. It usually meant that the den was going to be full of funny smelling smoke and that the TV was going to be turned up too loud and that Mama was going to laugh at things that weren't funny. Plus, Lenny liked to touch my hair. He would tug at the ends of my ponytail and smile at me around the cigarette that was always hanging from his lips.

"You really want to go to Granny's?" Jonathan asked.

I nodded.

"Then let's go."

"But, I thought..."

Jonathan shushed me and looked back out the window where Lenny was showing Mama his new motorcycle. "Get some clothes," he whispered. "Hurry."

I pulled my only pair of blue jeans and some tattered shorts out of a drawer and stacked them on the bed. "You better get a jacket, too," Jonathan said. He took all my clothes and shoved them into his backpack with his ball and David's glove. "I'll be right back," he said. "Stay here."

I listened to the old floors of the trailer creak while he tiptoed down the hall. He came back a few minutes later with two Pop-tarts and a couple cans of Coke. He shoved them into a smaller backpack and handed it to me. "You need anything else?"

I looked around the room and tried to remember if there was anything worth taking with me. We always had nice things when Daddy was there, but when he died, Mama sold most of our stuff. I pulled a little box out from under the bed and tucked it into my bag. "What's in there?" Jonathan asked.

"A necklace that Daddy gave me."

Jonathan tugged a book out from under the mattress and took out his favorite baseball cards. "Put these in there, too." He shoved his baseball cap into his bag and zipped it up.

"Are we gonna leave David a note so he can find us?"

Jonathan shook his head. "He'll know where we are." He crouched by the door and put his finger over his lips. "We just have to wait for them to turn on the TV," he whispered. "When they do, it'll be so loud they won't hear us." I nodded and strained to hear what was going on in the den. When we heard the theme song

for *The Price is Right*, Jonathan pulled his backpack onto his shoulders and nodded at me. “Let’s go,” he hissed.

My stomach was all tied in knots. “Do you even know the way to Granny’s house?”

“Shh...” Jonathan clapped his hand over my mouth and pointed to the bathroom. “In here,” he whispered. I followed him and watched him climb onto the toilet and push the heavy window above it open. “Here,” he said, holding out his hand. I grabbed it and he pulled me up onto the edge of the toilet seat. “We’re gonna jump out, okay?”

I gulped and almost shook my head, but I knew Jonathan wouldn’t understand that I was afraid. David would have, but not Jonathan. So I nodded once and my long ponytail slapped against my backpack. We climbed onto the windowsill and Jonathan counted to three. He clamped his hand hard over my mouth when we jumped and I squeezed my eyes shut tight.

Dust flew up into our faces when we landed and the cans in my backpack clinked together loudly. Maggie, our Daddy’s old hound dog, ran towards us and tugged at her chain. “Can we take Maggie with us?” I asked.

Jonathan shrugged. “Sure.” He unhooked her from her chain, hooked two fingers under her collar, and gave her a tug.

“Which way do we go?” I asked.

Jonathan bit his lip for a second and stood with one hand pressed to his forehead, shielding his eyes from the late afternoon sun. He pointed to the woods

behind the house. “This way,” he said. We ran across the yard and into the trees with Maggie right behind us.

“Jonathan, are we running away?”

He took his baseball cap out of his backpack and shoved it down onto his head. “I guess so.”

“Do you think Mama will miss us?”

Jonathan rubbed his face, where Mama’s handprint was still a blotchy red outline on his cheek. “Do you think she will?” he asked.

I shrugged and looked down at my worn sneakers. “Come on,” Jonathan said, tugging at my arm. “If we’re gonna get to Granny’s before dark, we better get going.”

* * * * *

“We’ve been walking for forever!” I whined. “How much farther, Jonathan?”

“I don’t know, Jess.” Jonathan put his hands on his hips and kicked at a pebble.

I crossed my arms over my chest and sat down on a big rock. “I’m hot.” Tears ran down my dirty cheeks. “And my feet hurt. And these cans are heavy. And it’s getting dark.”

“How did you get so good at pouting?” Jonathan asked.

“I wish David was here.”

I felt new tears burn my eyes and Jonathan shook his head. “Don’t you start crying,” he said, pointing his finger in my face. “Now, would you rather be out here with me, or back at the trailer with Mama and Lenny?”

I sniffed and wiped the back of my hand over my cheeks. “With you.” We heard a car coming down the road and Jonathan grabbed me by the shoulders and pulled me behind a tree.

I had those knots in my stomach again. If it was Mama and Lenny, they’d be really mad. When Lenny got mad, he got mean. I reached over and touched the rough scars on Jonathan’s arm, where Lenny had ground his cigarette into it the last time that he was mad, and felt my lip start to quiver. “Jonathan?”

“Hush!” Jonathan pushed my hand away from his arm and pulled his sleeve down over the scars. “They’re not gonna find us.”

“But...”

He put his hand over my mouth. “Quiet,” he hissed.

“Do you see them?” I heard Mama’s voice call.

“Hold on a minute,” Lenny’s raspy voice answered. He pushed at the bushes and stomped by just a few feet away from us.

“Well, do you see them, or not?” Mama called.

Lenny pushed a limb and it scratched against my neck. I sucked in a breath and Jonathan tightened his grip around me and pressed his hand down harder on my mouth. Just then, Maggie growled, jumped out from behind us, and clamped down on Lenny’s hand. He screamed and kicked Maggie hard.

“What is it?” Mama’s yelled.

“That stupid dog!” Lenny reached for Maggie, but she yelped and ran off and Jonathan pulled me deeper into the woods. He tugged my arm as he ran and held me steady as I stumbled over the uneven ground behind him.

We came to a little clearing and Jonathan stopped and bent over with his hands resting on his knees. He wiped his face with the bottom of his shirt. I was crying and had the hiccups. “Calm down, Jess,” Jonathan said. He whistled softly and Maggie limped out of the woods and sat down beside me. “Look,” he said desperately, rubbing my back, “Maggie’s fine. You’re fine. They didn’t get us, so stop crying.”

Tires crunched over the gravel and I felt the knots in my stomach again. I gripped the straps of my backpack hard, expecting to see Mama and Lenny, but instead, I saw David’s old blue truck.

“Jon! Jess!” He called quietly, “I know you’re out here.” He stood in the rays of his truck's headlights and cupped his hands around his mouth. “Come on, guys!”

Jonathan stood up and jerked his head toward the truck. “Look, Jess,” he said, kicking the toe of my shoe. “David’s gonna take us to Granny’s house.”

I followed him to the truck and climbed in beside David. “There’s my beautiful girl,” David said. He looked just like Daddy, with wavy brown hair and hazel eyes that always looked tired. “You scared me, running off like that.”

“It was his idea,” I tattled, pointing to Jonathan.

David just grinned. “I know.” He stretched across the cab of the truck, ran his callused fingers over Jonathan’s shaggy brown hair and patted him on the

shoulder. Jonathan whistled for Maggie and let the tailgate down so she could jump in the back, then climbed into the truck beside me.

David patted my knee. "You guys walked a long way," he said as he pulled the truck out into the road.

"How long does it take to get to Granny's house?"

"A long time." David turned onto the highway and put his arm around my shoulders. The skin on his forearm, where it was supposed to be smooth, was bumpy and rough from Lenny's cigarettes, too. "Why don't you take a nap and I'll wake you up when we get there, okay?"

I yawned and leaned against his side.

"You were really brave tonight," David whispered, reaching over to run his fingers over Jonathan's hair.

"Was I brave, too, David?" I asked sleepily.

He tugged gently on my tangled ponytail. "You were brave, too," he said. "Now go to sleep."

* * * * *

I was still asleep when David pulled up at Granny's house. He carried me inside and up the stairs to the bedroom. I woke up when he was pulling the covers up to my chin. "Are we at Granny's?" I asked.

David nodded. "You'll get to meet her in the morning," he said. He smelled like coffee when kissed me on the forehead.

"What time is it?"

"Late. Now go back to sleep."

I rolled onto my back and waited for my eyes to adjust to the dark. The full moon was shining through the window, casting shadows around the room. The sheets smelled like sunshine and were as soft as my favorite t-shirt. Outside, I heard crickets and frogs, just like at home. I slid out from under the covers and tiptoed to the window. The big red barn looked blue in the moonlight. Behind it, fields of thick grass went on forever, just like Daddy had said they would.

The door creaked open and I ran back to the bed and jumped under the covers. "It's just me," Jonathan whispered. He'd had a bath and his hair was still wet and stuck to his forehead. "Do you remember this place?"

I shook my head.

"I didn't think you would. You were just a baby last time we came here." He sat down on the edge of the bed. "Do you remember Granny?"

"I talk to her on the phone all the time," I said.

"You'll like it here," Jonathan said.

He looked sad. "Do you think Mama's sad that we left?" I asked.

"No."

"Do you think she's mad?"

"Probably."

I picked at a loose thread on the pillowcase. "Do you think Lenny's hand still hurts?"

Jonathan covered his mouth to stifle a laugh. "Yeah, I bet it does," he said with a big, gap-toothed grin. He stood up and walked towards the door. "Good night, Jess."

“What if they look for us?” I asked.

“They won’t.”

“How do you know?”

“Because David said so,” he said with a shrug. That was all he needed to say.

Life Saver

By Peter R. Malik

What was amazing was that she was on television and that I knew her. Stacy was my wife: a tall, tan, shy woman from Kentucky, as sweet as she could be before the baby came. Now here she was on the quiz show *Life Saver* trying to win enough money to leave me for good.

I spent the first 30 years of my life minding my own business. I grew up in Las Vegas, graduated from Valley High, and have been working at the DMV ever since. I was content with my simple life; video poker on Friday night, a visit with the nephews and nieces on Saturday night and football on Sunday.

Then Stacy, a friend of my sister who was here on vacation, showed up. She called me from a downtown music club, bored, and wound up spending the night. She never went back to Kentucky. She got pregnant, and, before I knew it, I was at the altar of the Little Chapel of the West saying “I do” and charging the \$145 for the wedding to my Visa card.

Once the child came, though, it was quickly over. You might say I literally became Number 2. God, did she love that child. She slept with it, sang to it, bathed it, and fed it. I was left with the bills.

Everything was always my fault. “Can you find something better to do than working at the DMV, taking home \$500 every two weeks?” She suggested I become a craps dealer, and I paid the \$300 for dealer school, but I could never figure the odds out, and I didn’t want to work in a casino anyway.

She left right after the bill collectors began to call. Just like that. There was a note under the coffee pot: “We took the bus to my mother’s. I’ll be in touch.” I thought of the long bus ride from Las Vegas to Kentucky, the bad food, the stinky restroom on the bus, the whining of the child at 4 a.m. somewhere in Texas. But I knew she would make it. She always did.

I was left with the bills, so I did what everyone does in Las Vegas sooner or later: I went bankrupt. It was all cut and dried; I just signed over my tax refund (\$682) to the lawyer, and it was finished in a week. I lost everything, but the judge let me keep my car so I could get to work.

I rented a cheap studio apartment just off the Strip--the same as a lot of casino people who are hooked on booze, gambling, or drugs or who can’t pay child support. You might have seen these places; the apartments built on Koval in the 1960s and 1970s so casino workers wouldn’t even need a car to get to work.

The one thing I got now is a good television. I got it with the money from my penny jug, one of those big water bottles you see in offices. It took 10 years to save up. I had the best cable hooked up, too. Before the baby came, Stacy and I had always loved game shows, and now I got Game Show Network. I watch it every night and all weekend. I like the old shows the best. The host, contestants, and audience are all probably dead and buried by now. I can’t believe they get so excited about so little money: “If you can just get this question right, you’ll win \$10!”

Sometimes, at night, after four hours of game shows, I wonder: What do I like about them? When I watch them, I think of nothing else. In my mind, there is

only the price of an eight-ounce can of peas or the capital of Ontario, not the fact that I will never see my child again.

And now here was Stacy on *Life Saver*, the show that we always used to watch together, before the baby was born. No one spoke during *Life Saver*.

It was our favorite show. They spun a wheel to determine the amount of money for which everyone could play. As long as you guessed the correct letter, you could keep playing.

Stacy was up against an Army sergeant from Fort Polk and a young woman with a laugh like a squeak who “worked for one of the leading credit card firms.” When asked about her personal life, Stacy said diplomatically, “I have a wonderful husband and a child named Precious.” The host made a weak joke out of it. “Is her name Precious or is that how she looks?” Stacy told the host she was in food service.

Once the game got going, she proceeded to blow everyone away. I had never seen her that intense--not even during sex. “A ‘b’ please!” “A ‘c’ please!” “Buy a vowel, please.” The colored wheel went around and around, and she kept doubling her money while never losing a turn or going bankrupt. It was amazing. The woman had barely finished high school and here she was, running up the score, not allowing the other two players so much as a single spin. She won every round. “You’re setting a record here, Stacy,” said the host, who didn’t seem too happy about the lack of competition. “Thank you,” she said and waited silently for the next round. The last puzzle before the Big Save was “introvert and extrovert.” Stacy got it by guessing every letter of every word correctly.

The Big Save round was a two-word puzzle for \$100,000. She had to pick letters and then guess the two words. The category was “TV Show.” The apostrophe at the end of the first word gave it to her without much effort. When she won, the letters were turned over to reveal *Charlie’s Angels*. Balloons came down, confetti blew, and strobe lights flashed.

The best part of a game show is when the grand prize winner reacts. Seeing a normal person hop up and down letting out cries like a child is fun for the viewer; it also cuts down on the envy that you feel. When Stacy won, she didn’t react this way. She coldly shook the hand of the host. There was no family member to come out; her father was dead, and her mother was probably at home with Precious. So Stacy looked into the camera and started waving, a strange one like the mock wave of a winning fan at a football game. As I looked closer, I could she was squinting, as if to be sure she had found the camera that was on at the moment. She continued to wave right at me (she knew I would be watching), and it was easy to lip read the two words that she mouthed: “Goodbye, Wayne.”

Cartoons came on next, and I closely watched how the cat kept surviving the deadly attacks of the mouse. There is no doubt in my mind that the anvil should have killed him.

From *Pineapple*

Afterword: A humble treatise on comedy besting morals derived from tears; composed in heartfelt rhyme that defies all jeers and disproves the Wilde Oscar's homily 'bout bad poems that ring sincere; an injunction to—for Granny's sake!—go drink some beers

By Joe Taylor

The trouble with comedy, people think,
is that it's funny. It's not. To prove this
becomes my high intent. A cat caught eating skink,
I swear I'll die if you derive the smallest bliss

from these sad lines that follow. I'll take a chance
and lay it bare: The time has come
to talk of many things. Of bombs that dance
for miles, of bones be-charred by atomic scum;

of tortillas, cabbages, kings, refried beans,
and creeps. Right here and now I dare to ask,
"Why is it, yes, that briny tears distract our genes
more than doth one good laugh?" Me, I'd rather bask

in deep belly rolls or e'en one small chortle,
but oh no, critics, academics,
philosophes all skip to the briny portal
to cite their so-fine morals and polemics.

Then they mince, "Comedy? Toss that pabulum to the
lowly dweeps." If there were a muse's court
I swear I'd wing right up and sue the
critical creeps. Comedy's fuse burns short,

exploding with a cackle. Tragedy drones,
its whine unending, intently sucking
its babe-like thumb. Empathy? Catharsis? Those moans
just one thing mean: self-satisfied mucking.

With comedy, cerebra have to reach out—
with more intensity than Ma Bell's finest cell.
Thought has to slide and slip, a real boxing bout
that fires the brain to fume unnerved, unwell.

*Didja see that one? Catch that? What's it mean?
Twist and slide, shake it on out, come on, Brain,
work it on out.* Yes, comedy jumps: active, lean.
Tragedy smushes pudding through a strain.

Doncha see? Tragedy's just too damn tame.
Face it, they both tell the same beastly thing.
Yes! Comedy and tragedy ram the same
theme! *Life, please stop your abominable sting!*

Life runs amuck, it's a wreck, a mess;
both whirl about to point this sad state out.
Comedy sends the memo with finesse;
Tragedy uses a blackthorn stick, blunt and stout.

Don't believe me? Count the deaths in Willy:
nearly a dozen in *Hamlet* alone,
enough to leave an audience silly.
In parting, then, I shall focus on and hone

some thoughts sublime, divine, for sure correct.
Wiser and truer than that Swiss John Calvin,
you'll be left to stroll amongst the Elect
as I shock and move you like Galvan-

I mean, for sure this'll pop your valve on:

Ode to Betty Opp's Los Alamos Toes

While Robert drank his cold martinis;
While engineers set off imploding devices;
While children ate chili and weenies;
While wives clacked out numbers nice as
you please; While Groves strutted to keep
Army demeanor and his tummy in shape;
While MPs and tanks guarded the heap;
While all concerned planned on global rape,
While Betty Opp's lips did open and leap
to take in Lethe's river—I mean gin neat—
Betty Opp's toes did curl, even in sleep.

Nothing, I think, lies so sweet
as ten lovely toes that curl in deep
pleasure. Angel lips would kiss those feet,
and angel eyes would gladly weep.

I think. "Dipsomania," people did bleat,
but Rabelais, a fellow all time will keep,
did give it us clear and neat:
"Drink up, Shriners, for soon enough you'll sleep."

Wherein friends, lies any fault? Not in those toes.
Did they skip and curl from bed to bed?
Rumors creep, but blast rumors, who knows?
E'en if they did trek, *they* didn't leave scalded heads
exceeding a fifth, not of gin, but of a million dead.

So again, I sing: Bless those Betty Opp toes!
Clean, pure and pink! All ten stayed amazing!
Reader, you can watch atom bomb shows
of mushroom clouds floating and grazing
on air, burnt flesh, debris, on anything that blows
in a thermal draft to drop, forever lazing
a Geiger count that clicks off and throws
our minds to numbidity at the razing.
But what should you watch? Those curling toes.

I'll sing it once more, with real conviction:
Bless Betty Opp's curling toes!
Bless 'em wholeheartedly without restriction!
Bless 'em where'er they goes.
Just bless 'em, friend,
and laugh and drink your gin!

Critical Essays

“‘The Yellow Wallpaper’: Another Diagnosis”

By Alan Brown

Published in 1892, “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is the harrowing story of one woman’s struggle to keep her sanity following the birth of her child. She and her physician husband move into an old mansion in the hope that she will find the peace and tranquility he thinks she needs to overcome the depression that has engulfed her. He confines her to the nursery at the top of the house and orders her to stay in bed. Convinced that writing has contributed to her nervous state, he tells her not to write anymore. Left alone with nothing to do, the woman begins to see human shapes in the ornate pattern on the wallpaper. Eventually, she begins to believe that a woman is actually trapped behind the wallpaper. In the end of the story, her husband opens the door to his wife’s room and shocked to find her crawling over the pieces of yellow wallpaper that she has ripped from the wall. After her husband faints dead way, the crazed woman crawls over his body time and time again as she covers the circumference of the room. She escapes the confines of her genteel prison, but she remains a prisoner of her own tormented mind.

In 1913, eleven years after writing “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Charlotte Perkins Gilman published an essay *The Forerunner* titled “Why I Wrote the Wallpaper.” In the essay, Gilman says that after suffering from depression for three years, she decided to see the most famous American neurologist of the day. Dr. S.

Weir Mitchell: “This wise man put me to bed and applied the rest cure, to which a still-good physique responded so promptly that he concluded that there was nothing much the matter with me, and sent me home with solemn advice to ‘live as domestic a life as far as possible, to ‘have but two hours’ intellectual life a day,’ and ‘never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again’ as long as I lived. This was 1887. I went home and obeyed those directions for some three months, and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin that I could see over. Then using the remnants of intelligence that remained, and helped by a wise friend, I cast the noted specialist’s advice to the winds and went to work again—work, the normal life of every human being; work, in which is joy and growth and service, without which one is a pauper and a parasite—ultimately recovering some measure of power.” One can view “The Yellow Wallpaper,” then, as a cautionary tale for women who defer too much to the advice of husbands and doctors.

For years, scholars have accepted Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s explanation of her heroine’s malady. Post-partum depression is now recognized by obstetricians all over the world as a side-effect of some pregnancies. However, a closer analysis of the tale reveals that the protagonist is clearly suffering from another psychological disorder—pareidolia—which is the phenomenon of recognizing patterns, shapes, and familiar objects in a vague or obscure stimulus. Pareidolia comes from the Greek words *para*, which means faulty or wrong, and *eidolon*, which means image, form, or shape. This is tendency to see animals in clouds or faces in a piece of toast or in a rock outcropping on the side of a hill. In his 1995 book *The Demon-Haunted World—Science as a Candle in the Dark*, American cosmologist Carl Sagan wrote that

pareidolia enables infants to bond with other human beings: “As soon as the infant can see, it recognizes faces, and we now know that this skill is hardwired in our brains. Those infants who a million years ago were unable to recognize a face smiled back less, were less likely to win the hearts of their parents, and less likely to prosper. These days, nearly every infant is quick to identify a human face and to respond with a goofy grin” (45). Sagan went on to say that this instinct that enables human beings to instantly judge whether an oncoming person is a friend or foe could result in some misinterpretation of random images as being faces.

Psychologists believe that pareidolia may be more prevalent in some types of people than in others. Researchers from the University of Helsinki in Finland studied how 47 adults saw faces in dozens of pictures of lifeless objects and landscapes, such as a rock wall or tools arranged on a table. After the experiments, the participants filled out a questionnaire to measure their religiosity as well as their belief in the paranormal. For example, the subjects were asked whether they believed in God, thought people could move objects with their mind, or if they believed individuals could use astrology to accurately predict the future. At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that the religious people and those who believed in the supernatural saw faces more often than the non-religious and the skeptics (Stewar). The scientists’ conclusion seems to be verified by the thousands of people who have seen religious imagery in mundane objects and places. Examples include the sightings of the face of Jesus in the Hubble Eagle Nebula (Marsching) or the image of the Virgin Mary on the windows of the Seminole Finance Corporation building in Clearwater, Florida (Stewar).

The woman in “The Yellow Wallpaper” clearly seems to belong in this category. Even though she is not overtly religious, she does seem to harbor a belief in the supernatural. In the very beginning of the story, she cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that the colonial mansion where she will be living is haunted: “I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate! Still, I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it. Else, why should it be let so cheaply?” (1660). She is somewhat disappointed when she learns that legal problems are responsible for the house’s vacant state, but she maintains that there is still something not quite “right” about it: “That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don’t care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it” (1660). After living in the house for two weeks, she begins seeing ghosts walking through the garden as she stares out of the window in the nursery: “I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least” (1662). As the story continues, the woman’s insistence that she is sharing her room with some otherworldly entity runs afoul with her husband’s belief in things concrete: “John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures” (1660).

Ironically, John’s assertion that his wife’s illness is “all in her head” is closer to the truth than he realizes. Her predilection for pareidolia begins to emerge when she sees eyes in the wallpaper covering the nursery walls: “I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they

crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn't match and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other. I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have" (1662). People often make connections with their eyes, and this is the reason why the protagonist sees the entity's eyes before she sees the rest of her. A little later in the story, she begins to perceive the form of another person behind the wallpaper: "But in the places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just so—I can see a strange, provoking formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design" (1663).

Gilman provides evidence suggesting that her protagonist has created an imaginary companion because she is lonely, in the much the same way that children sometimes concoct imaginary playmates. The nursery where her husband forces her to lie in bed reminds one of a jail. The windows are barred, and there is room for only one bed. She pleads with him to allow her to visit her Cousin Henry and Julia, but he refuses on the grounds that she would "not be able to stand it" (1664). Ironically, the only holiday that she celebrates in the story—The Fourth of July—is also called "Independence Day" (1663). She remains in the house, but John does permit her mother and Nellie and the children to visit her.

The protagonist's artistic sensibilities could be another factor behind her pareidolia. In his notebooks, the great Renaissance artist, sculptor, and inventor—Leonardo da Vinci—wrote about pareidolia as an artistic device: "If you look at any walls spotted with various stains or with a mixture of different kinds of stones, if you

are about to invent some scene, you will be able to see in it a resemblance to various different landscapes adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys, and various groups of hills. You will also be able to see diverse combats and figures in quick movement and strange expressions of faces, and outlandish costumes, and an infinite number that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous web of things which you can then reduce into separate and well-conceived forms” (Read). In other words, the artist can refine this innate ability to impose meaning on his environment to the benefit of his art. The protagonist in “The Yellow Wallpaper” is, in her mind, a writer above all else. Even her rather thick-headed husband can tell that his wife thinks more like an artist than like a rational, clear-minded scientist: “He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try” (1662). The woman takes her husband’s advice and tries to suppress her creative imagination by taking “phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is—and tonics and air, and exercise” (1660). From her own experience, Gilman know that any artistic endeavor is a compulsion, not a vocation. The true artist is compelled to bring out bring out beauty in the world through painting music, sculpting, or writing. Artists are born, just as the woman’s husband, John, was born to be a physician.

The artistic drive has to find some sort of release. John’s wife takes comfort in writing, but when she is forbidden to set pen to paper, her imagination finds another outlet: the intricate designs in the wallpaper. Once she can no longer write, she regains her childish ability to perceive anthropomorphic qualities of inanimate

objects: “I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store” (1662). Eventually, her suspension of disbelief in women hiding behind the wallpaper deteriorates and she loses the ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Her imagination completely takes over the rational part of her mind, and the woman she has “made up” becomes real: “I think that woman gets out in the daytime! And I’ll tell you why—privately—I’ve seen her! I can see her out of every one of my windows! It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight. I see her in that long shaded lane, creeping up and down. I see her in those dark grape arbors, creeping all around the garden. I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes, she hides under the blackberry vines” (1668).

Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s tale is frightening because the protagonist is the victim of a loving husband and a well-meaning physician who refuse to admit that men and women do not view the world the same way. In the beginning of “Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper,” Gilman says that a physician from Kansas called her story the best description of incipient insanity that he had ever seen. She goes on to say that her story is not only highly valued by “alienists,” the 19th century word for psychologists, but it has even been credited by saving one woman from a similar fate. She concludes the essay by stating that “the great specialist had admitted to friends of his that he had altered his treatment of neurasthenia since reading ‘The Yellow Wallpaper.’” However, Gilman’s story is much more than therapeutic reading for patients and doctors. Like Henry James’ *Daisy Miller*, “The Yellow Wallpaper” is a

meditation on how we view the world and the people. Both Gilman and James believed that reality is, indeed, a matter of perception, subject to influences from those people around or from the dark interiors of our minds. Like us, Gilman's tragic protagonist is driven to make sense of the chaotic, confusing, and sometimes frightening world around us.

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D. G. Rossetti's Ballads

By Benjamin F. Fisher

Studies of D. G. Rossetti's poetry so often center on *The House of Life* that far less focus goes to his balladry, which amounts to a considerable portion of his poetic accomplishment, and therefore should not be ignored. Such neglect also seems unusual because Rossetti considered his ballads major achievements. Significantly, his earliest and latest creative writings were ballads. *Sir Hugh the Heron* (1843) is his first such poem, privately printed by his Grandfather Polidori. It does not appear in any edition of the collected works because Rossetti later stated that it was entirely too juvenile to publish. *Jan Van Hunks* was begun early, although it was revised intermittently until shortly before his death in 1882 (Wahl 5-7).¹ With general praise for the ballads from eminent contemporaries like Swinburne, Morris, and Pater, as well as some from later critics, it is even more surprising to find no extended study of these works.² I provide greater coverage of these ballads than Lionel Stevenson (1972), and a more sympathetic readings than those of David G. Riede (1983), the two chief recent commentators on this type of Rossetti's poetry.

The folk ballad and its derivative form the literary ballad, as it came to Rossetti in the works of Scott, Coleridge, Keats, and others, appear as major shaping influences on his own ballads. Some clarification of terms will aid in showing just how he employed such materials (Leach 1-44; Friedman 262ff.). Ballads tell stories, simply and directly, emphasizing dramatic situations, in an impersonal, objective manner. Character, setting, and theme—other important story elements—are given scant attention. Rapid movement toward a climax upon which the tale focuses is another characteristic of the true ballad, and the technique of “leaping and lingering,” the passing over unimportant matters to dwell at length on some scene

that is especially dramatic or colorful, is another common trait. Other significant features are the lyric qualities and the folk elements, for the ballad stems from oral tradition and legend of the common people. Consequently history and local events are the main sources of subjects, the appeal being desirable to a middle-class audience. Ballad style is naturally simple: austere imagery and language, repetition of lines, of figures of speech, and of detail—but not too elaborate detail—being typical. The repetition may have variations, and is then called incremental repetition, a device which advances the story toward a climax and helps to knit more tightly the whole poem. Sometimes a refrain of no value other than that of music appears, and at other times a burden—a chorus appearing after each narrative stanza—adds some variety to the form. Rhymes are frequently approximate, meter and stanzaic patterns are simple. The abcb rhyme-scheme with a 4343 line stress appears most commonly and is called ballad stanza.

Literary or art ballads originated in crossings of the ballad with the medieval metrical romance. From the romances come color, evocative language and detail, ceremony and chivalric attitudes which the ballads lack by the very simplicity inherent in the genre. Because of the modifications to the original ballad form, an artificiality often infuses the literary ballad, tending to differentiate it from its parent. Rossetti's lifelong interest in the supernatural would also have inclined him toward this type of poetry, in which supernaturalism often appeared; his pronounced taste for Gothicism is evident in his ballads (Doughty 1949: 49; WMR 1: xxviii).²

In addition to traditions of action, color, and sensuousness in the Coleridge-Keats-Tennyson influence the matter of Pre-Raphaelitism must not be overlooked in regard to Rossetti's works. That term, according to Paull Baum, is "a dangerous [one] which both demands and defies definition," because of its original application to a group of painters rather than to literature; hence a confusion results (PBS xxiii). The Pre-Raphaelite painters wished to return to the simplicity of Italian artists who

had preceded Raphael, and Rossetti is traditionally considered as the prime mover in this association. In literature the following characteristics are Pre-Raphaelite: medieval subjects remote from actual life, the use of archaic diction (deriving from Coleridge, Keats, and Tennyson rather than from the medieval literature itself), a wealth of sharp detail, light, and color, conveying a distinct pictorial effect. The concept of Pre-Raphaelitism is linked with the Romantic revival and the reaction against the industrialism of the age. The solidities in detail and description add an element of realism to the otherwise vague and shadowy world created in the works of many of these people; “the resulting balance forms numerous word pictures or, as Pater terms them, “lovely little sceneries” (234). These characteristics are plentiful in the early poems of Morris and Swinburne, and they are of greater importance in the poems of Rossetti and his sister Christina. There are decorative effects in their poems which are found in no other works in English literature.

The Poems

Rossetti’s first published major ballad is “Sister Helen.” (Baum PBS 8) The situation is one frequently encountered in old ballads. A girl has been betrothed, symbols of that betrothal have been exchanged—the usual ring and broken coin—and then her lover has suddenly turned his attentions elsewhere. The desire for revenge and the employment of the supernatural to effect it are typical, and the ironic tone which pervades the poem is also characteristic ballad fare. The dialogue form is another ballad feature, but the naïveté of the little brother is a more sophisticated device, which throws into bold relief the bitterness and exultant hatred of Helen, heightening the irony to an effective pitch. The incremental repetition of the italicized lines has a twofold purpose, providing musical effects and conveying Helen’s thoughts which advance the tale. Her feelings of revenge, of wicked delight

therein, and, finally, of despair are built up by means of this varied repetition. The realization that, whatever witch-like qualities she may possess, she is still a woman intensifies the dramatic element in the poem: “But he *and I* are sadder still.” (my emphasis) reinforces Helen’s human qualities, which make her as subject as Keith to psychological tortures—on earth and in hell (Hearn 69; Mégroz 262)

The narrative is straightforward and well controlled. Suspense is established in the first line—one is immediately curious about the “waxen man”—and maintained skillfully throughout the story. Helen’s repeated references to hell and heaven, the images of death (ll. 28, 32), and the mystery surrounding these matters help to secure the reader’s interest. Then the men appear with the news that Keith of Ewern is dying, and again Helen’s comments add to the suspense in the tale. Keith’s betrayal of her love is next revealed in a series of flashbacks, and the future of the doomed pair is made explicit in the references to hell (ll. 92 ff., ll. 183-196). After the appearance of Keith’s bride, the rehearsal of her agonies, and the departure of the entire Keith family, the poem comes full circle with another reference to the melted figure and a final remark on Keith’s and Helen’s certain damnation.

The rapid movement of the stanzas (effected by alliteration and quickly gliding words—“Mary Mother,” “Hell” and “Heaven”—in the italicized lines), the “leaping and lingering” from one eventful scene to another, the objectivity of the narrative, all provide means of centering the focus of the poem’s climax in the final stanza. The neglect of carefully explaining the events preceding those upon which the poem centers, in order to provide the sensation and the dramatic therein, is in true ballad style.

“Sister Helen” differs from the popular ballad in its sensuousness, in its penetrating psychological analysis of Helen’s mind, and in certain Pre-Raphaelite qualities foreign to the austerity and lack of decoration in the older forms. The following stanza is a good example of the sensuous movement of the poem:

‘They’ve caught her to Westholm’s saddle-bow,
Sister Helen,
And her moonlight hair gleams white in its flow.’

‘Let it turn whiter than winter snow,
Little brother!’
*(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven!)*

The repeated -t-, -s-, -l-, and -w- sounds, especially in the alliterative effects of the last, and the numerous disyllabic words add a flowing, gliding quality not noticeable in the traditional ballad. These features recall “Christabel,” “Kubla Khan,” “The Eve of Saint Agnes,” and “Mariana.”

The examination of the feminine psyche in Helen is also alien to the ballad heritage (Trombly 60). Although the reasons for it are not explained at length, the hatred which has twisted Helen’s personality is revealed with a terrifying precision. Her final despair is also deftly but emphatically stated. Rossetti’s study of the heart of Woman is characteristic of much of his poetry, as the subsequent considerations of “Eden Bower” and “Troy Town” will reveal. The *Femme Fatale* in “Sister Helen” may very well derive from similar ladies in “Christabel” or in “La Belle Dame sans Merci,” but Rossetti’s own circumstances at this time might also contribute a good deal to this aspect of his poems. During the fifties—and the poem underwent three revisions during those years—his relations with Lizzie Siddal, who later became his wife, grew more and more strained. She grew weak in body and mind, and so the following lines sent to Rossetti in a letter are not at all surprising:

Ope not thy lips, thou foolish one,
Nor turn to me thy face:
The blasts of heaven shall strike me down
Ere I will give thee grace.

Another passage from the same poem, "Love and Hate," is also strikingly akin to the theme in "Sister Helen:" (Hunt 195):

And turn away thy false dark eyes
Nor gaze into my face:
Great love I bore thee; now great hate
Sits grimly in its place.

I am not implying that there are direct parallels between the two poems, but I think that, with autobiographical details in so many of his other poems, there may very well be some link, although in "Sister Helen" the focus on terror is the mainstay (Sonstroem 108; cf. Riede 171). While the revenge theme in "Sister Helen" is common in folk tales, it would not be at all beneath Rossetti to see the possibilities inherent in such material for the venting of his own feelings. To those same years belongs "The Song of the Bower" in which he mourned the freedom with women which his marriage to Lizzie would deny him.

The creation of a vague world is effected by such names as Ewern, Boyne, and Westholm, suggestive of the border regions. The balance between the unreal place and the sharply realistic touches is nicely preserved. Interestingly readers are figuratively made to see through the little boy's mouth. He describes the scenes, "See, see the sunken pile of wood,/Sister Helen/Shines through the thinned wax red as blood," and "speaks" word pictures. The passage cited is a good example of Pre-Raphaelite precision in detail and color. Other decorative touches provide an artificiality alien to the simplicity and austerity in the tradition but not uncommon to Rossetti. The little boy says, "The moon flies face to face with me" (l. 45), and "In the shaken trees the chill stars shake" (l. 51), and Helen speaks of "woe-withered gold" (l. 245). These images and the decorative adjective are far too elaborate to have appeared in the early folk ballads.

“Stratton Water,” generally considered to be Rossetti’s best ballad imitation (Baum PBS 17n1)), is the one humorous ballad to see publication during his lifetime, although many short pieces of a comic nature have been since noted (Sharp 347; Mégroz 263) The remarks about Father John’s prayers being of no avail—“But woe’s my heart for Father John!/As hard as he might pray,/There seemed no help but Noah’s ark/Or Jonah’s fish that day,” or those referring to his buttocks being too large to facilitate his entrance into heaven—are in the rollicking mood of ballads like “Get up and Bar the Door,” “The Farmer’s Curs’d Wife,” or “The Crafty Farmer” (Leach 657ff.).

Typical ballad dialogue form sets the poem in motion in the manner used in “Sister Helen.” Intermittently an impersonal omniscient narrator intrudes to aid in scene shifts which could not be effectively conveyed through dialogue. The cleverest use of this technique occurs when Sands departs without his servant for the church; the knave opposes his master’s forthcoming marriage and is, rightly, left at the castle. The dialogue throughout the poem is not merely a prosodic device, but the series of questions and answers gradually reveals a story in which the fast-moving train of events is enhanced by the rapid movement of the verse itself. A situation of illicit love, family opposition to a pair of young lovers, the misunderstandings perpetrated by that opposition, and the ultimate union despite all thwarting circumstances are revealed. The girl’s pregnancy and her obstinacy, the lover’s amazement and his response to her wishes could come directly from old British balladry. Somewhat atypical is the happy ending in the poem; many of the older poems frequently end in catastrophic circumstances for such young lovers (Leach 10-18; Ingham 26; Hough 7).

Incremental repetition in this poem, like that in “Sister Helen,” keeps the narrative moving rapidly and directs it toward the marriage, finally, of Lord Sands and Janet. She says, “‘And many’s the good gift, Lord Sands,/You’ve promised oft

to me;/But the gift of yours I keep to-day/Is the babe in my body.’” The balance of sentences with “gift” as the subject tightens the stanzaic structure and simultaneously reveals important information. Another similar device occurs in these stanzas:

The first strokes that the oars struck
Were over the broad leas;
The next strokes that the oars struck
They pushed between the trees;

The last strokes that the oars struck,
The good boat’s head was met,
And there the gate of the kirkyard
Stood like a ferry gate.

The repetition carries the action through more than one stanza, and it provides musical and emphatic effects as well, all in the manner of the true ballad.

The flashback—like that in “Sister Helen”—reveals mere bits of the past and allows the reader’s mind to supply the details. ““They told me you were dead, Janet,—/How could I guess the lie?/“They told me you were false, Lord Sands—/What could I do but die?”” presents only bare essentials. The reader must then imagine the outward manifestations of Sands’s grief upon learning of Janet’s death or of her casting herself to the elements when she learns that she has been shamed. These circumstances provide elements of sensation and melodrama which align “Stratton Water” with numerous predecessors.

Akin to the flashback is the portent of future events. The reference to Sands’s revenge on his brother and to the surprise of his mother indicate that violence is imminent:

‘Now keep you well, my brother Giles,—
Through you I deemed her dead!
As wan as your towers seem to-day,
To-morrow they’ll be red.

‘Look down, look down, my false mother,
That bade me not to grieve:
You’ll look up when our marriage fires
Are lit to-morrow eve.

Rhyme, meter, economic phrasing contribute to the genuine balladry in “Stratton Water.” The variation is by no means a defect nor is it unusual; a similar pattern occurs in the old tale of Tam Lin (Leach 136ff.)

Pre-Raphaelite characteristics in “Stratton Water” are the medieval subject, the vague world, the simple language (here a truly medieval characteristic rather than a pseudo-medieval one), the color, and the pictorial detail. The lovers’ departure for the church is typical:

He’s wrapped her in a green mantle
And set her softly in;
Her hair was wet upon her face,
Her face was grey and thin;
And ‘Oh!’ she said, ‘be still my babe,
It’s out you must not win.’

The numerous monosyllabic words provide unsophisticated form, but the turning of these uncomplicated materials into interesting combinations of visual and tactile imagery shows Rossetti’s peculiar skill at work. The description of Janet allows the reader to use his imagination, but it is still sharp and clear as it stands in context. The reference to the baby provides a bit of whimsicality, and it effectively combines the visual with the tactile.

“The Staff and Scrip” presents the common ballad theme of blighted earthly love in a somewhat altered form. Perhaps the idea of the lovers being re-united after death is influenced by Rossetti’s devotion to the Dantesque concept of love (Baum HOL 66-67; Myers 220; Doughty 1953 100). The ending is not typical of the older tradition; no indication of mitigation of suffering appears therein. It may be of some significance that this poem underwent considerable revision in 1870 after the

exhumation of Rossetti's manuscripts from Lizzie's coffin and after a ten-year period of guilt, persecution complexes, and increasing indulgence in sensuality (Doughty 1949 262ff.). Little wonder that Rossetti should be doubtful of the pleasures inherent in love and that he should dwell instead upon its bringing sorrow and hardship, even death. He had not yet arrived, however, at the point of fear and the sense of mystery conveyed in "The One Hope," the final sonnet in *The House of Life*. In that poem all of his youthful idealism had disappeared, and he remained a sadder if not a *wiser* man (Mégroz 102, 306-307). "The Staff and Scrip" was, however, originally composed during the early fifties, and at that period in his life Rossetti may have felt that love must surely be rewarded. And yet the poem betrays one great problem noticed by a recent critic. Rossetti never adhered to the Christian concept of heaven, and so it is a dichotomy in the poem that he gave lip service to something which he did not actually believe (Doughty 1949 255, 347).

The setting in the poem, like that in two preceding, is vague and remotely medieval. The name Blanchelys, French in origin, suggests the tradition of courtly love and romance. The queen's banner, a white lily, relates neatly with her name, providing another example of Rossetti's keen awareness of the decorative possibilities in a word. The stanza is a modification of the usual pattern, rhyming abab and adding an extra short line. The extra line allows for some expansion of the thought of the preceding lines, at times merely adding to what has already been said or commenting in such a manner that the reader becomes increasingly aware of a greater meaning than the one baldly stated:

'Who rules these lands?' the Pilgrim said.
 'Stranger, Queen Blanchelys.'
'And who has thus harried them?' he said.
 'It was Duke Luke did this:
 God's ban be his!'

The final comment, epigrammatic in style, expands the usual ballad-stanza rigidity and succinctly concludes the first bit of dialogue.

Another decorative ornament occurs in the fifth stanza, in which the overpowering and sickening sweetness of the musk and myrrh conveys olfactory appeal alien to the simple old poetry, and the syntax is far too twisted for any other than a literary ballad: “The sweetness sickened her/Of musk and myrrh.” The too-conscious assonance and alliteration place the poem firmly in the nineteenth-century tradition.

The wealth of color and sharp detail also places the poem in the Pre-Raphaelite mode. The descriptions of the sword, the banners, and the shield contain the characteristic bright color and pictorial detail; the piling up of these pictures serves only as decoration. Once again the simplicity of the language is deceptive; it is used to produce images and effects too elaborate and sensuous to appear in a popular ballad:

She sent him a white shield, whereon
She bade that he should trace
His will. He blent fair hues that shone,
And in a golden space
He kissed her face.

The “cute” conceit built up and the sensuousness of the action are evident, and the same preciousness is obvious in the description of the dead knight. Grim realism is there—in a manner similar to that used by Morris for the beheading scene in “The Haystack in the Floods.” It is, however, presented in terms much more decorative and elaborate than those appearing in works like “Tam Lin” or “Johnny Armstrong.” Thus in attempting to combine the medieval and modern modes, Rossetti performs the task with the hand of a skilled craftsman, and he neatly works out a musical and elaborate form for his rather exalted—and elaborate—content.

“Troy Town” and “Eden Bower” are strikingly similar. They date from 1869, Rossetti’s second great poetic outpouring, and, along with paintings like “Sybilla Palmifera,” completed in 1866, and are representative of the domination of “women and flowers” on his work (Weatherby 11-19; Doughty 1949 575). The central figure in each is a beautiful, sensual, deadly woman—a *Femme Fatale* in every detail. Helen of Troy is wholly human while Lilith, the legendary witch-wife of Adam before the creation of Eve, partakes of the supernatural. The ultimately destructive results wrought by each are similar; Helen corrupts Paris and initiates the Trojan War; Lilith corrupts Adam through Eve and thus effects the curse on the entire human race. Each woman implores the aid of a supernatural being to relieve her sexual frustration. Both call attention to their physical charms, and both convey an image of sensual bodily movement, Helen before the altar of Venus and Lilith entwined in the coils of the serpent. Morris’s opinion that giving supernatural beings human qualities in “Eden Bower” provides a fit subject for poetry is merely his attempt to justify Rossetti’s work to the Victorian reading public. Buchanan’s charge of fleshliness certainly applies, if not in the context which he meant it, to these two poems (342, 350). One can see, however, that giving human qualities to Lilith does not detract from her supernatural aspect. She judges God and Adam according to her own standards and therefore need not justify her revenge; she is a product of a world where judgment is different from that of the Judaeo-Christian heritage.

“Troy Town” and “Eden Bower” begin in the abrupt manner of the ballad, and intimate a momentous climax. The narrative technique is naturally uncomplicated, and the flashbacks reveal past events which, in true form, have been played down in order to intensify the dramatic moment around which both poems center. The statements concerning the future provide clues to the epic events which will occur.

“Troy Town” has the slighter thread of narrative. The first forty-two lines build up a sensuous—and sensual—image of Helen’s breast and the cup for which it served as a model. Assuming the reader’s familiarity with the story of Paris and Helen—as Tennyson does in “Oenone”—Rossetti concentrates on the dramatic aspects involved in Helen’s giving the cup to Venus in order to secure the aid of the goddess. So the narrative element is suppressed, and the dramatic and sensual are pushed emphatically to the foreground. There are several flashbacks, the first when Helen is reminded of the dispute over the apple at the feast, and the second when she recalls her own stirred emotions. There is little action, Cupid’s shooting his arrows into the breasts of Helen and Paris and Paris’s writhing in torment being the only actual mention of movement. Sensuous bodily motion is strongly implied in Helen’s references to her breasts. One can visualize her swaying voluptuously as she implores aid from Venus.

In “Eden Bower” one is allowed to witness more events while they are actually occurring than in “Troy Town.” Seeing through Lilith’s eyes one glimpses her and Adam loving each other, her and the snake caressing, her and Eve acting their parts. God’s banishing the sinful couple from the garden and Cain’s murdering his brother provide a sensational climax. In both poems the action is conveyed through dramatic intensity rather than through actual narrative means. This technique may derive from Keats’s “The Eve of St. Agnes.” That that poem was a great favorite of Rossetti’s has been established, but only cursorily noticed. “The Eve of St. Agnes” hints of possibilities for violence and sensational events characteristic of Scott and Byron’s narratives. Impending atrocities to Porphyro’s person never become more than whispers, however; likewise a feast is prepared lavishly and never eaten. The sensuousness and the piling up of colorful, decorative details become the chief attributes in this poem. Technique in “Troy Town” and “Eden Bower” is similar. Another, uncompleted, poem of Keats’s, “The Eve of St. Mark,” bears

similarities to these Rossetti poems in its wealth of description and promise of narrative never realized. Since this poem was even more delightful to Rossetti than “The Eve of St. Agnes,” its influence upon him is probable (Unwin 230ff.).

The stanzaic patterns of “Troy Town” and “Eden Bower” are similar in their sensuous musical effects. In the first is a modified “Rubáiyat” stanza (aaba) with interspersed refrains and lines of eight instead of the usual ten syllables. In the second are quatrains rhyming abcc (a modification of the ballad pattern), the -b-rhyme refrains effecting a link between units of two stanzas. In both poems only a few rhyme words are used, the first line in each stanza of “Eden Bower” ending in “Eden,” “Adam,” or “Lilith,” and the fourth line in each stanza of “Troy Town” ending in “desire” in order to rhyme with “fire” in the final line. Incremental repetition and the refrains contribute a sensuous quality of movement to the poems which is in keeping with their content and which artistically tightens the structure.

A series of individual scenes in the form of word pictures is presented in each poem, each stanza coming to a full stop, but every one ties in with or builds upon what has preceded it and also contains images and themes that reappear and are elaborated in succeeding stanzas. The fourth stanza of “Troy Town” begins with a description of the cup: “It was moulded like my breast;” and mentions its effect upon a man’s “heart’s desire.” The next stanza is Helen’s cajoling “See my breast, how like it is;” and her questioning Venus: “Is the cup to thy heart’s desire?” In “Eden Bower” Lilith’s invocation: “O, thou God, the Lord God of Eden!” is ironically altered to address the serpent: “O, thou Snake, the King-snake of Eden!” Such repetition and refashioning of only a few words, ideas, and images interweaves the structural threads and forms a pattern, characteristic of balladry, which leads through dramatic moments toward a stark climax, as it focuses on the connection of eroticism to death (Howard 148-149).

Departures from the tradition are also apparent. The extremely sensual imagery and lyrical effects are far more elaborate and decorative, so much so in fact that these poems stand out from the lush productions of the literary ballad tradition, even from those of Keats. They also differ from Swinburne's ballads because Rossetti is not so deliberate a destroyer of Victorian idols. His poems are much more of the studio and are consciously "literary" in style and effect. This conscious artistry appears in the extended emphasis upon Helen's physical beauties, and in decorative phrases like "Grip and lip my limbs as I tell thee" in "Eden Bower." Likewise in the repeated association of -s- and -l- sounds in conjunction with Lilith's hair—her "tresses"—and with her other sensual features produce effects of striking demonic sensuality.

The theme of the *Femme Fatale* in these poems may very well have come through Coleridge's "Christabel" or Keats's "Lamia" and "La Belle Dame sans Merci," but there are also relevant autobiographical suggestions. Most of the poetry written from 1869 to 1872 was inspired by Rossetti's love for Mrs. Morris (Baum LFC 137; Doughty 1949 8-10, 307ff.), but other factors complicate the situation. Rossetti's illness, his increasing sensualism and the desire to satisfy such cravings as it caused (and they were never long satiated), a cynical rejection of his early Dantesque ideal combined with the inability to cast it off altogether, and the frustrations and miseries resulting from this combination of forces, found an outlet in the poetry he composed during these later years. The evil woman from folklore and Gothicism is a perfect artistic figure for Rossetti in "Eden Bower," in "Troy Town," and in other projected works of the period, e.g., "Michael Scott's Wooing," "The Orchard Pit," "The Doom of the Sirens," and "God's Graal." In prose and verse he displayed his increasing obsession with the idea that love and woman were associated with evil, mysterious, and fearful forces. It is easy to imagine his transplanting Fanny Cornforth or any of his other voluptuous models from paintings

like “The Blue Bower,” “Sibylla Palmerifa,” or “Lilith,” all dating from the middle sixties and the early seventies (WMR 1: 377, 477ff.; Doughty 1949 481, 488), into a poem of similarly pronounced ornateness and sensuality like “Eden Bower,” “Troy Town,” or others not of a narrative nature like “Body’s Beauty.” Rossetti’s fascination for golden or “strawberry blonde” hair is apparent in many of his poems, the latter three being entirely representative of his taste. Lizzie, Fanny, and numerous others who modeled for him had long blond hair, and their frequent appearances in his paintings drew from Mrs. Gaskell the remark that Rossetti was “not as mad as a march hare, but hair mad” (Doughty 1949 251).

Another poem from this period is “Down Stream,” a production altogether different in form and—to some degree—in content from the lushness and sensuality in the preceding works. More like “Stratton Water,” it approximates the genuine ballad, *e.g.*, in scanty characterization, in simple meter, in typical stanzaic pattern (although some comment on its variation will appear below), and in bald economic style. The setting is also indefinite, occurring “Between Holmscote and Hurstcote” at some vague time, the actual events cover a fourteen-month period, and the situation is one of tragic and fatal love: A man meets a girl by the river, he seduces her, falsely promising marriage after returning from his journey, she bears his child whom she drowns along with herself.

The effect of the fourteener metrical pattern is one of speed, and the numerous run-on lines quicken the movement. The stanzaic pattern is merely the joining of what would normally be two separate stanzas. The first lines in each section describe the river, and the next four tell what occurs in the vicinity with each change of season. The rhyme scheme, abcb for the first quatrain and abab for the second, makes each portion an entity in itself, but the colon after the fourth line in each stanza shows that the first section really preludes what follows. The refrain quality of the first two lines in each stanza provides music and knits the structure,

and the building of one stanza upon another leads directly toward the resoundingly climactic final stanza, a technique frequent in other works. The final impression of life's proceeding rather impersonally despite the sensational tragedy being narrated gives to the poem the grim irony characteristic of the true ballad.

The conscious repetition varied in "whispering" and "ripple's" becoming "low-whispered" and "rippling" in the first stanza and the continuation of similar devices bring in an artificiality often noticeable in Rossetti's work of this period, and furnishes an example of his being at his best in creating ornamentation through language. "Neath shuddering clouds that hang in shrouds/And lost winds wild for home" or "A troth was riven and given/From heart's trust grew one life to two," give some idea of his playing with language. The alliterative effects in "shuddering," "shrouds," in "winds," "wild" and the touches of assonance and consonance in the -s-, -r-, -l-, and -ng- sounds, and the skillful use of internal rhymes (this last feature descending from Scott)³¹ add musical touches nearer to those in "The Eve of St. Agnes" or "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" than to the rough irregularity in many popular ballads.

"The Bride's Prelude" is a long fragment which Rossetti revised from time to time, although he apparently disliked it, until its publication in *Poems* (1881). He considered its story too slow and uneventful for general favor, but he thought that its decorative aspects would commend it (Baum PBS 123-124). This opinion is generally correct, although the abrupt opening, the dialogue form, and the situation of illicit love and the supernatural derive from the ballad tradition and provide possibilities for an interesting, dramatic story. The Keatsian atmosphere and decoration tend, however, to place the poem more solidly in the Pre-Raphaelite manner and also in Rossetti's own phase of conscious literary refining and lushness. The plot is rather simple when one separates it from the long descriptive and ornamental passages. Just before her marriage to Urscllyn is about to occur, Aloyse

unburdens her shameful secret and relates the true nature of the events which have led up to this wedding. Her innocent and naïve sister Amelotte is her confidante, and her ingenuous questions heighten the irony in the situation. Aloÿse's story is one of seduction, abandonment, and violence. She bore her lover an illegitimate child, it was kidnapped, and—one must assume—it was murdered. In her grief she employed the aid of the supernatural, but such help was useless. How Urscelyn has returned—or how he has been forced to come back—is not stated. A projected sequel to this fragment reveals that more violence and sensationalism would have been included in the succeeding sections (WMR 1: 515-516).

The slow-moving metrics, Aloÿse's hesitancy in revealing her secret, Amelotte's reluctance to press the matter, and the constant references to the heat, to the stillness, and to the slow passage of time combine to produce a "*tour de force* of slow motion" (Baum PBS 124). The stanzas at the beginning of the poem are similar to the ballad stanza, with the addition of an extra line and the lengthening of the last three lines (rhyming ccc) considerably slowing the movement. The long narrative and descriptive passages between bits of dialogue also lengthen the work, and the fact that each girl keeps repressing her desire to continue the conversation only contributes to the lack of eventfulness. The initial reference to the long, hot day: "And the noonday stands still for heat," establishes an atmosphere of silent, monotonous "frozen time" which thereafter pervades the whole (Jones-Faverty 190).

The aura of maddening stillness which is ever present, the images of the moat, and the reference to slime (reminding one of the "moated grange" in "Mariana"), combine to furnish evidence of derivation from Tennyson. The descriptions of Aloÿse in her chamber, of the light falling upon her, and of her jewels and clothing are reminiscent of similar scenes in Madeline's chamber in "The Eve of St. Agnes." The phrase "I made moan" (l. 320), very likely comes from "La Belle Dame sans Merci," a poem in which Rossetti frequently went "word-searching." These

decorative qualities add nothing to the narrative; they are rather obfuscating additions, more evidence of Rossetti's overworking a thin vein (Ford 127ff.). The ornate physical settings in these poems contribute significantly to an atmosphere of lush richness, replete with piled-up details. The lyrical qualities in "The Bride's Prelude" are elaborately clever, too much so to belong anywhere except in a literary ballad:

From the raised bridge and guarded sconce
To green-clad places of pleasaunce
Where the long lake was white with swans.

The length of this sentence forces a dying away of power and a lowering of pitch at the end, emphasizing the concept of dead silence surrounding the two girls. The alliteration in "places" and "pleasaunce" and "long lake" is too closely packed to suit the simple requirements of the old ballad, and an additional bit of preciousness, the almost rhyming sounds in the first pair is nothing if not "literary" in purpose. The wrenching of the accent onto the normally unaccented syllable and the imitative "medieval" spelling of "pleasaunce" are degrees of further artificializing in the work. The lyrical qualities align this poem more closely with the gliding movement of "Jenny" and "The Blessed Damozel" than with the other ballad-narratives (Mégroz 251; Baum PBS 123 n2; BD ixff.).

"Rose Mary" is the last extended production of Rossetti's middle period of poetic activity. It recalls poems like "Troy Town," "Eden Bower," and "Down Stream" in the theme of illicit love and its consequences and in the central figure being a guilty woman, one who engages in outbursts of violent and melodramatic emotion. Like Sister Helen and the woman in "Down Stream," Rose Mary dies as punishment for her passionate delights, and like her predecessors she is betrayed by her former lover.

The relation of “Rose Mary” to the ballad tradition is evident, but there are several interesting “literary” modifications. The themes of treachery and blighted love, the abrupt opening and dialogue, the refrains and incremental repetition, all are usual. The folk motif, too, accords with the heritage (Hyder 205). The continuing suspense and the melodramatic revelations retain the reader’s interest, and they could also belong to the older mode. The stanzaic pattern (five lines rhyming aabbb) derives from the metrical romance—coming to Rossetti through works like Scott’s and Byron’s narratives; the triplets often split into a couplet with an extra thought or comment added. The four-stress line allows for more variation and rapidity in movement than does the 4343 stress of the true ballad (Friedman 296). In “Rose Mary,” then, Rossetti skillfully blends techniques from several sources to produce a new type of work.

Other factors which tend away from the true ballad form are the abundant descriptive details and the attention to psychological aspects in presenting Rose Mary’s character. The description of the chamber housing the Beryl-stone accumulates entirely too many images cast in typical Pre-Raphaelite clarity of detail and color to fit into the company of early popular ballads:

The altar-cell was a dome low-lit,
And a veil hung in the midst of it:
At the pole-points of its circling girth
Four symbols stood of the world’s first birth,
Air and water and fire and earth.

To the north, a fountain glittered free;
To the south, there glowed a red fruit-tree;
To the east, a lamp flamed high and fair;
To the west, a crystal casket rare
Held fast a cloud of the fields and air.

The painted walls were a mystic show
Of time’s ebb-tide and overflow;
His hoards long-locked and conquering key,

His service-fires that in heaven be,
And earth-wheel whirled perpetually.

These stanzas would *not* have been heard around a campfire “between Holmscote and Hurstcote.” (my italics) Again the language itself is turned to ornamental purposes which produce a pronounced artificiality. In the first stanza quoted, the final rhyme is anticipated by the two preceding words. The echoing in the catalog in the second stanza of “Air and water and fire and earth” is too contrived for either the traditional ballad or for the interest of the reader. The usual alliterative techniques and the forcing of rhymes (the last syllable of “perpetually” being accented to rhyme with “be”) show Rossetti “peeking through,” as it were. The whole extended metaphor of the globe, *i.e.*, the earth, begun in the first line cited and subsequently developed through the succeeding stanzas is too elaborate and too “worked” to be frugal ballad fare.

The Beryl-songs are also an ornamental addition, but I think that they are not entirely useless despite the adverse opinions of some other critics (Mégroz 265; PBS lii; Wood 298; WMR 1: 516). They provide hints of the future otherwise not mentioned and so function usefully in keeping the reader’s interest. That they are defective as far as poetic merit is concerned is obvious. The repetition of just a few rhyme words, the similar openings of the three songs, and the problem of fixed form inherent in their structure are severely limiting factors. The rigidity and artificiality resulting from the second line in each beginning with the rhyme word and from the fifth, second, and first lines respectively recurring as the final three lines suggests the experimentation with and variation from French forms by Rossetti, by Swinburne, and other Victorian poets. Providing rhymes for “beryl” is no mean task, and so the songs are further limited as poetry.

The lengthy passages treating Rose Mary’s thoughts and motivation provide too much psychological information to find place in traditional balladry. The

description of her grief and recovery in terms of sea imagery in parts II and III are detailed and cleverly expanded. In any older ballad the causes of such rending emotion and its effects would be baldly stated and passed over with characteristic indifference of the folk mind to the facts of life. Dwelling upon the feminine psyche is, however, an aspect of Rossetti's too rooted in his personality to allow for economy in such matters.

Another factor related to the lengthy development of the psychology is the structural technique in the poem. Mégroz (265) says that many ballads might have been developed from the diverging strands of narrative therein, and an examination in the light of his statement bears out that truth. All of the vignettes or "little sceneries" could very well be individual ballads needing very few alterations to effect the separation from the whole. The dialogue between Rose Mary and her mother, the mother's discovery of the packet, or the visions in the crystal might be worked into smaller—but just as complete—pieces and still make good ballads. So the structure in "Rose Mary" is not so tightly knit as that in some of the other ballad-narratives. The two large issues in the love story and the influence of the spirits upon it tend toward separate means of holding the reader's interest.

That this poem has been called a "Gothic novel in verse" (Baum PBS li) is relevant in a discussion of the episodic structure in the poem. The numerous coincidences probably stem from this strain in Rossetti's literary background. Rose Mary's mother's just happening to spy the concealed note and the sword's conveniently being within Rose Mary's reach at the moment she needs it to destroy the Beryl-stone are typical of the deus-ex-machina techniques common throughout Gothic fiction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Other Gothic features abound. The supernatural, the remote setting, the environs of the castle proper (replete with long winding corridors and a secret stairway), the ambush, the violent death of Sir James, the detailed description of his gory corpse, all figure in the

Walpole-Maturin heritage. Rose Mary's fragile beauty and her tendencies toward weeping and fainting are characteristic of the school-of-terror heroines, and the description of Sir James's face could just as well be that of a long line of villains or Byronic hero-villains:

The fight for life found record yet
In the clenched lips and the teeth hard-set;
The wrath from the bent brow was not gone,
And stark in the eyes the hate still shone
Of that they last had looked upon.

The Knight of Heronhaye's face, though that of a corpse, leaves no vestige of doubt as to his wholly evil character. Rose Mary's final triumph over evil is, despite her atypicality in not being entirely virtuous, common moral fodder suggesting the conclusions of Mrs. Radcliffe or Clara Reeve.

Even the Beryl-songs would not be out of place in a Gothic novel or in Scott's and Byron's poetic offspring of the genre. Such lyrical interludes provide the means of relieving the melodrama and violence otherwise prevailing, and similar techniques continue to appear in English fiction through the nineteenth century, Meredith's *Vittoria* and Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* furnishing examples of late outcroppings. So Rossetti has added to the ballad tradition other "medieval" ingredients, *i.e.*, the romance metrics and stanzaic form, modified to be sure, and the Gothic fashions, and has created a veritable melting pot in form and in content. "Rose Mary" also emphasizes, from the very nature of its title to its final narrative line, his preoccupation with "women and flowers."

In "The White Ship" and "The King's Tragedy," the final ballad-narratives to see publication during his lifetime, Rossetti attempts something different from his earlier ventures and closes his third period of poetic activity which had begun in 1877. He deals with stirring events in English and Scottish history, and he attempts

to capture the spirit of famous old historical ballads like “The Battle of Otterburn” and “The Hunting of the Cheviot,” the “Chevy Chase” lauded by Addison.

Assuming his readers’ familiarity with British history, Rossetti naturally concentrates upon the dramatic and colorful elements with which he can embellish his subjects.

Rossetti had been challenged to write a poem “in the simple, direct, and emphatic style, which is the style of the ballad proper” (Caine 77), as a means of diverting his attention from himself after a serious illness. So he delved into historical records, and “The White Ship” was the poetic fruit of his research. He tells a good story, the narrative moving swiftly and clearly from the circumstances which set the tale in motion to the catastrophic shipwreck and deaths and then on to the effects of the revelation of these events upon King Henry. The simplicity of the language, the poignancy of the refrain, and the theme of death and nature’s indifference to it are true ballad characteristics. The supernatural element, *i.e.*, the strange forebodings sensed by the king’s party at the time of the prince’s shipwreck, and the melodramatic violence inherent in the death scene are also standard trappings (Weatherby 19).

The story gains immediacy and credibility from a first-person narrator. That Berold is a butcher coalesces artistically with the simple octosyllabic couplet stanzas, each one possessing an individual emphasis characteristic of an untutored elderly man’s speech. The occasional occurrence of a triplet accords with the elaboration of an idea or with an outburst of emotion, and so it is not awkward or defective. Berold begins by relating something of King Henry’s background; in stanza six, a sour note creeping into the poem, he expands the mention of the king’s treachery, and in stanza seven he reveals the emphatic feelings of the people:

Of ruthless strokes full many an one
He had struck to crown himself and his son;
And his elder brother’s eyes were gone.

And when to the chase his court would crowd,
The poor flung ploughshares on his road,
And shrieked: "Our cry is from King to God!"

The additional line in each stanza allows a full development of the thought, accomplished neatly in compressed form and so eliminating the need for extra whole stanza units. The expansive technique is another derivation from Rossetti's literary heritage, coming from his idol Coleridge. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" furnishes a prototype for the stanzaic variations and also one for the general scheme, both in setting and plot, of "The White Ship." The stanzaic form is actually nearer to that in a metrical romance than to the more rigid ballad pattern. The refrains are structurally clever in indicating the division of narrative sections and in providing the vehicle for the repetitious moral utterances of old Berold (Friedman 282; Routh 33-37).

"The King's Tragedy," in its historical subject matter and expansive devices resembles "The White Ship." Rossetti's technical dexterity is evident in these sections. Kate Barlass' description of King James's early life suggests Berold's account of King Henry, although the stanzaic pattern in which her narrative is cast is more nearly that of the true ballad. The $a^4b^3a^4b^3$ opens her portion of the narrative, but when an elaboration in her story or an added degree of emotion is necessary the stanza lengthens to coincide with the extra flow of words. The first description of the queen:

For once, when the bird's song drew him close
To the opened window-pane,
In her bowers beneath a lady stood,
A light of life to his sorrowful mood,
Like a lily amid the rain.

requires an extra line to include the lily simile. The increase contributes to the garrulity of and the wealth of detail remembered by the old lady.

Kate's being a first-person narrator stands out as another link between "The King's Tragedy" and "The White Ship." Indicative of the obviously personal tone in both poems, she intrudes more emphatically than Berold does, but her intrusions should not be considered as defective as Graham Hough says they are (70). Kate participates much more significantly in the historical event which she relates than Berold does in the disaster at sea. He is merely a spectator, and a lowly one at that, necessary only in that he survive to relate the terrible news of the prince's death. Kate, though, not only relates the circumstances which finally culminate in the murder of the king, but she also conveys—melodramatically to be sure—the fact of her great importance in those matters. Her tale is, after all, a rehashing of *her* becoming a renowned figure in legend as well as an inside story about noble personages (my emphasis). While her emphatic intrusions into the narrative are not defects per se, the fact that she—acting for Rossetti—attempts to interweave a love story, a historical tragedy, and a legend about herself into one ballad-like tale causes structural diffuseness in the whole. Rossetti attempts too much—here as in "Rose Mary" are materials for numerous ballads—and so the poem falls below the measure of a masterpiece in balladry.

Other characteristics in both "The White Ship" and "The King's Tragedy" show greater affinities with the literary ballad than with the more primitive antecedents. The studied use of archaisms, the frequent internal rhymes, the characteristic Rossettian abundance of color and decoration, and the obviously Gothic aspects are clearly techniques of the nineteenth century, *e. g.* , from "The King's Tragedy" :

And the song was long and richly stored

With wonder and beauteous things;
And the harp was tuned to every change
Of minstrel ministerings;
But when he spoke of the Queen at last,
Its strings were his own heart-strings.

The use of “wonder” as an adjectival archaism, the over-wrought, unoriginal strings metaphor, and the preciousness of “minstrel ministerings” are entirely foreign to the imagery and diction in works like “Johnnie Armstrong” or “The Battle of Otterburn.” In both “The King’s Tragedy” and “The White Ship” clever “medievalism” appears in rhyming “behind” and “wind.” Rossetti’s skill with language being what it was, one may assume that he intended a genuine old pronunciation rather than one of his more frequent “stunning” words. Ornamental language is evident also in the deceptively simple “The White Ship:” “For *Christmas cheer* is to *home hearts dear*, / And *Christmas* now was drawing *near*.” “*Eighteen* years till then he had *seen*, / And the *devil’s dues* in him were *eighteen*.” (my emphasis) The internal rhymes and other sound effects obtrude all too emphatically and cleverly to have come from the genuine old ballads.

Rossetti’s borrowings are evident in the obviously Gothic attributes in “The King’s Tragedy.” The stormy night, the tossing sea, and the flickering moonlight combine to form a perfect background for the weird old crone and her prophecy of violence and death. The aura of the supernatural which causes the horses to rear—animals supposedly being more perceptive than humans to such phenomena—appears frequently in Gothic literary works. Several stanzas farther on, a stormy night again figures prominently, the elements providing a setting coincident with violent emotion and action. Then an interlude of seeming placidity ensues, the stanzas from “The Kingis Quair” adding a note of love and sentimentality which provides strong relief for the otherwise pervasive mood and tone of violence, but dire portents are intermingled with the gaiety. The treachery of Stuart, the second

appearance of the old woman (who could come directly from Scott's *Ivanhoe* or *Guy Mannering*), the remote location of the royal chamber, and the bloody scenes of terrible death bear more nearly the stamp of the Radcliffe-Lewis-Maturin School than that of the originator of "The Twa Corbies." The melodrama and its trappings are too greatly elaborated to have come from the austere, matter-of-fact medieval tradition. The episodic structure and the diffuseness in "The King's Tragedy" may also owe something to the long Gothic romances, although there is evidence to indicate Rossetti's failing health as the cause for such defects (Baum PBS 229n1).

During the early months of 1882, with death drawing near, Rossetti turned to the completion of one of his earliest projects, "Jan Van Hunks." The materials for the tale of a Dutchman losing his soul to the devil in a smoking contest came from popular tales of the eighteen-twenties and thirties (*Jan Van Hunks* 15ff.) The poem is like "The White Ship" in its straightforward narrative progression to a momentous climax in the final stanza. The absence of overloaded ornamentation also places the two poems close in matters of style. The stanzaic pattern in "Jan Van Hunks" (rhyming abcdb with a 434343 stress pattern) is another type of expanded ballad stanza, and the lengthening serves a purpose similar to that in Rossetti's other ballads.

Several distinctly Gothic elements are also present, and they neatly coincide with the situation inherent in Van Hunks's challenging the devil, the idea of selling one's soul to Satan recurring throughout the School-of-Terror genre, as well as being staple popular ballad fare. The setting is typical; the evening coming on "stealthily" and developing into a cold windy night for a physical background ideal for the strange and violent events ensuing in the "quaint old room." Van Hunks, cruel, selfish, and proud, is fit prey for the devil, and his audacious challenge calls forth that ever present personage in the guise of a singular old man. The stranger's appearance recalls the stereotyped mysterious man from earlier literature in the

century. The marked brow, the terrible countenance, and the noticeable aura of the supernatural about him are the attributes of a Montoni or a Melmoth:

What thunder dwelt there, which had left
On his brow that lowering trace,
What lightning, which could kindle so
That fitful glare on his face,
Though the sneering smile coursed over his lips,
And the laughter rose apace.

The pact is quickly concluded with little thought on Van Hunks's part concerning the identity of his strange guest. Several vignettes follow in which the atmosphere of mystery and eeriness is intensified. The smoke curling around the old man's head has serpentine characteristics, and the mirrors, instead of reflecting the features of the smokers, show dismal scenes of starvation and suicide. The recurrent mention of the stranger's fiery eyes and odd laughter increases the tension. The final hour arrives, Van Hunks dies, and the devil transports him to hell. A scene of torture occurs there which recalls the cruelties in the last chapter of *The Monk*. There is grim humor in the idea of Van Hunks being dismembered and fashioned into a pipe for Satan, but it is overshadowed by the Gothic barbarity and violence.

Knowing that Rossetti first worked on this poem early in his life, I believe that he intended it as a conscious assay in the Gothic genre. Another early poem, "William and Marie," also shows decidedly Gothic tendencies, and the use of this type of material is not surprising if one recalls that the great vogue of writers like Beddoes, Barham, and Ainsworth during the eighteen-forties. A young man working on his first poems would naturally have followed models likely to bring him great popularity (Fisher "Hints" 121ff.). The moaning wind, the flashing lightning, the desolate setting, and other trappings combine to produce a work of the hair-raising type:

And the lightning glanced on the murderer's face
And showed its livid hue,
And faster o'er the lonesome waste
In mortal fear he flew.

And it glimmered on his crested helm,
And dashed him from his horse,
And stretched him writhing on the earth,
A burnt and blackened corse.

It is not difficult to see in these stanzas the prototypes—crude ones—of Rossetti's later ballad-narratives; his vein ran thin but he mined steadily.

Conclusion

The most obvious feature of Rossetti's ballads is their revelation of his skill in adapting literary materials and refashioning them into poems bearing his unique artistic stamp. One critic states that "'Typical' and 'characteristic' are the words which constantly jump to one's pen in writing either biography or criticism about Rossetti. His life and his work are reflections of each other, and both are reflections of an extraordinarily fixed personality." (Mégroz vii) His ballads bear out the truth in that statement. They are similar not only to each other but to the remainder of Rossetti's poetical output.

These ballads suited Rossetti's story-telling abilities, and the directness and simplicity in "The White Ship" or in "Jan Van Hunks" demonstrate his talents along such lines (Pater 208ff.). Moreover, while lyrical qualities dominate in "Troy Town" and "Eden Bower," an impression is conveyed that a tale of epic proportions is before the reader. Details of suspense, of flashback, of conversation, and of the dramatic are skillfully handled in the ballad-poems as well as in others like "The Blessed Damozel," "A Last Confession," and, to a lesser extent, "Dante at Verona." Rossetti's capacities to deal with narrative forms sometimes result in his attempting

too much, and so poems like “Rose Mary” or “The King’s Tragedy” contain materials sufficient for several tales and thus are structurally diffuse.

Rossetti’s mastery in matters of language is another skill and, sometimes, a defect in his poetry. The combination of words and sound effects in poems like “Eden Bower” or “Sister Helen” makes for lovely musical effects (similar non-narrative lyrical masterpieces are “The Cloud Confines” and “The Song of the Bower”), but his use of the same materials for decorative touches or for demonstrations of his ability to play with words may become artificial and annoying. “The Bride’s Prelude” and “Down Stream” provide examples of minglings of such excellence and artificiality

Another irritating feature in these and in other Rossetti’s works is the piling up of the images and the compression used in forming the individual units in order to achieve poetic refinement, *e. g.*, in “Rose Mary” and “The Bride’s Prelude.” An obscurity frequently results from this decorativeness, which does not gain admirers. Sections of “The Bride’s Prelude” bear witness:

At least an hour had Aloyse,
Her jewels in her hair,
Her white gown, as became a bride,
Quartered in silver at each side,
Sat thus aloof, as if to hide.

Her arms were laid along her lap
With the hands open: life
Itself did seem at fault in her:
Beneath the drooping brows, the stir
Of thought made noonday heavier.

The difficulty in deciding whether it is Aloyse or the gown sitting aloofly in the first section, and the strange construction in the final couplet of the second passage make the reading far from easy. This fault is perhaps more apparent in some of the sonnets in *The House of Life*. but there are traces of it through others of the longer narratives.

Color, light, and sharp detail add freshness to some of these poems and to others that was new and needed when Rossetti was writing (Jones-Faverty 194-195; Doughty 1953:94-95). His abilities as a painter admirably qualified him for the task of instilling such materials into poetry, and so he was able to create many striking word pictures:

‘Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen,
The moon flies face to face with me.’
‘Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother.’
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sight to-night between Hell and Heaven?*)

From “The King’s Tragedy” comes this sharp image:

But Death even then took aim as he sang
With an arrow deadly bright;
And the grinning skull lurked grimly aloof,
And the wings were spread far over the roof
More dark than the winter night.

Rossetti employed many themes, *e.g.*, family conflicts, striking sexual themes, illicit passion, violent death, the supernatural, and stylistic devices such as the somber tone foreboding doom from the old ballads in “Down Stream,” “Sister Helen,” and “Stratton Water.” He developed these materials into his own distinct contribution to the tradition of the literary ballad, and no imitator could approach his technical skill.

Rossetti often imitated the poetry of others (and not just in his ballads), but the results show great cleverness in form. Gothic and Keatsian derivations are particularly evident. Rossetti usually secured an artistic combination of form and content in poems like “Sister Helen,” “Stratton Water,” “Eden Bower,” “Troy Town,” “The White Ship,” and “Jan Van Hunks.” In others like “Rose Mary,”

“The Bride’s Prelude,” “The King’s Tragedy,” and “Down Stream,” he was less successful. Hall Caine says that Rossetti disliked poetry that was not entirely poetic, and that he could for that reason never endure the work of Wordsworth. His dislike of the prosaic in large measure accounts for his endeavors to create poems foregrounding “literary” and lyrical touches, along with romantic and exciting themes, which appear repeatedly in his ballads (Wood 2013 544-545).³ Just so, he may have concentrated his efforts in later years to his ballads, which are all set in the past, because he didn’t find much of interest or excitement in contemporary life (Cooper 176, 188). These poems should not be minimized because they demonstrate Rossetti’s adding artistic dimension to the literary ballad in the later nineteenth century.

Notes

- 1) Paull F. Baum’s edition of *The House of Life* (Cambridge, Mass., 1922) remains the “standard” edition of that poem. I dedicate this study to the memories of Professors C. D. Yost, Jr., Paull F. Baum, Lionel Stevenson, Benjamin Boyce, and Clyde K. Hyder, who inspired my studies of Rossetti.
- 2) Ironically, Caroline Franklin includes only selections from Christina Rossetti’s verse in *The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse*.
- 3) Wood’s interesting perceptions about Rossetti’s musical-performative techniques do not encompass the ballads.

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Not Your Typical Southern Town: The Modern Sensibility of Ashton, Mississippi, in Hubert Creekmore's *The Welcome*

By Phillip Gordon

When Hubert Creekmore first sat down to work on the novel that would become *The Welcome* (1948), under its original title *Fulcrum*, he wrote to his publishers that the themes of the novel would include “the responsibilities of the man and the woman in a marriage, to each other and to their contract.”¹ As a “second but equally important theme,” he continued, the novel would explore “the relation of marriage to the environment in which it occurs, in this particular case a small Southern town.”² In *The Welcome*, Creekmore put in motion two couples, one unhappily married, the other soon to be married. The first, Jim and Doris Furlow, married right out of college and moved to Jim’s hometown, Ashton. A grotesquery of Southern womanhood who demands nice things from her husband but denies him sex, Doris alienates Jim, who despises providing for a woman he hates. Meanwhile, Don Mason, Jim’s former high school friend, returns from a failed attempt to move to New York City, an attempt to escape the confines of his small Southern town. With his return, however, he has accepted the inevitable social obligation to marry and courts Isabel, a former-tomboy-turned-lady whose transformation has been predicated by this need to marry as well. The novel ends with Don and Isabel driving off on their honeymoon, while Jim retreats to the slow, inescapable doom of his life

with Doris. The promise of the marriage to be and the disintegration of the marriage that has been animate the primary theme of the novel: the responsibilities of marriage. The dual marriage plots counterpoint each other in marvelous symmetry, and though Creekmore begins the novel with an epithet from Christopher Marlowe's *Faustus*--an ominous epithet to be sure--his mastery of the dual plot structure would even impress that other Renaissance dramatist of Marlowe's generation with a penchant for dual plot structures himself.

In this paper, however, I want to focus on that other theme that Creekmore mentioned: the relation of marriage to the environment in which it occurs, in this particular case a small Southern town which Creekmore named Ashton, Mississippi. He modeled Ashton very closely on his actual hometown of Water Valley, Mississippi, in Yalobusha County, just over the Yocona River from William Faulkner's hometown of Oxford in Lafayette County and their apocryphal corollaries, Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha. Ashton is geographically the equivalent of Faulkner's apocryphal Mottstown, where Joe Christmas retreats after murdering Joanna Burden and where the Bundrens eventually go to cross the swollen "Yoknapatawpha" River after failing to ford the river nearer to Frenchman's Bend. Creekmore's Ashton, however, is no ordinary small town from the pages of much of Southern literature town, with its penchant for dusty streets, mules in yards, and other evidence of an older, unmodernized way of life. Ashton certainly stands out in comparison to its neighbor to the north (yes, Ashton is further south than Jefferson, a real accomplishment, metaphorically speaking). The town is distinctly atypical in relation to the mythic dusty backwaters so prolific in Southern fiction, namely *THE*

Southern archetype, Faulkner's postage stamp of native soil. This atypical presentation of Ashton is at the heart of how Creekmore critiques marriage "in this particular case" and why it is no minor point that he singled out "environment" as the theme for the novel, but not in the way that we might expect.

To begin an investigation into Creekmore's novel, I would like to pose as an axiom that in Southern literature the standard presentation of Southern communities is of towns or villages (or hamlets) that are small, isolated, and thoroughly anti-modern. I am sure astute scholars of Southern literature could think of exceptions to this axiom, but I hope we can all agree that this treatment is also fairly ubiquitous as a fundamental aspect of "telling about the South." At the crux of the blooming that we have named the Southern Renaissance is a representational tension as the so-called "Sahara of the Bozart" and its denizens confront the economic and industrial upheavals that threaten the "old ways" with the steamroller of progress, the deforestation of dense woodlands, the construction of large dams and the flooding of vast tracts of "virgin wilderness," the growth of urban areas, and the increasing ease of transportation between rural and urban spaces, to say nothing of the upheavals (in regard to race relations primarily) attendant upon the prolific modernization of the idealized Southern pastoral landscape and the idealized way of life practiced therein. In theory, Creekmore's Ashton should fit this axiom, especially as his original synopsis of the novel places "environment" in such close proximity to the theme of marriage that he means to explore.

The revision process as the novel went from *Fulcrum* to *The Welcome* would seem to heighten the preference for a stock treatment of the Southern town. In

Fulcrum, Creekmore meant to set the action *after* World War II. He wrote the novel in 1947-48, and for all practical purposes envisioned it as set contemporary to its writing. As he revised his original idea, however, he regressed the time of the novel to roughly 1933 but with much of the action relying on events that happened five to seven years prior, when Jim and Don were in high school. Faulkner also wrote a novel in 1948 that he set in roughly the the early to mid-1930s. In *Intruder in the Dust*, Chick Mallison clops along on a horse on a dark dirt road, following a car to be sure, but stuck on his horse as he tries to make his way out to Beat 4. The horse, of course, is primarily a plot device that allows Faulkner to drag out the action in a novel which famously reminds us elsewhere, in the ruminations of Chick's uncle Gavin Stevens, that really anytime we want it, we can just pretend it is a little before two o'clock on a hot July afternoon in 1863 in the waning moments before Pickett's Charge, the sticking place in history from which time has never really progressed forward for the South if the South so chooses to believe that it has not. Admittedly, there are cars in the novel, and Chick, Aleck, and Uncle Gavin eventually use one to move around more quickly to save Lucas Beauchamp after Chick, on his horse, solves the murder case against Lucas.³

This deference to automobile transportation is in stark contrast to the novel Faulkner wrote in 1930 and which, perhaps more than any other, epitomizes the pastoral, anti-modern impulses of Southern literature, *As I Lay Dying*. In that novel, set contemporary to its writing, the Bundrens drag a woman's corpse across the countryside in a wagon with mules in order to bury her, the slow journey of their move from isolated to urban space recounted in pain, suffering, and the

overwhelming odor of decay. To modernity and its emblems, Anse spits, “Durn that road” (35), and he resents its fast-moving ways when it passes the Bundrens’ farm, as if it is utterly out-of-place in his pastoral countryside. In the seemingly timeless landscape of the family’s journey, one is almost stunned when, near Jefferson, Darl happens to mention that “a car comes over the hill” (228). In the nine days of the novel and the forty miles that the Bundrens travel, this is not only the first car they encounter but the first mechanized object as well. Their South is a rural and isolated South, their lives dictated by its outmoded rhythms. Modernity troubles them and seems completely out of place to readers who buy into the image of the South that the novel presents.

Though he set his novel in the 1930s and in the same geographic space as *As I Lay Dying* (the Bundrens travel north to Jefferson/Oxford from Mottstown/Ashton/Water Valley), Creekmore desists from such depictions. In defiance of such imagery, he makes the car a central figure in Ashton, even making Gus Traywick, another of Jim’s high school friends, the owner of a Ford dealership. Jim and Doris own a car, which Jim uses to drive down the street a few blocks to work, but Doris wants a nicer car because merely owning a car is not a status symbol. She wants a certain make of car that would be better than the other cars that everyone else in town owns, a Buick or a Lincoln, she explains, not just another Ford from Gus’ lot. Oddly, in the entire novel, no one rides a horse, and no great deal is made out of the dusty roads. It would seem the roads in Ashton are even paved, or are being paved because “at the main intersection” in the town, “the oil flares of the PWA paving project smoke somberly” against the night sky (61). Furthermore, the

country roads that Jim and Don explored together--in a car no less--while they were in high school are not described as impassable in any capacity. When he finds out about Don's return, Jim closes up his law office for the afternoon and goes for a drive to get his thoughts in order. He does not go for a walk, nor does he saddle up a horse. In 1933, when the events of the novel take place, he goes driving to think to himself. He never drives past a wagon with a dead woman and her five children in it. Neither horse nor buggy appear in the novel at all. When he clears the city limit and finds himself overlooking livestock in a farmyard, he recognizes how primitive the scene is and finds it unfortunate because he does not care for the rural pastoral mythos associated with it nor its proximity to his home in town.

The different perspective on automobiles does not account for the entirety of Creekmore's competing vision of the Southern landscape and its mythic antiquity. From the earliest pages of the novel, we are introduced to "the young people" of Ashton, late-twenty and early-thirty somethings, sitting around the drugstore in town where they gather daily for a soda with ice (as opposed to Faulkner's country folks in *The Hamlet* gathering around a country store with an open barrel of crackers to eat from and squatting on their haunches for lack of a chair). Though Jim begrudgingly compares Ashton to Memphis and New Orleans and loathes the provincialism of Ashton in comparison, he, Doris, and Gus and Bea Traywick go to movies most nights, at one point to see "Katharine Hepburn in something. Name of a girl, I think. Something about a small town" (61). While they wait for the movie to begin, they are treated to "loud, undeveloped jazz tunes" being played in the background of the theater and not even worth describing in further detail except to say they are,

precisely, background (62).

Beyond the movie theater, Isabel decorates her house with prints on her wall by Marie Laurencin, the French Cubist painter. These mass-market-produced prints are in stark contrast to Darl Bundren's "cubistic bug" comment that is so profoundly out-of-place in *As I Lay Dying* and emblematic of Darl's own queerness in relation to his rural, uncultured surroundings. Later, as she courts Don, Isabel and Don skim through her record collection, beginning with an old Haydn symphony but moving on to a number of her other albums, of which she owns a great many. The contrast here is also to *As I Lay Dying*, where, in addition to Anse's acquiring a new wife, after the trial by fire and flood that marks their journey, Anse also acquires for his children a solitary gramophone, the end-all of their suffering being the acquisition of that one piece of mechanized modernity. However, no narrator ever specifies if Anse also bought records to play on it, much less a whole collection of them.

Creekmore's small Southern town differs from its more famous neighbor to the North in more than just the accoutrements of modernity. The sensibility of the townspeople and their racial and social interactions are notably different as well. The Furlows, Don and Isabel, Gus and Bea Traywick, and the entire cast of the party at which Don and Jim reunite are all white, middle-class citizens. Doris in particular is keenly aware of her social standing in relation not to her peers but to the parents of her peers, lineage being the basis for her sense of social standing in a town where none of her peers share her condescension and in which, for all practical purposes, class distinctions are almost invisible. Hence, Doris must choose a certain brand of car to separate herself from her peers. Otherwise, everyone has about the same

standard of living. No poor whites live in antiquated cabins surrounded by the detritus of their abject poverty. Everyone has nice, new things. Don's mother and his aunt often invoke an antiquated sense of aristocratic propriety when they discuss Don's father and Don's marriage prospects, but since Don's *stated* reason for coming home is supposedly to take care of his dying mother, it does not take much to realize that the old ways are, quite literally, dying, to be replaced by a new, pleasantly bourgeois bourgeoisie (also, Don has returned home for more than his stated reason of taking care of his mother).

Also, only one person in the novel has a black maid: Isabel has Dulcy. Doris believes she is entitled to a black maid, but Jim does not provide her with one, nor does Creekmore ever give us any image of any of the other couples of the Furlow's social set having one either. Doris has to cook dinner for herself and Jim in her comfortable and well-equipped kitchen. Though "somehow she could not picture herself, like the women in the *Ladies Home Journal*, being lyrical over the stove while fabricating the scraps of supper into a tasty luncheon dish," her home nonetheless has "plenty of closets, electrical plugs and a modern kitchen" (16). Doris is closer in lifestyle, if not in sentiment, to Mrs. Cleaver than to Mrs. Compson. The home she occupies surrounds her with modern convenience, and she is expected to run that home alone, as a self-sufficient stay-at-home wife with no use for hired help. Conversely, Bea works with her husband and Isabel lives alone with her maid prior to Don's courting her. Her courtship is based on a desire to marry, not on a need for financial support from a working husband.

What stands out so strikingly upon inspection of the "environment" of the

novel is that it does not really stand out. The people in the town suffer their share of the ennui of life, their days spent in the quiet desperation of the modern condition, perhaps, but certainly not burdened by being “in this particular case a small Southern town” with a list of anachronistic trappings emblematic of a broadly embraced, rigid, antique Victorianism driving the tension between progress and stereotypical hell-and-tarnation recalcitrance. In fact, Ashton is only barely discernible as Southern, and were it not for the reference to the nearby campus of Ole Miss (the University of Mississippi), it would almost seem like any small town in America, Southern or not. Yet Creekmore insisted when he first proposed the novel that the “environment” would be a key theme as a reference point to understanding the contract and responsibilities of married life there. Indeed, the novel explores the theme of marriage with extraordinary power--at one point Jim even introduces Doris to Don with the caustic irony that “a wife’s a wonderful thing for a man to have,” even though we, if not Don, know that Jim hates Doris and his life with her (96). We also know that Jim actually *loves* Don and that Don once *loved* Jim. The dual marriage plots in the novel are bound through Don and Jim, whom Creekmore fashioned as closeted homosexuals. Only, they are unable to express their love for each other until after that expression has lost any chance of changing the world they live in and the patterns of life they find themselves leading, though Jim has trouble remembering why he married in the first place except that it was the natural next thing for him to do at that particular point in his life. All he recalls clearly is that “in Ashton, in all such towns, you married, you worked” after finishing school (25). Jim has simply done what came to him next as the natural step in the progression of his life. He did

not question that step, at least not until after he made it and began to realize his error.

The problem Creekmore explores in the novel is not with marriage *qua* marriage, but it turns out that he was, in fact, quite concerned with marriage and its relationship to its environment. Creekmore did not, however, set up the conflict in the novel as modern love in opposition to a traditional environment. Rather, he reversed the conflict as what happens when traditional love, along with its institutional arrangements, finds itself in conflict with a modern environment that allows for new, more modern social structures as well. Although he revised the time of the novel backwards, Creekmore nonetheless retained the modern sensibility of Ashton, Mississippi. In 1951, while applying for grant money, he would explain a more nuanced version of the theme of *The Welcome* and its handling of “modern marriage” and its difficulties. He wrote that his goal was to make

an attempt to define the modern basic necessity of marriage by questioning its usefulness and success in light of modern neurotic life, modern women, and divorce. The problem is posed mainly on the negative side--the choice of not marrying, with emphasis on submerged homosexuality to dramatize the negative choice--with variously successful married couples to demonstrate the opposite results.⁴

In this light, the problem is that Jim should not have married. He did not need to in this modern world that does not require young people to follow such a rigid pathway in their life; this problem is exacerbated, in brilliant counterpoint, by the fact that he

also harbors deep homosexual desires which he could have acted upon but did not. The tragedy of the story is one of timing and missing the mark (a true translation of the term *hamartia* from classical discussions of drama). In high school, Don loved Jim. Jim was oblivious to Don's love, though they were immensely close to each other, and chose to marry a woman instead. He married Doris because he thought he had to get married as part of the natural order of life. Heartbroken, and directly as a result of Jim's decision to marry Doris, Don fled to New York--a gay space in American culture, as George Chauncey has explicated in his historical study *Gay New York*--but he failed to find himself there for reasons Creekmore would explain in a letter in 1948 in response to a review of *The Welcome* in *The New Yorker*. Don returns to Ashton after a three year absence in which Jim has realized that Don loved him and that he loved and still loves Don in return. But Jim is married now. He cannot escape his marriage--at least not easily--and even if he could, Don will not let him. Don's failure in New York has scarred him as deeply as Jim's marriage has scarred Jim. Now that Jim wants to run away with Don, Don chooses to marry Isabel, despite the evidence that Don has witnessed, via Jim and Doris's marriage, that marriage is not a viable solution to the problem of attaining happiness in this modern life. Unable to make a way for himself beyond the confines of small town expectation, Don embraces the model of marriage and work that Jim has discovered holds so little promise for joy.

Don and Jim could not express their love for each other *at the right time* to save themselves from their tragic fate of eternal alienation. Jim failed to return Don's love when it was offered. Don failed to return Jim's offer when he finally came around.

Had they expressed their love for each other at the same moment, they could have found happiness. Creekmore usurps the traditional trajectory of the marriage plot, usually a comic structure, by making the marriage at the end of the novel the source of the tragedy. Don's marriage epitomizes Jim's reversal of fortune, when he realizes how deeply Don was hurt by his rejection as Don rejects him. This reversal of fortune leads Jim to recognize the full, terrifying reality of his marriage contract with Doris. His bitter recognition sends him upstairs to face the inescapable life that he has made for himself with Doris. The final scene bleeds cathartic energy--the pity a reader is meant to feel for Jim and the fear that an unexamined life might lead others to the same tragic ending so overwhelm the final scene as to make it nearly as unbearable as the final scene of *King Lear* when so little hope for a restoration of order remains in the carnage that all the dying king can utter is "Never" until he, too, finally dies.

This tragic conclusion could not have been fully realized in an old, anti-modern Southern town where the homosexual desire between Don and Jim would be subsumed by Victorian sentiment and hidden away in houses laced with Carpenter Gothic eaves and trestles and shadowed by mysterious lattice-work framing the front porch. This tragedy has to take place against a believable background in which Jim and Don could have expressed their love for each other and found acceptance. In fact, Gus grants Don exactly this acceptance when they are out drinking moonshine together and Gus figures out that Jim's reaction to Don's return is predicated on more than simple hurt-feelings as a spurned friend. Even though Gus does not want to imagine the details of Jim and Don's homosexual feelings, he is able to accept that

Don and Jim might feel that way because they are both his friends. He has no significant hang-up about Don's admission that he and Jim felt more than friendship because Gus is not trapped in a Victorian order that denies the existence of homosexuality. He is a little surprised to discover that homosexuality actually exists in Ashton, Mississippi--as opposed to New York or a more urban environment--but only a little surprised, very little. The only hang-up anyone in Ashton has at all is that they assume that young people will get married, and young people do accordingly marry before they even have a moment to consider the long contract they are entering, the possibilities it precludes, and the other love it might blind one to in the first place. Old-fashioned marriage expectations in a modern environment cause tensions that produce tragic ends.

The plot plays out against a background with one, singular social condition--the blind expectation to marry--that carries its tragic possibilities beyond the isolation typical of small, Southern towns cut off from the progress of the greater nation around them. Creekmore used Don's return from New York to demonstrate that this particular environment is actually not exceptional in regard to its expectations concerning marriage. The universality of the tragedy in *The Welcome* is placed in contrast to Don's search to find himself in a new, more modern environment in New York, where he fled to when Jim rejected him by failing to recognize his affections. Don fails to find himself in the big, urban city because, it turns out, the big city does not offer a new, more modern environment. Creekmore explained the problem of assuming that New York is a different space with different expectations in a letter to his sister after the novel was published. On 5 November 1948, Creekmore

complained to his sister that the reviewer charged with reviewing his novel for *The New Yorker* was wrong in his dismissal of the novel as “set in one of those small Mississippi towns that, as described in literature, make one wonder why the state wasn’t ruled out of the Union years ago” (129). Creekmore lamented in his letter that the reviewer missed the point that the town in *The Welcome* was distinctly not *one of those towns*.⁵ Rather, as Creekmore wrote to his sister, “I pointed out that the small town in the book was no worse than any other town, even New York--they all had the same qualities at bottom.”⁶ By setting the novel in a universally recognizable contemporary town, not a mythically old-fashioned one, Creekmore used his small Southern town as the counterpoint to easy dismissals of his theme as emblematic of hum-drum Southern grotesquery or gothicism. Rather, he successfully crafted a treatise on modern marriage in which environment is not the problem. Marriage is, particularly when one enters into it as a *de facto* expectation despite evidence in one’s surroundings that the world has changed and the basic assumptions about the natural order of society could change with it. Creekmore used his novel to argue that a small Southern town can be a progressive, modern space capable of bearing significant social change. The citizens of that town simply miss the mark and do not realize the error of their attitude, specifically towards marriage, until it is too late.

Hubert Creekmore’s *The Welcome* is a damning tragedy, as its opening reference to *Faustus* implied it would be all along. The tension in the novel is predicated not on old ways encountering the encroachment of modernity but rather on modernity finding itself encroached upon by the residual presence of old and dying ways. Had Jim realized that he did not have to marry, he and Don might have found some

means of attaining happiness. The world around them--their *typical* small Southern town--is thoroughly modern in its lifestyles and sensibilities, except that its citizens are still wed to an outmoded expectation: they feel required to marry someone for reasons that are not clear except that they are “expected.” This expectation is outmoded in relation to its environment, the thoroughly modern town of Ashton, Mississippi. Like any good tragedian, Creekmore carves out the heart of this single faulty aspect of life in Ashton to craft the powerful message of his very atypical and exceptional Southern novel indeed.

Notes

1.) Hubert Creekmore Collection, The Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.

2.) Ibid.

3.) Arguably, the change in mode of transportation signifies the shift from fixation on the past and the “Lost Cause” of Southern independence with slavery intact to a more contemporary concession that racial politics have changed. When the novel finally progresses to concede this point, the mode of mobility changes accordingly as well

4.) Hubert Creekmore Collection, The Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts..

5.) The reviewer’s dismissal is all-the-more stunning a lapse in judgment of the novel when seen on the page in the 23 October edition of the magazine. The one paragraph review of *The Welcome* follows an eight page review of Faulkner’s *Intruder*

in the Dust and the starkly contrasting image it presents of an unregenerate Jefferson and the truly terrifying Beat 4

6.) Hubert Creekmore Letters, The University of Mississippi Special Collections, J. D. Williams Library, Oxford, Mississippi. These letters are a new addition to the library at Ole Miss and were being catalogued when I had the chance to read through them. My thanks to Jennifer Ford, head of Special Collections, and Mary Alice White, who donated the letters, for generously allowing me to read them on such short notice.

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All in the Family: The Misogyny of Bigger Thomas

By Jeanna Graves

Richard Wright's *Native Son* focuses on the dead-end life of Bigger Thomas and the hopeless road which leads him to that end. Populated by well-intentioned white society blinded by their prejudicial and patronizing fairness on one side, and poor-mouthing "woe-is-me" black society who blame the injustices of their lives on the indefensible decisions they make on their own, Bigger's world swallows him whole. Bigger contributes to this consummation by mistreating and disregarding the love and attention given him by the females in his life. Being black and poor in 1930s Chicago, Bigger lives much like an isolated tribesman of some unknown and remote jungle. He only knows the ins and outs of black society, and perhaps this isolation leads to his mistrust and disrespect of women of both races. He is forbidden to cross certain boundaries, and he knows little of white people outside of his own narrow-minded observations and beliefs. "They" have everything; "we" have nothing. He sees white people as oppressive and alien and cannot see past his own self-loathing and prejudice. Bigger cannot even fathom the possible commonalities that exist between them. Bigger's treatment of not only the white female Mary, but his black girlfriend Bessie, his mother, and his little sister Vera as well, show the reader the inhumanity Bigger ultimately feels for all people, especially himself. His murder victims, Bessie and Mary, initially complete opposites, exhibit several parallels. His sister Vera seems to be the parallel of both Bessie and her own mother.

Understanding the traits they share lends much to the ultimate betrayal Wright wants the reader to see in *Bigger*: that his own blindness to the similarities of these women would contribute to his downfall.

Bigger's misogyny becomes evident in his relationships with Bessie and Mary and "critics have most often responded negatively both to those sections of the book that articulate Richard Wright's commitment to Communism and to the violent deaths of Mary Dalton and Bessie Mears" (Guttman 169). This violence proves the "undeniable evidence of the misogyny underlying Wright's work" (Guttman 169). The portrayal of *Bigger* as a woman hater is recognizable to the author considering Wright's documented problems with women himself and "his difficulties in portraying feminine experience in some of his works" (Butler 5). Margaret Walker, professor emeritus of English at Jackson State University and a bestselling author in her own right, writes extensively on Wright from both a personal and professional point of view. Although she found Wright to be ambivalent toward black women, he also told her that "black women don't do anything but pull you down when you're trying to get up" (Osborne 2). Following publication, Wright was "totally unprepared for the shock of the book" (Osborne 2) to readers both black and white. Walker ascertained that her relationship with Wright was platonic and friendly even though he would eventually treat her with hostility and mistrust. His attitude toward women, both black and white in *Native Son*, was most closely demonstrated in *Bigger*'s treatment of the two major female characters. Focusing first on Bessie and Mary, the most striking similarity they share is that they are both murdered by *Bigger* for the same reason. They are both of no substantial or long-term use to him and

only threaten him with capture. Bigger accidentally suffocates Mary in a desperate act to protect himself from being caught in her bedroom by Mary's mother. Because the Daltons and Mary's communist boyfriend Jan have encouraged Mary to violate her given place in society, she moves beyond convention at the encouragement of the Communist Party to have "social relations between the races" (Guttman 174). This black-on-white transgression in Mary's room leads to her death. Bigger "knew that Mrs. Dalton could not see him; but he knew that if Mary spoke she would come to the side of the bed and discover him, touch him [...] He felt Mary trying to rise and quickly he pushed her head back to the pillow" (Wright 85). Whether by accident or ambiguity, he realizes that he has killed her. Bigger expresses no remorse and only reacts to the selfish fear of being caught, thus bringing him to dismember and burn Mary's body.

Following his trial, Bigger explains to Max why Mary deserved to be murdered and what "first prompted his desire to 'blot [her] out'" (Guttman 188) when he says, "She asked me a lot of questions. She acted and talked in a way that made me hate her. She made me feel like a dog" (Wright 405). Ultimately Bigger kills Mary to protect himself, and the reasons he gives Max only explain why it was so easy for him. Max defends Bigger with a "anguished social protest" (Seidman 4) that indicates that black people are denied their own identities by the racist premises which leave them "estranged from the moral codes of society and continually testing the limits of individual moral freedom in search of self definition" (Seidman 4). Bigger kills Bessie for the same reason he killed Mary, to save himself. Bigger says, "What about Bessie? [...] He could not take her with him, and could not leave her

behind” (Wright 235). In the end, both women are discarded and are literally disposed of like trash. He beheads Mary and burns her in the furnace (Wright 91-92), and bludgeons and tosses Bessie into an air shaft (Wright 239). The horror of Bessie’s death becomes all the more horrific upon learning that she survives the beating and fall and eventually freezes to death. Bigger expresses little regard for either woman and harbors an outright hatred for Mary. The reasons for the misogyny in literature are personal, cultural, and individual, but “perhaps the most obvious reason is sexual guilt [...] which often leads to obsessive concern with lust, the conviction that sexual relations are degrading, and the impulse to rebel against sexual dependence on women by degrading them” (Rogers 269).

Bigger’s hatred becomes evident when Wright says, “He did not feel sorry for Mary; she was not real to him, not a human being; he had not known her long or well enough for that. He felt that his murder of her was more than amply justified by the fear and shame she had made him feel” (Wright 114). Initially witnessed during Bigger’s job interview, his hatred of Mary shows itself immediately when she asks him if he belongs to a union. He understands the danger of the question “because in his mind unions and Communists were linked” (Guttman 173). Bigger thinks to himself, “He hated the girl then. Why did she have to do this when he was trying to get a job?” (Wright 52). Although Bigger recognizes Bessie’s self-pity when she tells him, “All my life’s been full of hard trouble [...] I wish to God I never seen you. I wish one of us had died before we was born” (Wright 229), she obeys him (Wright 231) and initially makes him feel confident when she agrees to help him with the ransom demands (Wright 149). Bessie’s weakness becomes the catalyst for Bigger’s

disgust with her. Rogers says when referring to misogyny in literature, “attacks on women were sometimes justified, not only because women have their faults like everybody else, but because social conditions often encouraged the development of obnoxious female types” (Rogers 265).

Both Bessie and Mary use alcohol to an extreme and would most likely be considered alcoholics today. Bessie drinks throughout the story and tells Bigger in a pathetic rant that “I just worked hard every day as long as I can remember [...] I had to get drunk to forget it. I had to get drunk to sleep” (Wright 229). Bigger first sees Mary on a news reel frolicking on winter vacation in Florida with Jan and other communist friends (Wright 32). This first impression contributes to an unconscious hatred for her by him. She appears as something unreal, both because of her wealth and race, but also because she appears on screen. This appearance on the movie screen contributes to her inhumanity to Bigger. Bigger and Jack view the footage that “represents Mary as an object of sexual desire and a symbol of white, capitalist power when she is introduced as one of the ‘little collection of debutantes [who] represents over four billion dollars of America’s wealth’” (Guttman 172). Wright also refers to her as “the naughty rich” (32). Evidence of Mary’s experience with drinking is obvious when she, Bigger and Jan go riding the night of the murder because she tells Jan while tilting a bottle of whiskey, “I can hold it” (Wright 79). Bessie’s alcoholism shows itself constantly.

Both women come across as non-political. Bessie’s political views are not discussed, but if Bigger did not know what the term NAACP meant, neither would Bessie. Mary donates money to the Communist Party, but never articulates a clear

reasoning for supporting such a divisive political party, other than her relationship with Jan. Mr. Dalton supports the NAACP, so the assumption that Mary does is a valid one. Her attitude about politics tends to discredit her with white society and places her at a greater divide with the black population.

The two women's views of sex parallel to a certain degree as well. Mary has sex in the car with Jan while Bigger drives. He can see the act in the rearview mirror and notes, "Mary was lying flat on her back in the rear seat and Jan was bent over her. He saw a faint sweep of white thigh" (Wright 78). Some readers may agree that her behavior lends itself to her murder because while drunk she has Bigger in her bedroom. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's description of the role of a lady includes the statement, "Women who abandoned secure, if circumscribed, social roles forfeited the claim to personal security" (Guttman 173). When Bigger must help Mary, he watches her struggle drunkenly up to her bedroom and thinks, 'she was beautiful, slender, with an air that made him feel that she did not hate him with the hate of other white people'" (Guttman 177). Misogyny based on a culture's view of sex and the rejection and guilt surrounding sex leads "naturally to the degradation of woman as the sexual object. [...] The difficulty of repressing desire, the disgusted recognition of woman's sexual power, is one reason for the misogynist's belief in her omnipotence" (Rogers 270). Bigger finds Mary's weakness sexually appealing, whereas he finds Bessie's weakness disgusting. At first he sees Bessie as something to be used to get ransom money and to help him escape, but eventually Bessie becomes an impediment to him. He practically forces her from her home, rapes her, beats her and finally "blots" her out by killing her. The reader sees Bessie's rape in addition to

hearing Bigger's thoughts developing the event into an even more brutal action. Guttman notes, "Bigger's utter unselfconsciousness is manifest in the scene's increasingly fragmented sentence structure" (184). An example of the exchange includes, "He had to now. Yes. Bessie. His desire was naked and hot in his hand and his fingers were touching her. Yes. Bessie. Now. He had to now. don't Bigger don't!" (Wright 234). Guttman sees the brutal attack with the brick as Bigger's attempt to "blot her out" (Wright 176). Although Bigger and Bessie have had consensual sexual relations in the past, Bigger's abuse of her in this way contributes to the negative stereotype of black women as sexualized and promiscuous and confirms Sandra Gilman's belief that "black women came to represent sexuality, particularly sexual deviance" (Reames 5). Even scientists in the nineteenth century sought to prove that black women were fundamentally sexual "based upon the 'primitive' sexuality of Africans" (Reames 5). Dunbar states that "Bigger only uses Bessie as a tool of sexual gratification. She suffers at the hands of a Bigger that society has created, and she suffers as a black woman who must attempt to exist in that same society" (56). Guttman reinforces this belief when she says "While *Native Son* illuminates the violence that occurs when the white female body is figured as a symbol of capitalist power, the novel also makes clear that it is the black woman who suffers sexual violence because of it" (171). Following the rape, Bigger dumps Bessie like a sack of trash down the airshaft. His only remembrance of her with any worth comes when he realizes that she had his money on her. Both Mary and Bessie are only two "things" in Bigger's life. Because he doesn't see himself as a real person, he cannot see worth in anyone else; hence compassion and regret do not exist. Bigger later

seems untouched by the Daltons' sorrow and only seems slightly moved by the clinical and embarrassing display of Bessie's tortured body exhibited on a table in the courtroom. Even then his response seems selfish in nature because he sees her display as a reflection on him.

Bigger's misogyny also encompasses women in his own family. He clearly shows a palpable impatience and bitterness for his mother and her hopeless faith that their lives will get better. This type of desperate religious faith is often evidenced in "the feelings of helpless black women imprisoned in a world of collective despair. For Bigger's mother, the only ray of hope comes from her belief in a better world in the afterlife" (Dunbar 55). Bigger hates this belief because "the only thing Bigger's mother can bequeath him is belief in a religion which has continuously failed her" (Dunbar 56). Bigger feels constantly hounded by his mother with her requests for him to find respectable employment because they depend on government assistance. "Bigger's response to the "grinding poverty of his family members' lives, his mother's expectations [...], and the repeated evidence of the futility of his ambitions in a racist culture" (Seidman 5) contribute to his volatile nature and hatred propagated toward the females in his life. Mrs. Thomas repeatedly addresses Bigger as "the biggest fool" (Wright 7) and even tells him, "And mark my word, some of these days you going to set down and cry. Some of these days you going to wish you had made something out of yourself, instead of just a tramp. But it'll be too late then" (Wright 9). Irritated by her "prophesying" Bigger tells her to stop. This repeated revelation of the denial of "the American Dream explodes into unfocused violence" (Seidman 5) for Bigger. Much like Wright's character Johnny Gibbs from

Rite of Passage, Bigger “seeks a new life in violence because he finds himself trapped in a society which denies him most of the things which build and sustain human identity - family, friends, work, and self-esteem” (Butler 1). If Mrs. Thomas is the figurative head of Bigger’s family, then he sees her as a contributing factor in the prevention of his “new life.” Unlike Gibbs, Bigger comes from a threatening life and moves into a new threatening existence (Butler 3).

Much like Bigger sees Mary and Bessie as “things”, he sees his own mother as a thing that he can use to achieve a selfish purpose. For example, Bigger asks his mother for money following the murder even though he has money stolen from Mary. He may claim to hate his family because he can’t provide for them, yet he remains oblivious to the financial burden for his mother. She says, “Here’s a half. That leaves me exactly one dollar to last till Wednesday” (Wright 107).

Wilson speculates the reason Mrs. Thomas may have felt the need to leave the South when he says, “Now 20, Bigger left the South at 15, maybe with his mother’s hoping that they were leaving before Bigger became a perceived threat to white womanhood” (18). The fatalistic “threat to white womanhood” comes to Mary. The new life Bigger believes he will have away from his mother following his new job is in fact a “false ‘new life’” (Butler 3) because it leads to “the destruction of his most humane self and quickly leads to his death” (Butler 3). Mrs. Thomas is a weak and pathetic woman described as having “no interest in civil rights, nor any understanding of the masculine frustration within Bigger. [...] She simply wants Bigger to get a ‘nigger-type’ job and be a good boy” (Carey 40). Wright’s own mother was described as “strong-willed and domineering” and his feelings for friend

Ellen Wright “seem to have been a mixture of love and resentment and maybe even a certain degree of bitterness” (Dunbar 111). Perhaps Wright’s personal attitudes toward the women in his own life are paralleled in Bigger’s. Dunbar adds that these “mother-sufferers, these women are often ‘dependent on males and abused or abandoned by them’” (122). Bigger mirrors this self-hatred in his attack on Bessie because he is an abuser and Bessie disrespects herself because she allows him to abuse her. Bigger also assigns some blame for Mary’s death on his mother because she forced him to take the job with the Daltons. He feels that “while trying to respect the established race code, Bigger finds himself in an impossible situation. On the one hand, he should not be alone with Mary in this fashion. On the other hand, it is his duty as an employee to offer his assistance” (Wilson 21). Thus trying to be a good employee like his mother wants, Bigger feels forced into the situation which ends in Mary’s murder.

Realizing that the Daltons also own the property in which Bigger’s family lives, he has the added responsibility of ensuring their safety and comfort in a situation in which they are victims of “urban economic inequity” (Wilson 17). The fear of homelessness and the desperation of the Thomas’s situation come to light most clearly following Bigger’s arrest and his family’s visit to the jail. Wright says, “They stood in the middle of the floor, crying, with their arms locked about Bigger. Bigger held his face stiff, hating them and himself, feeling the white people along the wall watching” (Wright 300). Mrs. Thomas later begs the Daltons to save her son or at least do not throw her family out of their home (Wright 301). During this time, many Southern blacks who migrated to the north found themselves “disheartened by

the squalid conditions they found there” and even if they could afford better housing, “they were denied access” (Wilson 17).

Bigger feels more “paralyzed with shame” (Wright 301) by his mother’s begging for their slum apartment than by her begging the Daltons to spare his life. Although Wright describes his own mother as domineering, he also credits her with encouraging his writing talents and “providing him with resources which enabled him to find imaginative alternatives to the social environment which crushes so many of his characters” (Butler 5). Further justification for Bigger’s hatred for his mother can also be explained by the literary phenomenon of Naturalism which states “that human beings are influenced by two major forces: socioeconomic determinism and biological determinism” (Wilson 22). Thus humans are shaped by their environment and their own innate urges. Wright uses Naturalism to describe Bigger’s reactions in *Native Son*, reactions caused by a world with no choices for black society (Wilson 22), but the use of Naturalism just as easily works as an explanation for Bigger’s hatred for his mother. Seidman reinforces the connections between the modern human condition and the biological determinism of Naturalism when she says, “The antidote to naturalistic despair in Wright’s early fiction is provided by Communism, which explains the degradation of racism as part of a worldwide pattern of class exploitation whose remedy is assured through the historical inevitability of revolution” (4). As the oldest male member of the Thomas family, Bigger assumes the role of “man of the house.” This title and the unwanted responsibilities give Bigger the “most important cause of misogyny, because the most widely and firmly entrenched in society, is patriarchal feeling, the wish to keep

women subject to men. There is one obvious reason for this: the top dog naturally wishes to remain on top” (Rogers 272).

Although Bigger exhibits hatred for his mother, he saves disgust for possibly the most minor character in *Native Son*. Bigger’s little sister Vera, described as timid, afraid and weak in the text, often parallels Bessie. While Vera tries to comfort her mother following an argument Bigger thinks, “He shut their voices out of his mind. He hated his family because he knew that they were suffering and that he was powerless to help them” (Wright 10). Both Vera and Mother are introduced in a fearful scene with the rat killing episode at the beginning of the book. Dunbar describes Vera’s fear as “a constant part of her personality. She carries with her fears she had known in the South where her father was lynched” (54). Bigger carries great rage toward her. “Her inner fears and frustrations are not hard to trigger. She will be forever running and jumping and screaming and fainting” (Dunbar 54) and Bigger will always hate her for it. Instead of trying to contribute to the family in some positive way, Bigger uses his own powerlessness as an excuse to hate them. Much like Bessie, Vera allows Bigger to treat her disrespectfully and abusively. The family wakes to a rat in the apartment and after beating it to death with an iron skillet, Bigger taunts her with it until she faints. His mother admonishes him while he “enjoys his sister’s fear” (Wright 7). Later while Bigger and his mother are talking, Vera mentions the possibility of him getting a job and Bigger tells her, “I wish you’d keep your big mouth out of this” (Wright 11). Later he describes her as “sappy” and says that “she did not have any more sense than to believe everything she was told” (Wright 15).

Bigger's sexual use of Bessie and total disregard for her feelings parallels his relationship with Vera to a certain degree. Bigger becomes angry by the lack of privacy their poverty allows them and questions the unfairness of it when he enters the Dalton's large mansion (Wright 105). At his home, Vera notices Bigger looking at her while she buckles her shoes. She tells him that she wishes he would not look at her. When he does not stop, she throws a shoe at him and screams, "I told you not to look at me" (Wright 103). Bigger instantly becomes angry. Later she sobs "He makes me feel like a dog," (Wright 103). After meeting Mary, Bigger has a concrete, white example to which he compares the other women in his life. Guttman states, "While the white woman was cast as the desirable and inaccessible symbol of white power and culture, the black woman occupied the place of her opposite, the easily accessible symbol of the uncivilized, animalistic, black masses" (171). His disregard for her emotions and her weak acceptance of his treatment of her mirrors Bessie's reactions. Bessie feels sorry for herself and her lot in life and exhibits this by drinking excessively. Although Vera does not drink, she exhibits her own apathy in her physicality. Bigger says, "How different Vera was from Mary! He could see it in the very way Vera moved her hand when she carried her fork to her mouth; she seemed to be shrinking from life in every gesture she made" (Wright 108). As much as he recognizes Bessie's hopelessness, he sees Vera's fear as an "organic part of her" (Wright 109). Much in the same way Bigger "blots" out Bessie, he wishes Vera would leave him when she visits him in jail. He says that she is "so little and helpless." He refuses to see her visit as a giving of herself to him, much in the same way he would not recognize Bessie's sacrifices to run away with him. Bigger sees her

sorrow at seeing him in jail as proof of his guilt. His mother later tells him that Vera has had to quit her sewing class because his arrest has caused her classmates to alienate and shame her (Wright 298). Bessie also feels shame in her job and allows the negative opinions of others to affect her.

In *Native Son*, both black and white women bear the brunt of Bigger's violence, and "Bigger feels the difference between them so acutely it seems to him as if he is at once both invisible and utterly naked" (Guttman 174). Mary's murder looks like an attack on rich white families, and she becomes the female embodiment of innocence and capitalism. Bessie's murder seems more heinous in the sense that Bigger thinks about, plans, and conducts her murder in the most brutal way following her rape. Bessie becomes the embodiment of Bigger's true guilt. In the end, Bessie and Mary's similarities are ignored, and the major difference that counts lays on the table, much like Bessie's corpse. Bigger will be put to death for Mary's murder because she is white and has worth; "the black girl was merely 'evidence'" (Wright 331). Vera's fate may never be known. Affected in a deep way by Bigger's arrest, the reader ends Vera's part of the story with a question as to whether or not she might break the bonds that have isolated and held down her mother and other black women. Interested in violence against women, Wright worked on an incomplete novel after *Native Son* tentatively titled "Little Sister" which might be a reference to Vera (Guttman 191). Vera's choice is clear. She will either perpetuate the negative life she knows or fight for a more positive change. She may escape the fates of her mother, Bessie and Mary, if she does not meet a Bigger of her own.

Rogers states that “a man who writes against women is not necessarily moved by hatred; he may be concerned mainly with capitalizing on a perennially interesting, and therefore salable, subject” (266–267). Wright’s use of misogyny in his fiction is not a new convention in literature and in fact the “criticism of women, whether inspired by handy convention, the desire to release feelings through humor, or deep hostility, has flourished in all periods” (Rogers 276). Using stereotypes to label different groups remains a human characteristic as well as a literary one. Although Vera and Mrs. Thomas’s futures would never be known, Bigger’s hatred of them would definitely follow them as “Richard Wright’s black female characters are full of hopelessness and despair, but he is aware of their aches and makes them known” (Dunbar 57). Wright wrote *Native Son* as a proletarian novel, “a novel that aims to convince its readers of the inevitability of a Marxist revolution” (Guttman 170). He believed that “the coming revolution would be an uprising of black and white working-class Americans, he intended *Native Son* to address those issues that divided the races” (Guttman 170). In the end, Wright’s use of violence in the book against his own race as well as white society deters readers from his original intention and leaves readers shaken by the aftermath of Bigger’s violence and hatred.

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“Modernism’s Lost Masterpiece” Recovered: Hope Mirrlees’s *Paris: A Poem*

By Nancy D. Hargrove

Since Hope Mirrlees, the author of *Paris: A Poem*, is largely unknown—a situation that has only recently begun to be remedied—, I’ll begin with a short introduction to this incredible and somewhat inscrutable woman.¹ Born in 1887 in Kent, England into a wealthy family of Scottish ancestry, Mirrlees was raised in Scotland and South Africa, returning to England to study Greek from 1910-1913 at Newnham College, Cambridge University. The famous classical scholar Jane Ellen Harrison became Mirrlees’s mentor and then her companion, although Harrison was 37 years older. They lived together intermittently beginning in 1914 at the Hôtel de l’Élysée at 3 rue de Beaune in Paris, where in the spring of 1919, Mirrlees wrote her daring avant-garde poem, published by the Hogarth Press in May 1920 with Virginia Woolf herself setting the type.² Woolf described Mirrlees as “capricious, exacting, exquisite, very learned and beautifully dressed” in one diary entry (200) and as “very self-conscious, willful, prickly and perverse” in another (258), while describing the poem as “very obscure, obscene, and brilliant” in a letter (*Letters II* 385). In the 1920s Mirrlees published three novels, the most famous of which was the fantasy *Lud-in-the-Mist*, and it seemed that she was launched on a literary career. However, after Harrison’s death in 1928, the devastated Mirrlees converted to Roman Catholicism

and largely retired from public life and writing. She died in 1978 in relative obscurity with not a single obituary.

As Julia Briggs has asserted, Mirrlees's poem is "modernism's lost masterpiece, a work of extraordinary energy and intensity, scope and ambition" ("Hope" 261); however, thanks largely to Briggs, it has recently been rescued from the depths of obscurity. Like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the model of high modernism, it employs an experimental style and fragmented structure, focuses on a great metropolis immediately following World War I, uses obscure allusions and languages other than English, and ends with explanatory notes.

What inspired such spectacular innovations in these two writers? The very air of early 20th Century London and Paris, the locations in which each lived during that period, was filled with a multitude of contemporary sources of inspiration. Eliot lived in Paris during the academic year 1910-11 and in London beginning in 1915, while Mirrlees lived in both Paris and London from 1913 to 1928. The period from 1910 to the early 1920s in both cities saw startling developments in all the arts: theatre, early cinema, jazz and avant-garde classical music, innovative ballets such as the Ballet Russes's *Parade* and *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and contemporary art movements such as Cubism with its technique of collages comprised of fragments of newspapers, wallpaper, and ticket stubs (for example, Pablo Picasso's 1912 *Still-Life with Chair Caning*, Georges Braque's 1914 *Man with a Guitar*, and Robert Delaunay's 1911 *Eiffel Tower*) as well as Dada and Surrealism. In addition, it saw the advent of advertising reflecting the new consumer culture, the popularity of the music hall and the circus, advanced technology, and World War I.

Furthermore, such writers as Guillaume Apollinaire, Jean Cocteau, and Blaise Cendrars advocated and demonstrated experimental techniques and the use of the everyday in poetry; Apollinaire in his 1913 poem “Zone” provided both poets with a model as his protagonist walks through Paris recording its sights, noting, “Tu lis les prospectus le catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut / Voilà la poésie ce matin” [You read leaflets catalogues posters that sing loudly / There’s poetry this morning] (ll. 11-12), while in his 1918 collection *Calligrammes* he often incorporated a design into the form of the poem on the printed page, such as The Eiffel Tower. As Briggs notes, the modernist poet Mina Loy argued a few years later for the “beauty of the ordinary. . . , all that is impressing itself upon our subconscious, the thousand odds and ends which make up your sensory everyday life” (“Hope” 244), in effect describing—though she was talking about Gertrude Stein—exactly what Mirrlees does in *Paris* and what Eliot does in *The Waste Land*.

However, in addition to these general sources of inspiration, it is entirely likely that Eliot was influenced by Mirrlees’s poem. Since her poem was published by the Woolfs a year after they published Eliot’s *Poems* and not long before he began the composition of *The Waste Land*, the Woolfs perhaps sought his advice on whether to publish it, given his in-depth knowledge of Paris based on his 1910-1911 year there and his love of all things French. And, after they published it, they seem certain to have told him about it and/or shown it to him. Also, as Cyrena Pondrom has pointed out, two episodes from the poem were published in 1919 in *The Egoist*, of which Eliot was then assistant editor (4). And in August 1920 Eliot and Wyndham Lewis stayed at the Hôtel de l’Élysée in Paris (*Letters I*, 491), where Mirrlees and

Harrison were living, so it is quite possible that Eliot met Mirrlees at that time. Since they became acquainted sometime in the 1920s, this seems likely. Further, although Mirrlees wrote in the early 1970s, “I never discussed [the poem] with him, and I am unaware whether he ever saw it. We were not yet acquainted in 1919” (qtd. in Bailey 4), her comment of course does not mean that he did not know her poem; indeed, in a 2000 review of a biography of Harrison, Briggs states categorically, but without citing any source whatsoever, “Those, like T. S. Eliot, who did read it, never forgot it” (“Wives” 25).

The lives of Mirrlees and Eliot also intersected at other points and in other ways. Eliot joined the Church of England in 1927, and, soon after Harrison’s death in 1928, Mirrlees converted to Catholicism, so they had similar spiritual commitments. Further, they became such good friends that Mirrlees often checked on Vivienne in the 1930s, and indeed in October of 1940 Eliot became a paying guest at Mirrlees’s mother’s house just outside London to escape the German bombing raids, to find, according to Michael Swanwick, “the tranquility in which to compose his poems,” and, as he himself revealed in a letter of 1952 to Mirrlees, to have a home, “the nearest I have had since I was a boy” (qtd. in Swanwick 43).

So, with this background in mind, let’s turn to Mirrlees’s poem; written in both English and French with a bit of Greek as well, it demands a great deal from its readers, including a good knowledge of the city of Paris and of French culture and history.

The speaker, a female *flâneur* (a daring appropriation of a hitherto male figure), walks through Paris during an entire day and night in the spring of 1919

(specifically on May 1), observing its random sights, sounds, and smells, which include everything from the most ordinary to the most extraordinary. The former includes names of metro stations; advertisements for cigarette papers, hot chocolate, and wine; little boys on the carousel in the Tuileries; pigeons; hot chestnut stands in the streets; department stores; snatches of overheard conversations; taxis lined up on the street; smells of sewers and of cigarettes; and soldiers in blue World War I uniforms. The latter include paintings by Rousseau, Manet, David, and Poussin; commemorative plaques on the homes of Molière, Voltaire, and Chateaubriand; U.S. President Wilson and French President Poincaré; Etruscan vases, a Roman statue, and a Roman temple; the Cathedral of Notre Dame; part of the actual score of the melancholy aria “Let me weep for my cruel fate” from Handel’s 1711 opera *Rinaldo* (Briggs, “Hope” 299); and numerous references to literary works from *The Frogs* to *Anna Karenina* and *Crime and Punishment*.

The protagonist’s path is not as random as it at first seems, and she is definitely not lost, as Ruth Gilligan suggests (2), although most readers are upon a first reading. As the poem begins, the protagonist boards the métro, probably at Rue du Bac (the station closest to her hotel), observing numerous advertisements as well as the names of metro stations; she exits at Place de la Concorde, sees or walks through the Tuileries, notes the Arc de Triomphe in the distance, says that she hates the Étoile, the madhouse circle around it, and is bored by the fashionable Bois du Boulogne beyond. As she walks north toward the rue St. Honoré, she smells hot chestnuts at a street vendor’s stand, notices children playing, red roofs, the blue smocks of workers, an advertisement for spring clothing at the huge department store

Le Bon Marché, imagines faraway gardens, and thinks of paintings in the Louvre recently re-hung after being hidden underground during the war. Spring growth on sycamore and poplar trees makes her think of the Roman Catholic Church at Easter, as well as its less laudable elements. She passes shops selling milk, cold cuts, aperitifs, and diabetic food, hearing the common greetings of shop owners to customers—“*messieursetdames*” [gentlemen and ladies], with the “*et*” elided to reproduce the way that it actually sounds.

She is then haunted by various images of death, including framed portraits of war dead with brass plaques proclaiming “MORT AU CHAMP D’HONNEUR” [Dead on the Field of Honor], a terrible irony, and comments on the devastating French losses at the Battle of the Marne: “Never never again will the Marne / Flow between happy banks.” Arriving at the Grands Boulevards, she seems to evoke the statement of the poet Cendrars in his 1913 poem “Contrastes”: “Les fenêtres de ma poésie sont grand-ouverts / sur les Boulevards” [The windows of my poetry are wide open onto the Boulevards] (ll. 1-2). With deliberate irony she notes, “It is pleasant to sit on the Grand Boulevards,” describing unpleasant smells of excrement in the sewers, the hot rubber smell of car tires, the cloyingly sweet smell of face powder, and the strong odor of Algerian cigarettes.

Returning to her hotel, she looks down into the rue de Beaune, observing street vendors and dogs that might, she imagines, make up a lost romance “Penned by some Ovid.” As the sun sets, she then goes back down to the street (although Sandeep Parmar says, incorrectly I believe, that she observes the rest of the poem from her room, xlii), passing the church of St. Thomas Aquinas at the end of rue de

Beaune and the homes of Moliere, Voltaire, and Chateaubriand, going to Benediction in the church Notre-Dame-des-Champs, and seeing the “sun sinking behind le Petit-Palais,” while along the Seine the “bouquinistes shut their green boxes,” very accurate details. Then in the 7th arrondissement [one of the twenty districts of Paris, where the protagonist is living], “Night [falls] like a vampire” sucking out all color and sound. She seems to take a taxi to Montmartre, the quartier of prostitutes, lesbians, and nightclubs such as the famous Moulin Rouge, overhearing an American voice proclaim, “*I don’t like the gurls* [spelled in the manner of Ezra Pound] *of the night-club—they love women,*” in italics for emphasis. Suddenly it is “DAWN,” in caps, and she thinks of Verlaine’s bed-time, the strong addictive liqueur absinthe, cigarettes, and “Talk, talk, talk”—all associated with the bars and night-clubs of Montmartre.

The poem ends on a very positive note as “The sun is rising” and “The sky is saffron behind the two towers of Notre-Dame.” The beauty and goodness of Paris, despite its negative aspects, overwhelm the protagonist, and she closes in French caps: “JE VOUS SALUE PARIS PLEIN DE GRACE” [I salute you, Paris, full of grace]. Those who love Paris can understand her salute to the city as a spiritual being full of grace. This “psychogeographic” poem, as Parmar calls it (xxxiii), describes the great variety of the city as well its condition following WWI, explores political events, religion, economics, class, and the arts, and reveals the mind and imagination of its protagonist as the reader gasps for breath beneath its torrent of images.

So what are we to make of this complex, dazzling, and overwhelming poem? What is it? Swanwick has said with some justification that “it is easier to explain the poem line by line than it is to judge it as a whole” (15). However, I’ll take up the challenge of judging it as a whole. The poem is, of course, many things. It is a daring experiment in bold, avant-garde techniques: different sizes and types of print from bold caps and various capital letters to italics; the abandonment of conventional punctuation; and unusual spacing as in the visual depiction of the Tuileries and of taxis lined up on the street, as well as—prior to e.e. cummings’s “a leaf falls”—a long vertical line made up of a single letter in “there is no lily of the valley” (condemned by a contemporary reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* as “not belonging to the art of poetry,” qtd. in Swanwick 17), to mention only the most striking. It also experiments with a blend of objective observations of the protagonist and her thoughts, musings, and memories in the new stream of consciousness technique, reflecting the recent exploration of human psychology by Freud (mentioned directly in the poem) and others. And supplying notes, of course, is another experiment, one that Eliot uses as well.

And what is it about? One answer is that it is about what it was like to experience Paris in the spring of 1919 at the time of the Paris Peace Talks, literally to walk through it, observing, recording, and thinking about its most mundane, trivial aspects along with its most sublime in an impressionistic collage that captures “the whole of [the] experience” (Briggs 263) of a civilization in ruins, emotionally and psychologically speaking, that nevertheless still contains beautiful and valuable elements. I’m not sure, however, that it has “unmistakeably a quest structure,” as

Pondrom asserts (4) or that it does “the work of cultural repair as performed in the ancient rite of Dionysus,” as John Connor suggests (3). This poem takes a long time to digest; indeed, part of its stunning power is its chaotic, elusive, and frustrating effect—like real life. Similar to Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Mirrlees seems intent mainly on capturing the disordered, often bewildering human experience of one’s environment by throwing at us many disparate elements of Paris in 1919, including those which are shocking, unnerving, and disturbing juxtaposed to those which testify to its splendor and glory. The poem’s fragmented, jagged structure reflects the shattered condition of civilization following World War I, yet through the broken shards gleam numerous surviving golden jewels.

Mirrlees’s brilliant poem deserves to be studied more fully and indeed celebrated along with other great works of high modernism such as *The Waste Land* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*. As Nancy Gish has asserted, “It is long past time for serious study and evaluation of this cultural and poetic treasure” (2). And in conclusion, I will be so bold as to suggest that Eliot might have set *The Waste Land* in Paris had Mirrlees not beat him to it!

Notes

- 1) Photos of Mirrlees as well as sites in Paris mentioned in the poem can easily be found on the Internet using Google or other search engines.
- 2) Woolf erroneously gave 1919 as the publication date. To see the original published version, go to http://hopemirrlees.com/texts/Paris_Hope_Mirrlees_1920.pdf.

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“I’m the artist here”: Subversion of Identity in Hwang’s *M. Butterfly*

By Whitney Knight

A play which seems on the surface to be about debunking Asian stereotypes, what *M. Butterfly* ends up doing best is blurring binaries of gender, culture, and sexual identity. A play of contradictions, *M. Butterfly* comments on the Western view of the East but portrays no authentic Eastern characters, has a main character who deeply desires to possess “the perfect woman” but who finds pleasure in homosexual practices, and stacks women who have masculine power up against a man who gains power through performing feminine roles. Identity in the play is tightly wound around all the characters, past and present. By examining the characters of both sexes in the play and comparing their behaviors to those of Song and Gallimard, I hope to illuminate the extent to which both characters subvert a heteronormative gender binary. I will use Judith Butler’s interpretation of Luce Irigaray’s work, along with her ideas about gender performativity and drag, to structure our reading of the intricate roles gender, sex, and identity play in the lives of Song and Gallimard. Ultimately, both characters will prove uncannily subversive to all of the neat binaries the play sets up.

Much scholarship on the play has focused on its depiction of China, criticizing that for a play about the stupidity of stereotypes, it does not try to add non-stereotypical Chinese characters to the canon, in fact ending the play with a strong image of just the stereotype it claims to protest. Edward Said’s views on

Orientalism often appear as a frame to examine the role stereotypes of Asia play in the text (Davis, Bollobás, Degabriele). These argue that Orientalism, much like gender, is discursive or performative. This reading, that both Song and Gallimard can perform a Chinese role effectively, causes a number of issues within the play. For example, Fung writes that “the characterization of Butterfly’s desire for a white man, even in the figure of Hwang’s revision of the Butterfly image, according to some Asian American scholars (i.e. Frank Chin, and his *Aiiieeeee!* co-editors) further inflames and extends the historical emasculation of Asian men already in progress” (20). However, I would argue that the “Chinese” they perform has little to do with any actual performative roles existent in China and much to do with Western-originated fiction. Song never performs as Chinese. (S)he performs as a fictionalized Western version of a Chinese woman and as a Western man throughout the play, but (s)he defies the gender and cultural roles of her/his own biological identity. In fact, all of the characters in the play speak with American slang accents. Hwang said of this choice, “You can take the crassest type of sitcom and butt it up against high culture like opera, and find a relationship between the two. . . . So it was fun to take an Eastern character like Comrade Chin and have her talk like the crassest person on television because in reality that probably would be how she would talk if she were speaking English” (qtd. in DiGaetani 148). However, this choice results in Comrade Chin becoming much less a purely Eastern character and more a Western interpretation of that character who has been shaped by Chinese culture. Though Hwang spins this as an American translation of the kind of language Chin would use in Chinese, it seems to be more of an interpretation—one which turns Chin’s

performances away from the Eastern and towards the Western. As we will see also happens with sex in the play, it is not enough for Chin to *look* Chinese in a Chinese setting. If the audience were able to correctly understand her performances as representing her culture, she would have to be translated much more closely. One critic who uses Said's lens points out that, "Stereotypes tend to be self-reflexive, telling us more about the person holding the stereotype than the one being stereotyped" (Davis 55). Indeed, *M. Butterfly* is very much a play about Western ideas and experiences, with very few instances where actual Eastern culture shines through.

In her article about gender and ethnicity in the play, Karen Shimikawa claims "Song is never exclusively female or male, Eastern or Western, villain or hero; there is always some 'bleeding' across these lines" (354). Song is not the only one who smears these binaries throughout the play. Along with smothering the line between Eastern and Western culture, Hwang also exploits the idea of gender as a performance with no real origin, neatly disbanding the notion of sex, identity, and gender as a whole. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler states, "Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature, gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts" (7). That is, gender has no essential connection to sex; however, gender usually communicates sex. In the play, a dissonance occurs between how those of the female sex perform their gender and how Gallimard would have them perform it.

Though critics often focus on Song's performance of Butterfly and Gallimard's ultimate portrayal of his fantasy as he dons the Butterfly robes, few critics have studied the ways other characters in the play construct their genders. Examining each character in turn reveals what "masculine" means to those of the male sex in the play and to what extent the female sex perform as masculine as well. The first two characters of the male sex other than Gallimard seen in the play are the two men at the party of Gallimard's imagination. When the woman intones that she feels sorry for Gallimard, the second man suggests a mocking toast. The same man also utters the phrase "Vive la différence!," a wish that will prove to be, or to have been, Gallimard's downfall as he seeks to preserve the gender binary (1.2.28). These outspoken men will prove to be the rule, not the exception, as we analyze the rest of the men in the play.

The second figure of the male sex we see is Sharpless, as played by Marc. Sharpless seems to embody the upright male figure who endeavors to keep his friend in order. He has high morals and wants his friend to be "serious" about his marriage to Butterfly (1.3.49). In contrast, Marc is very much the Don Juan character, attempting to get Gallimard to come to parties and setting him up with sexual partners. We learn that Marc has cheated with "three hundred girls in twelve years" (1.9.36). Both of these performances seem to be accepted as valid for the male gender. Though Gallimard comments of Marc's behavior, "I don't think we should hold that up as a model," we have seen from Pinkerton and will shortly see from Toulon that model is a common way for men to behave and is, in fact, one way to imitate the male gender role (1.9.37). In the end, however Marc and Sharpless differ,

they both perform their masculine roles perhaps too well, and both act as advisors to Gallimard/Pinkerton, encouraging him to perform more like them.

Hwang introduces Gallimard's superior, M. Toulon, as one who "likes to think of us all as his children. Rather like God" (1.12.3). The role of authoritative father is yet another acceptable male performance. Toulon exhibits very male American phrases such as "jump the gun" and "hunt[ing] down [girls]," as well as an abundance of italics (1.12.7, 2.3.30). Toulon also shares similar Cassanova values with Marc, commending Gallimard for landing a Chinese girl and mentioning his own affairs and those of his colleagues. Toulon's power over Gallimard leaves Gallimard feeling emasculated, and he seeks to imitate the male performances Toulon exhibits over others in his life, though he often fails.

The last male character in the play, besides Song and Gallimard himself, is the Judge who interrogates Song and sentences Gallimard. A clear authoritative figure who wields significant power, the Judge plays the masculine role of judge well. Even when Song attempts to "loosen up" the performances he must play, he remains strict in speech and manner. The Judge can direct the narrative being constructed in his courtroom. The depiction of the male gender in the play seems one of authority and power. However, do only those of the male sex exhibit male behaviors in the play? On the contrary, we will examine the women of the play similarly and find that their performances share a number of traits with the men.

Much like the male sex, the first instance of a person performing as female in the play appears in the woman at the party in Gallimard's imagination. She performs as authoritative and intelligent, initiating the conversation and referencing politics

when she says, referring to the need for sex education, “to protect the National Security—the Church can’t argue with that” (1.2.13). This first showing of femaleness presents as quite unlike Gallimard’s idea of the “perfect woman.” In fact, this female performance holds phallic power over Gallimard’s narrative. Even the girl personified by Gallimard’s magazines shows masculine power (1.5.20-46). Though she is seemingly a hole, ready to fulfill Gallimard’s desires, her authoritative poses suggest to Gallimard that she enjoys his gaze. Her power over him repulses him, and he cannot use her as he wishes to. Rather than a two-dimensional representation, the picture represents, at least to Gallimard, female autonomy over one’s own body.

Next, we see Suzuki, as played by Comrade Chin. Suzuki also presents as authoritative and practical, and also pointedly American. “Let’s make some bucks—I mean yen! We are broke!” she says (1.5.60). Comrade Chin herself echoes this nonsense attitude. In a snide comment to the audience, Song says of Chin, “What passes for a woman in modern China” (2.4.33). Indeed, Chin appears far away from Song’s portrayal of the perfect woman. Though she seems to manage to perform female gender roles satisfactorily, her wielding of the phallus over Song clouds her imitation. Chin seems to have female gender because of the desire for sex, identity, and gender to match. However, she exhibits far more masculine characteristics than many male characters in the play. From Song’s comment about “modern China,” combined with Chin’s rough Americanisms, the audience may be tempted to see her as product of feminism who has taken on phallic power for her own. At any rate, she certainly acts less “purely” feminine than the fiction of Butterfly.

Gallimard's wife Helga obvious contrasts Song's Butterfly. She introduces herself to the audience with the line, "My father was ambassador to Australia. I grew up among criminals and kangaroos" (1.5.89-90). She makes her own narrative about her identity, a far cry from innocent, inexperienced Butterfly. This version of the female performance has agency and independent experience. This agency continues in the next interaction between Helga and Gallimard. After asking about Gallimard's whereabouts, Helga concludes that she did not care anyway because she "went with the ladies to a martial arts demonstration" (1.9.10-11). This show of independence, combined with her subsequent show of attraction to the demonstrators, solidifies Helga's presence as a female performer who controls her own life and experiences.

Renee, the Dutch exchange student with whom Gallimard cheats on Butterfly, perhaps most obviously wields the phallus in the relationship. She immediately seems intelligent, saying that she is in China learning Chinese because she "think[s] it'll be important someday" (2.6.25). She proceeds to verbally castrate Gallimard, referring to his "weenie" (2.6.57). In fact, it is Renee who points to the distinction between sex and gender in the play. Wars, she says, are fought over men trying to prove whose penis is larger, "but you're still wearing clothes, so there's no way to prove absolutely whose is bigger or smaller" (2.6.92-93). Clothes are a large part of gender performance, so it seems that Renee is saying that, rather than looking directly at sex, men try to see who can perform the male gender larger and better. It is interesting that Renee should look down on gender performances to such a degree. Her esteem of gender roles seems to fit with the playful nature with which she exerts power in the play. Ever a student, Renee is working out which masculine

performances she can get away with; however, she deems them silly and seems not to understand their true power. Her ideas contrast strongly to Gallimard's, who values the fictitious female gender over all else and seems to be attracted to the gendering of femaleness, rather than the sex which constitutes being female.

And so all of those performing female in the play, except for Song, hold some sort of phallic power. These strong female figures repulse Gallimard. In fact, the only person in the play performing female roles as Gallimard sees them is of the male sex. In an interview about the play, Hwang is quoted as saying, "In kabuki they say that a woman can only be a woman whereas a man can be the idealization of a woman" (DiGaetani 146). We see that idea personified in the play as those of the female sex portray a blend of the masculine and feminine, while Song is able to portray "the perfect woman." However, Luce Irigaray presents an alternate way to view this phenomenon in her idea that femaleness does not exist except in opposition to maleness and the idea that gender can only be unified under a heterosexual matrix. Butler quotes Irigaray as saying, "there is only one sex, the masculine, that elaborates itself in and through the production of the 'Other,' and those positions" (18). "Femaleness" is not a role so much as an absence of the masculine, and "women can never be understood on the model of a 'subject' within the conventional representational systems of Western culture precisely because they constitute the fetish of representation and, hence, the unrepresentable as such" (Butler 18). Using this lens, we can revise Hwang's statement to [Those of the female sex are not gendered with male roles, and so it is males, who know their roles, who can most easily perform as the Other]. Thus, those of the female sex in the play are able to

appropriate male performances because rather than having a clear “female role” they must play, they are only expected to perform in the absence of maleness.

Song, who is of the male sex and shares many qualities with the men we have just listed (sexual appetite, power, advice, ability to construct a narrative), as he was gendered as male from birth, can perform as the “perfect woman” for Gallimard. Song mentions this idea that he can portray a woman so perfectly because he is a man many times in the play. At one point, while dictating to Chin, he tells her, “You write faster, I’m the artist here,” to which Chin replies, “You’re just gonna end up with the rough notes” (2.7.31). This exchange mirrors the way Song can take the “lack” Irigaray mentions and create out of it a female fiction, where those born into the female sex can only imitate amalgamations of masculinity and the lack thereof, while the women of the play are left with the “rough notes,” struggling to perform the feminine roles they did not invent. “Only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act,” Song claims (2.7.37). Only one who was gendered as male can fully portray the lack of said gender. Especially, within the play, only men can conceive of the appeal that the fiction of a woman like Butterfly could hold for a man like Gallimard.

Many interpret Gallimard’s display of desire for Song, who has male sex but is performing Gallimard’s idea of perfect female gender, to be a homosexual desire, especially because he appears at several points to be aware of Song/Butterfly’s sex (Shin 180). One critic claims that Gallimard represents Western homophobia, saying, “Gallimard superimposes male masculinity on himself and tries to establish a mimetic correspondence between anatomical sex and gender and sexuality. Because

of this, when his fantasy ends, he cannot accept himself and Song as two men in love” (Sengupta 75). However, the argument for Gallimard as a homosexual is not especially compelling. Gallimard’s sexual desire remains a constant over the course of the play: he is solely attracted to what he views as the female gender, or what Irigaray would call complete lack of masculinity.

Gallimard describes the perfect woman to whom he is attracted repeatedly throughout the play. She appears young, but “mature for her years”, has low self-worth, is modest, is weaker “than a Western woman”, etc. (1.5.1, 1.10.69). In short, she is the opposite of the qualities of all the men in the play. In fact, unlike the women in the play, she exhibits no signs of masculine power. Gallimard’s idealized idea of what the female gender should strive to imitate becomes clear.

Gallimard repeatedly reacts to the masculine actions of those of the female sex in the novel with repulsion. Isabelle, Gallimard’s first sexual experience, shows a prime example of his heterosexual preference for the fiction of the female gender. Marc describes Isabelle as “lov[ing] the superior position” and “a girl ahead of her time” (1.11.31). Gallimard derives little to no sexual pleasure from this experience, suggesting that his sexual partners must be devoid of masculine traits in order for him to show attraction.

Even during the scene in which Song reveals his male sex by stripping, Gallimard only shows sexual attraction when Song picks up the Butterfly robes and when he shuts his eyes and remembers the fantasy (3.2.100-105). Otherwise, he seems to be watching a train wreck as his fantasy comes apart before his eyes. Even if Gallimard may have suspected that Song was a man, his desire as expressed is

always and solely for the idealized female gender. Perhaps, of course, Gallimard always knew that only a man could perform that fiction so well. In the end, he loves the fiction so much he will sacrifice himself to become it.

To see clearly how easily Butterfly becomes an addicting fantasy for Gallimard, we need look no further than the question of Gallimard's fertility (2.5). Helga pleads with Gallimard to go to the doctor to check his fertility, as she has already done so. Gallimard goes directly from Helga to Butterfly, who reassures him of his masculinity and tells him that trouble conceiving cannot possibly be a man's fault. This would be enough to restore Gallimard to his masculinity, but Song goes one step farther when she constructs a child for Gallimard. The fiction of this sign of Gallimard's ability to conceive with Song must complete the idea within Gallimard that he is faultless and he only needs to have the perfect woman to be all the man she needs. Butterfly not only does not challenge Gallimard's masculinity, she also reaffirms it.

Though Gallimard certainly complicates a reading of heterosexuality by preferring the female performances of someone of the male sex, Song completely transcends heterosexual boundaries in the play when he shows attraction and love for a male character. "Don't forget: there is no homosexuality in China!" Song is told; to which he replies, "Yes, I've heard" (2.4.30-31). While allowing Gallimard to live his fantasy, Song could also be using him to pursue his own homosexual desires within the parameters his culture allows. His reply to Chin seems to suggest that at the very least he is aware of the boundaries and carefully navigates them. Indeed, his need for Gallimard to recognize him as male and that "under the robes, beneath

everything, it was always [him]” suggests that perhaps Gallimard was not the only one living in a fantasy (3.2.106). While Gallimard steadfastly ignored Song’s sex, Song was ignoring Gallimard’s sexuality. Butler says, “if the body is synecdochal for the social system *per se* or a site in which open systems converge, then any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment” (132). Song’s perusal of homosexual desire within a system that denies it must endanger the gender system itself, which is built on heterosexuality. Chin echoes Butler when she tells Song, “And you won’t stink up China anymore with your pervert stuff. You’ll pollute the place where pollution begins—the West” (2.10.18-19). Whether Song has actually enacted any sort of change over the East is unknown, but he definitely has put Chin ill-at-ease. Indeed, through the press, once it reveals Song’s masquerade, he seems to have made all who read of Gallimard’s folly uncomfortable with the binaries on which they build their lives.

Besides Song’s subversion of heterosexuality, he also subverts the gender binary by wearing drag. By doing such a good job of performing female that party guests, the Judge, and the audience itself must ask how such a thing is possible, Song proves that gender is not only performative, but that those performances have no connection to biological sex. If Song can convincingly play the female gender for twenty years, why cannot someone of the female sex subvert the patriarchy and gender itself to perform as male? And are there necessarily only two polar genders (or sexes)?

In a play that repeatedly challenges the gender binary, taking the reversed binary presented at the end at face value would be foolish. Rather, the binary is

presented at the end exactly so that the audience will feel a similar unease as to the rest of the play. Since we have seen the true women of the play perform plenty of masculine actions, it is difficult to argue that Song has any essential attachment to the male gender, even if he has always been of the male sex. Indeed, as he strips in Act III Scene II, he slips easily into the Butterfly persona while talking about his own desires. The flip of gender performance between Song and Gallimard is meant to point out the nonessential nature of gender, not to shock the viewer into the idea that Song has an essential masculine gender and that Gallimard's essential gender is female. Rather, the end scene shows that Song has taught Gallimard that regardless of sex anyone can perform whatever gendered fiction they wish to, and do it well.

In a play which seems at first to prove Irigaray's idea that there can be no female gender at the same time that there is a male gender, for the two cannot share subjectivity, the two characters who ultimately subvert the gender structure are not the female sex who appropriate male behaviors, but Song and Gallimard, who appropriate the fiction of the female gender. Song gains power precisely because he portrays Gallimard's idea of what femininity should be. Perhaps more tellingly, even when not in drag he retains the ability to put it back on whenever he wishes. Conversely, Gallimard is so enraptured by the fiction of the ideal female gender that he becomes that idealization. His drag performance is shocking for the audience because if they were not affected by the ease with which Song plays femininity, they now see someone who they themselves have participated in gendering as male subvert that gendering and fulfill his own (questionable) desires to preserve the fiction he holds dear. *M. Butterfly* becomes ultimately not so much a play about the

stupidity of Gallimard's constructed stereotype as one about the power of people to play fictions and their lack of an identity connected to anything more than the society around them.

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Completing the Journey of Reflection, Healing, and Interpretation:

A Survivor's Examination of Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*

By Preselfannie Whitfield-McDaniels

Two days after Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, I was sitting in my parents' home, having temporarily relocated from Mississippi to Arkansas in the aftermath of the storm. I was preparing to travel with my two sons and my parents to Kansas City, Missouri, for my closest cousin Gerald's wedding, relieved to be able to do something "normal," a relief from my three-year-old son Jaylen continuously screaming "Is it Katrina?" every time the light in a room was switched off, the wind blew too hard for too long, or the rain started to pelt the roof. This was his reaction to my own explanations on the night that we sat in the open window of his and his five-year old brother's bedroom, hearing the wind scream like an attacked woman, watching trees bend, then finally fall onto the neighbors' homes across the street in front of us and across the adjoining backyards behind us.

While we were in Arkansas, my husband Johnnie remained in Mississippi. He had decided that the boys and I needed to go to Arkansas after the storm had passed and left sweltering heat, long gas lines, some looting, no electricity, and no phone service. And of course, a state of shock, because, after all, Hurricane Katrina was not supposed to be a category 2-3 storm when it reached inland to our city of Jackson, MS, and its metropolitan area, a two-and-half-hour drive north of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. He dropped us off and headed back to Mississippi because

his sisters and brothers and their families were still there, most of them in nearby Pattison, MS, where there were no telephone, gas, electrical, or water services. He drove down the fifty miles with ice and water on a daily basis following the storm. His eldest sister had already been in the River Region Medical Center in Vicksburg with heart complications for several days when the hurricane made landfall; she died a few days later. So, on the day that I celebrated my cousin's nuptials, my husband, along with his other siblings, nieces, and nephews, had a funeral for his sister in the rural family church with only the natural light and opened windows. His newly eldest sister decided not to wait, because no one knew when utility services would be fully restored. Her instincts were right. It took weeks in some rural areas to receive all power sources.

Sometime later when I was made aware of the Call for Poetry from Joanne V. Gabbin of Furious Flower Poetry Center, a call for poems from Hurricane Katrina survivors, I thought, "someone knows what we need"; it would be an authentic outlet for grief. The results of this call would become a volume entitled *Mourning Katrina: A Poetic Response to Tragedy* when published in 2009 (with a preface by then Dillard University Professor Jerry Ward, who was also a displaced New Orleans storm resident himself). My poetic response to the call was the following:

Katrina
In Three Phases
(*Gulf Coast Hurricane, August 29, 2005*)

I. The Preparation

Provisions gathered
Hibernation formulated
Waiting initiated

Doppler radar screens hold pictures of broken futures
Predictions, instructions, warnings step out
from radio walls

II. The Storm

She screams, battering vacated structures, peopled frames,
and make-shift shelters
She roars, pummeling sea vessels, strong pines, brick
fortresses, surrendered bodies
She quiets, surveying her works through wide-eyed clouds
and left-behind gusts

Observing Nature
Seeing God

III. The Reflection

Gulf Coast sea wind witch
Wind-blown power in her arms
Devastating pounding force in her feet
Death blows touching Deep South quadrants

Annihilating human-harnessed powers
Swiping human-inhabited spaces
Contaminating human-consumed necessities
Leaving human-wasted memories

Hours of Fear
Miles of Pieces
Reflections of Lives (McDaniels 102-3)

This published poem was my outlet for reflection and healing, the kind that so many others expressed in their own poems, essays, stories, and testimonials.

One of those survivors in the small Mississippi Gulf Coast town of DeLisle was the present famed novelist Jesmyn Ward. And, I venture to say that Jesmyn Ward's healing experience, manifested in *Salvage the Bones*, is by far a brilliantly

tender and starkly revealing example of the reflective outlet for surviving the Katrina experience. She painstakingly introduces readers to a powerfully unforgettable family of characters and in twelve days, leads those readers to understand the meaning of the “swiping [of] human-inhabited spaces” that I mention in my poem “Katrina: *In Three Phases*.” In a sort of kinship reading, I am led to explore Jesmyn Ward’s *Salvage the Bones* in three of its most important phases/themes/individual stories, which she works simultaneously with the coming of the storm, the coming of Hurricane Katrina, that is. Transitioning from the narrative and poetic modes used earlier in my article, and moving into my third mode of writing, analysis, I examine these three story lines in Ward’s novel: Esch’s pregnancy, Skeeter’s China, and Daddy’s storm.

Esch's Pregnancy

Readers of Ward's novel find themselves in the hands of a 15-year-old, pregnant, poor, sexually charged, bookworm narrator, who is fresh off of reading *Medea* and days away from Hurricane Katrina directly striking her Mississippi Gulf Coast impoverished, predominantly African American town. Esch is at times a frustratingly metaphorical storyteller, but she always seems to be a reliable one. Perhaps this is because Ward creates in Esch the voice she knows all too well, having grown up in this same area of the South, witnessing its poverty, bayous, red clay, and beaches. Carolyn Kellogg writes, "Ward accepted the National Book Award saying that she wanted to write about poor, black, rural Southerners in such a way that the greater culture would see their stories--'our stories,' she said--as universal. In this

novel of dogfighting, unwanted pregnancy and poverty, she has done just that" (Kellogg).

It is also through Esch's words that readers become acquainted with the great poverty in which the Batiste family of four children and their widowed alcoholic father deal on a day-to-day basis. Although readers experience this twelve day tale majorly through the experiences of the children, of whom Esch is the only girl, it is always vividly real: the dire circumstances under which they exist. Rationed food portions, dirty sheets and clothes, a ragged house sweltering in Mississippi heat, an outdoor meal of fresh roasted squirrel and stolen bread, continuous helpings of Ramen noodles and boiled fresh eggs...these images are definitely not lost on readers. In fact images and scenes found in *Salvage the Bones* quite frankly "cut to the bone," they are so penetrating. Parul Sehgal asserts the following:

Job has nothing on 15-year-old Esch. She's poor and pregnant and plain unlucky. Mama's dead, Daddy's a drunk and dinner is Top Ramen every night. Sex is the only thing that has ever come easily to her. When the boys take her down in the the dirt or in the back seats of stripped cars in her front yard, she could escape briefly, pretend to be her favorite nymphs and goddesses from the Greek myths. But Manny, the boy who put the baby inside her, won't look at her anymore. Esch can't lie down in the dirt and pretend to be someone else or somewhere else. She's stuck in shabby Bois Sauvage, a poor predominantly black Mississippi town in the direct path of a hurricane they are calling Katrina. (Sehgal)

However poor this family is, they are close knit and loyal, and they love and protect each other fearlessly at all cost. Esch's brothers, according to Sehgal, "are fine and strong; they brawl and sacrifice and steal for her and each other" (Sehgal). These are the attributes of the characters that perhaps endear them to readers, when the opposite reader response could have been the case. Kellogg assesses the following:

...if you have a problem with dogfights, this might not be the book for you. Or girls having casual sex with their older brothers' friends [beginning] at age 12, for that matter. Yet, the story is told with such immediacy and openness that it may [be what] keep[s readers'] judgments at bay. We are immersed in Esch's world, a world in which birth and death nestle close, where there is little safety except that which the siblings create for each other. (Kellogg)

Esch's secret pregnancy is revealed in the midst of the family's desperate escape from the rising waters of Hurricane Katrina in their washed away and now floating home. Skeeter makes it known to the shocking silence of their father that a tight grip must be held on Esch because she's pregnant, meaning the two of them must be kept safe.

Skeeter's China

It is most profound that Skeeter, who seems to be the most aloof character due to his extreme obsession with his violently beautiful, white fighting pit bull dog named China and her puppies, would be the character to figure out and expose Esch's secret. Then again, maybe it makes perfect sense. He is greatly attuned to China and the fact that her roles of mother and contender are now at serious odds; he attends her closely in order to aid China in keeping these roles distinguished and

to protect her puppies in case those roles "of nurturing and danger" should clash and China might destroy her own litter in unspeakable ways (Kellogg).

Skeeter's love for China is almost indescribable. Even Esch has difficulty taking it all in, both in its literal and metaphorical senses. Kellogg writes, "Esch admires Skeeter but watches his devotion to China with unarticulated envy; the love he has for the dog is more than Manny has for her. She is resentful of the attention he pays to China" (Kellogg). Skeeter's obviously complicated devotion to China, in the words of Sandy English, is "sometimes to the detriment of his relationships with other humans" (English).

However, Skeeter is desperately obsessed with helping China's puppies to survive and thrive, as well. Selling these prized puppies can bring a great amount of money and buy things that the Batiste children so desperately need, especially a basketball camp slot for Randall, the brother who is aspiring to escape the poverty of the Pit, the grimy, rural junkyard environment in which they live, with a college basketball scholarship. English writes, "Motivating the older children is a need to rise above, to escape, their economic and emotional conditions--although exactly how [to do this] inevitably remains unclear to them" (English). So, as the puppies die one by one, hopes and dreams are repeatedly dashed. And when Hurricane Katrina, a force indescribably more fierce than anyone has seen before, sweeps China away, Skeeter's new obsession becomes his search for her. He relentlessly believes that she *will* come back to him.

Daddy's Storm

Kellogg writes, "The siblings have largely raised themselves since their mother died after giving birth to Junior, the youngest. After her death, their father took up a diminishing cycle of odd jobs, alcohol, and anger" (Kellogg). Olivia Laing continues, "Alcohol turns Daddy from a vacant, shiftless figure into a mean drunk who doesn't like being contradicted" (Laing). Mr. Batiste's income is unsteady as he "works odd jobs on oyster boats or hauling scrap metal" (English). Through this minor or somewhat marginal characterization of the father, Jesmyn Ward is able to spotlight two major issues. The Batiste family is a poster perfect example of the persistent poverty found in rural Mississippi, a state, as Sandy English reminds us, "with the greatest number of counties with high rates of children living in poverty. Fully 33 percent of Mississippi children are poor, according to the official poverty rate" in the U.S. (English). The other major issue presented by the father character is the coming of Hurricane Katrina. For readers to now envision the coming devastation of Hurricane Katrina on this family already living in such impoverished conditions is too unbearably real.

Mostly considered an unwarranted obsession by the Batiste children, Daddy's dedication to preparing for the storm is not taken up in vain. His furious collecting of canned foods, water in dirty jugs, old plywood for covering windows, and repairing the vehicle for future hauling jobs after the storm, all eventually make monumental sense to the others. Daddy's personal storm lands him right on target. And even though they survive the actual storm, readers are left to envision what the future holds for this family, minus China and with another mouth to feed on the way.

As Hurricane Katrina survivors, the Batiste family will have many tasks before them. As indicated in the poem, “Katrina: *In Three Phases*,” they have former lives on which to reflect and life pieces to gather and reorganize into a new beginning. For those living in poverty before the hurricane, it is an uncertain and frightening time. For many like the Batistes, this time may mean relocation and depending on government assistance to aid them in creating a new beginning. Much like the personal reflections with which this paper began, the Batistes’ Katrina experience is long from over by the close of Ward’s novel. Now, readers must wait, I guess, for the return of Esch’s voice in a Jesmyn Ward sequel...

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“A Poor Unwanted Teacher and Unmarried”: The Spinster Schoolteacher in Mississippi Writing

By Emma Richardson

I had discovered with mixed horror and fascination William Faulkner’s scary Emily Grierson in high school, but it was not until I began teaching an introductory Mississippi writers course that I discovered the sheer number of spinsters—*old maids*—who appear in Mississippi prose written between the 1930s and the 1980s.

In *My Mama’s Dead Squirrel: Lesbian Essays on Southern Culture*, Mab Segrest includes “old maids” or “spinsters” depicted in Southern writing in the well-known category of “the grotesque” and asserts that:

freaks in Southern . . . literature reflect a process basic to the small-town Southern life I knew. This community life was confined by the narrow boundaries of what it felt was permitted or speakable. The sharply drawn perimeters of normalcy created its opposite, the grotesque. If some people must be normal, then some must be different from normal, or freaks. (24)

Segrest goes on to suggest that “These community demands for normalcy are particularly strong around matters of female sexuality—hence the prevalence of the female grotesque” (25), *old maids*, the “pitiful cases” (Williams 18), as Amanda

Wingfield warns Laura, who do not fit the married norm. Segrest accounts for what she calls “spinster humiliation” (33): “[S]pinsters often have threatening, inherent power; they live alone in what usually seems like self-sufficiency; rescuing male lovers come along, and they leap in frustrated desire into their arms; the lovers jilt them leaving the women in humiliated knowledge of their dependency . . . The message is clear: women must be dependent on men” (33).

Southern writing offers a long list of “humiliated spinsters,” in addition to Faulkner’s Emily: Miss Watson in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Amelia Evans in Carson McCullers’ *Ballad of the Sad Café*; Flannery O’Connor’s Joy/Hulga Hopewell in “Good Country People”; Laura Wingfield in Tennessee Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie*; the fragile Miss Sook in Truman Capote’s companion stories, “A Christmas Memory” and “The Thanksgiving Visitor”; the oldest MaGrath sister, Lenny (the one with the *deformed ovary*, after all), in Beth Henley’s *Crimes of the Heart*—and on and on. These characters fail—or refuse—to adhere to Southern community standards of “normalcy”: in other words, of being married and having children. They are often objects of pity, of laughter, and of scorn. A particular “subset,” though, of unmarried female characters in Mississippi writing in the fifty-year period between the early 1930s and the early 1980s seems singled out for special humiliation: *schoolteachers*.

Willie Morris is not above having a cheap laugh at “old maidy” schoolteachers. The narrator of *Good Old Boy*, Willie, offers almost a whole chapter on his fourth-grade teacher, Miss Abbott:

There was terror for me in that school . . . and for the first time my grades were bad and my conduct report worse.

Miss Abbott had a pink nose and came from a small town in South Mississippi. The only book she ever read through and through, she told us, was the Bible, and you lived to believe her, and to feel bad about the day she got hold of that book. I myself liked the Bible. I had my own private friendship with God . . . But Miss Abbott's religion was one of fear and terror—it got you by the hind end and never let go . . . She wanted you to believe she herself was in telephone contact with the Lord, and had hung the moon for Him on day number four . . . She would not drink Coca-Cola, she said, because of the liquor hidden in it

For two hours each morning she would make us recite the verses she had assigned us to learn by heart. When we forgot a verse, she would rap our palms with a twelve-inch ruler . . . and if she caught you drowsing . . . or scratching your weary tail, she would go to her conduct book, and with a slight little flourish write down a “5.” (22-24)

The insistence by the spinster schoolteacher to follow the rules in her own life and for her charges to follow them is also seen in Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Even though the character of Miss Crocker is perhaps justifiably negative (she serves as a foil for the Logan children's own schoolteacher mother), Taylor's depiction of Miss Crocker depends on spinster stereotype. Cassie Logan, a fourth-grader, and her brother, Little Man, a first-grader, are taught in the same classroom by Miss Crocker at Great Faith Elementary School. In her welcome to the

students, Miss Crocker, described by the narrator Cassie as “yellow and buckeyed” (194), admonishes her charges to “work, work, work . . . work like little Christian boys and girls and share, share, share,” and asks, “Now are we willing to do that?” (195). Cassie refuses to chime in (“I never did approve of group responses,” she acknowledges to readers), and is already in trouble with the teacher “five minutes into the new school year” (195). But it is Little Man who draws down Miss Crocker’s wrath and is responsible for the hickory stick being applied both to himself and his sister. After a second group response, “WE PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF OUR NEW BOOKS,” Little Man—already a reader—discovers that the “new books” are not in fact new: they are hand-me-down textbooks from the white school, “badly worn,” with “gray edges of the pages [having] been marred by pencils, crayons, and ink” (196). Insulted, Little Man hurls his book to the floor and stomps on it. Miss Crocker’s response is swift and brutal for his disregard for the rules of behavior—of the classroom and of his race.

Is it possible that the old-maid schoolteacher insists sternly on following the letter of the laws of behavior and of religion because she has violated the rule most basic for Southern women: being married and having children? Or, rather, are we as readers challenged to examine the mindless insistence of “following the rules?” Or is the power of the single schoolteacher’s economic independence too threatening so that she must undergo “spinster humiliation” by writers and readers alike as we laugh at the “the telephone contact with the Lord,” the “pink nose,” and the “buckeyes?” What can we do except laugh when Willie Morris shows Miss Abbott hit in the head with a “lazy foul,” sprawling on the ground “with a moo like a milk

cow's" and laugh again when Spit McGee passes a note to Willie: "*i wick she got hit with a hardbal insted*" (152-3). When Willie admits, "I prayed she would die" (153), readers surely echo that hope and participate in the humiliation. Is the stereotypical characterization justifiable for a greater thematic good?

It is Eudora Welty, though, who *challenges* the stereotypical attitudes about single women—and especially single schoolteachers—and it is that challenge that sets her apart. In *One Writer's Beginnings* Welty acknowledges that in her writing are a "perhaps inordinate number of school-teacher characters" (26). In an essay on Welty's schoolteachers, Mae Miller Claxton asserts that Welty's "fictional schoolteacher characters demonstrate the difficulty of the teacher-student relationship as students seek the independence to live their own lives and seek their own paths" (11). Claxton also refers to a few of Welty's own teachers—most notably Welty's "first teacher," her mother, Chestina (11); the principal of Davis School, Lorena Duling (12-13); and Lawrence Painter, literature professor at MSCW (13)—but absent from Claxton's discussion are Welty's tributes in *One Writer's Beginnings* to additional Davis School teachers and professors at MSCW—all unmarried women.

The depiction of Miss Parnell Moody in "Moon Lake" offers insights into Welty's own steady and thorough absorption with and reflection on her own teachers and professors. At a summer camp where their teacher serves as a counselor, pre-adolescent girls study Miss Moody's intimate things as they ready for bed in the tent: "on [the] shelf in the flare of nightly revelation stood her toothbrush in the glass, her hand-painted celluloid powder box, her Honey and Almond cream, her rouge and eyebrow tweezers, and at the end of the line the bottle of Compound,

containing true and false unicorn and the life root plant” (*Collected Stories* 360). The teacher is worthy of anthropological study. Perhaps Miss Moody is redeemed from “old maidhood” in the eyes of the girls and the community by the fact that while single—and young—she has dates. The girls look out over Moon Lake and know that “Out there Miss Moody would sometimes go in a boat; sometimes she had a late date from town, ‘Rudy’ Spights or ‘Rudy’ Loomis, and then they could be seen drifting there after the moon was up, far out on the smooth bright surface. (‘And she lets him hug her out there,’ Jinny Love had instructed them. ‘Like this.’ She had seized, of all people, Etoile, whose name rhymed with tinfoil. ‘Hands off,’ said Etoile.)” (*CS* 359-360). Miss Moody’s “subscription to perfection” is perhaps best seen when the campers watch her swim: “How far, in the water, could Miss Parnell Moody be transformed from a schoolteacher? They had wondered. She wore a canary bathing cap lumpy over her hair, with a rubber butterfly on the front. She wore a brassiere and bloomers under her bathing suit because, said Jinny Love, that was exactly how good she was” (*CS* 363). The girls’ wondering about Miss Moody’s “transformation” from a schoolteacher to “a human being,” a “real woman”—albeit an idealized and idolized one—indicates an “otherness,” an “otherness” that darkens in the character of piano teacher, Miss Eckhart.

Miss Eckhart’s “otherness” in the eyes of the community of Morgana is underscored again and again in “June Recital.” Unlike Miss Moody, Miss Eckhart goes on no dates with men. Descriptions of Miss Eckhart are voiced by one of the story’s narrators, Cassie Morrison, who hears strains of piano music wafting up to her second-floor bedroom in her home next door to Snowdie King’s house, where

Miss Eckhart rents rooms and gives piano lessons. A recent high school graduate, Cassie is tie-dying a scarf, even though she acknowledges to herself that “perhaps up in September in college . . . tie-and-dye scarves would be out-of-uniform, though something to unfold and show” (CS 287). While waiting for the dye to set in segments of the scarf, Cassie recalls comments about Miss Eckhart by people in Morgana, and gives voice to her own assessment of Miss Eckhart from years of piano lessons. Miss Eckhart is “tireless as a spider” (CS 288), “so punctual and so formidable” (CS 288), “so strict and inexorable . . . with no give whatsoever” (CS 293) with “her back a ramrod in her dress” (CS 299). Furthermore, Miss Eckhart’s studio is “in some ways like the witch’s house in ‘Hansel and Gretel,’ Cassie’s mother said, ‘including the witch’” (CS 288).

Miss Eckhart’s strangeness, her foreignness, is underscored even by her religious denomination and her food choices. Cassie recalls that “Miss Eckhart belonged to some distant church with a previously unheard of name, the Lutheran” (CS 297) and that from her kitchen came “the smell of food nobody else had ever tasted” (CS 305). Except for her afflicted mother, Miss Eckhart “had no people,” and, as we say in the South, she just didn’t know how to *do*. Cassie relates that “Miss Spights said that if Miss Eckhart had allowed herself to be called by her first name, then she would have been like other ladies. Or if Miss Eckhart had belonged to a church that had ever been heard of . . . Or if she had been married to anybody at all, just the awfulest man—like Miss Snowdie MacLain, that everybody could feel sorry for” (CS 308), then Miss Eckhart might have been accepted by the community of Morgana. Cassie acknowledges that her own mother, “[she] had long known in

her heart, could not help but despise Miss Eckhart. It was just for living so close to her, or maybe just for living, a poor unwanted teacher and unmarried” (CS 306). It is Miss Eckhart’s unmarried status, ultimately, that is unforgivable.

The *goodness* of Miss Eckhart is finally acknowledged, though, in “The Wanderers” by Virgie Rainey, the pupil who in her youth had been defiant and disrespectful to her piano teacher, who had found “the timid spot in [Miss Eckhart’s] soul” and “showed it to people” (CS 293). Years later, after Virgie’s mother’s death and funeral, Virgie recalls the picture that was “Miss Eckhart’s pride,” a depiction of “Perseus with the head of Medusa” (CS 460). Virgie acknowledges that “Cutting off the Medusa’s head was the heroic act” (CS 460). Welty writes,

Miss Eckhart, whom Virgie had not, after all, hated—had come near to loving, for she had taken Miss Eckhart’s hate, and then her love, extracted them, the thorn and then the overflow—had hung the picture on the wall for herself. She had absorbed the hero and the victim and then, stoutly, could sit down to the piano with all Beethoven ahead of her . . . She offered Virgie her Beethoven. She offered, offered, offered. (CS 460)

What “drives” Miss Eckhart is, as Welty acknowledges in *One Writer’s Beginnings*, “the love of her art and the love of giving it, the desire to give it until there is no more left” (OWB 101).

Welty’s own models of teachers who “offered, offered, offered” are given in brief, memorable portraits in *One Writer’s Beginnings*, teachers at Davis School and at Mississippi State College for Women, unmarried teachers whose love-through-work certainly did “do good.” Chief among her Welty’s influences at Davis School and

whom Welty describes in most detail is the principal, Miss Lorena Duling: “Miss Duling, a lifelong subscriber to perfection, was a figure of authority, the most whole-souled I have ever come to know. She was a dedicated schoolteacher who denied herself all she might have done or whatever other way she might have lived” (*OWB* 22). Welty also recalls additional Davis School faculty: music teacher, Miss Johnson; physical education instructor, Miss Eyrich; art teacher, Miss Ascher; and fourth-grade teachers, Miss Louella Varnardo and Mrs. McWillie. In the final section of her memoir, Welty memorably recalls teachers whose classes she took at Mississippi State College for Women. While Miss Welty does not mention where her Davis School teachers were educated, Dr. Bridget Pieschel (co-author of *Loyal Daughters*, the centennial history of MUW) suggests that art teacher Miss Mary Ascher from Hinds County was enrolled as an “irregular student” in 1910, “no doubt taking a course in watercolor or oil painting.” About Miss Ascher, Welty writes:

Very composedly and very slowly, the art teacher, who visited each room on Fridays, paced the aisle and looked down over your shoulder at what you were drawing for her. This was Miss Ascher. Coming from behind you, her deep, resonant voice reached you without being a word at all, but a sort of purr. It was much the sound given out by our family doctor when he read the thermometer and found you were running a slight fever: “Um-hm. Um-hm.” Both alike, they let you go right ahead with it. (*OWB* 27).

Eudora Welty also recalls that “on winter’s rainy days, [when] the schoolrooms would grow so dark that sometimes you couldn’t see the figures on the blackboard,” her fourth grade teacher, Louella Buck Varnardo, a 1919 graduate of

MSCW, would lead her class in a spelling match: “you could spell in the dark,” Miss Varnardo would intone (*OWB* 28).

Eudora Welty’s close scrutiny of and admiration for her teachers—all unmarried women with the exception of the much-admired Mr. Lawrence Painter—continued during her two years at MSCW, admiration and memories echoed by many W alumnae down the years. In the final section of *One Writer’s Beginnings*, Welty acknowledges that at the W, “What was never there was money enough provided by our Legislature for education, and what was always there was a faculty accomplishing that education as a *feat*,” that students at MSCW were “well taught by a dedicated faculty remaining and growing old there” (*OWB* 77). One of those long-time faculty members was, of course, Miss Emma Ody Pohl. Welty recounts “how on a spring night with the windows open in the Music Building—now Poindexter Hall—“some strange song with low guttural notes and dragging movement, dramatically working up to a crescendo, was heard . . . we freshmen told one another that was Miss Pohl, the spectacular gym teacher with the flying gray hair, who was, we had heard and believed, a Russian by birth, who’d been crossed, long years ago in love” (*OWB* 78). Not far removed from the young girls who contemplate Miss Moody’s personal life at Moon Lake, Welty reveals that even college students speculate on their professors’ love lives.

Welty gives another portrait of an unmarried female faculty member at MSCW. She describes a parody she wrote of a play in which she had performed entitled, “The Bat.” Welty’s “The Gnat” is set in MSCW and the eponymous character assumes the disguise of the college’s “gym uniform—navy blue serge one-

piece with pleated bloomers reaching below the knee, and white tennis shoes” (*OWB* 79). Welty recalls that the parody depicts “our librarian . . . screaming at his opening line, ‘Beulah Culbertson, I have come for those fines’” (*OWB* 79). Miss Culbertson served as head librarian at the W from 1912 to 1958, living on into the 1990s to the age of 103 in her home on College Street next to the Baptist Student Union.

All of the “dedicated faculty remaining and growing old” at MSCW and at Davis School, the schoolteachers who embodied the heroic risk-taking of giving “until there is no more left,” are depicted in a poignant composite in Welty’s novel *Losing Battles*.

The schoolteacher character who informs all of *Losing Battles*, of course, is Miss Julia Mortimer, whom three generations of reunion family members have “gone to school to.” At first the depiction from adult recollections of Miss Julia’s inflexibly high standards seems headed for stereotype: “‘Know her?’ a whole chorus cried. ‘Suffered under her!’ cried Aunt Birdie” (*LB* 234). Another former student remembers “‘her waiting for us on the old doorstep, a-ringing that bell. She had more arm than any other woman alive,’ said Uncle Curtis. ‘That was her switching arm, too’” (*LB* 235). Later, Uncle Curtis again recalls Miss Julia’s unbending expectations: “‘She was ready to teach herself to death for you, you couldn’t get away from that. Whether you wanted her to or not didn’t make any difference’” (*LB* 240). Aunt Birdie complains, “‘She’d give out prizes for reading, at the end of school, but what would be the prizes? More books . . . I dreaded to win’” (*LB* 240). Uncle Dolphus agrees, “‘Yes’m, she taught the generations. She was our cross to bear’” (*LB* 240). Perhaps Uncle Percy best sums up Miss Julia Mortimer’s stern

influence: “‘She had designs on everybody. She wanted a doctor and a lawyer and all else we might have to holler for some day, to come right out of Banner. So she’d get behind some barefooted boy and push . . . She put an end to good fishing’” (*LB* 235).

But as the talk at the reunion continues, the portrait of Miss Julia deepens as the reader learns of her self-sacrifice, of how “she had Banner School to keep open herself” and did so by selling “fruit bushes and flower plants . . . and good seed—vegetables” (*LB* 242-43) through the mail; how she “scrubbed [the schoolhouse] inside out and scoured it without any help, raised up a ladder and painted it herself inside and out” (*LB* 273). And that “she nailed a shelf there under the front window and called it the library. She took her own money to fill up that shelf with books” (*LB* 274). One by one former pupils echo the sentiments of Homer Champion: “‘Miss Julia Mortimer made me what I am today . . . I grew up a poor Banner boy, penniless, ignorant, and barefoot, and today I live in Foxtown in a brick veneer home on a gravel road, got water in the kitchen, four hundred chickens, and filling an office of public trust’” (*LB* 339); Judge Moody attests that she made “‘a Superior Court judge, the best eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist in Kansas City, and a history professor somewhere’” (*LB* 305); Gloria Renfro declares, “‘She was Saint George . . . and Ignorance was the dragon’” (*LB* 245). Gloria reflects in the end, “‘Miss Julia Mortimer didn’t want anybody left in the dark, not about anything’” (*LB* 432).

In her writing, Eudora Welty enables readers and viewers to break out of the “prison of their own skin,” to “imagine themselves” into the lives of others and “the other,” to acknowledge a “shared humanity.” Through Welty’s art, readers come to

consider the moral implications of how they are connected to other people and to contemplate that they “owe” them “something, no matter how small that thing might be.” And through Welty’s generous depictions of unmarried schoolteachers, readers reflect on teachers’ love of learning, on their willingness to “teach themselves to death,” on how they *offer, offer, offer*.

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Creating Truth within the Tiger's Gaze

By Alexandra Robinson

In some remote corner of the universe, effused into innumerable solar-systems, there was once a star upon which clever animals invented cognition. It was the haughtiest, most mendacious moment in the history of this world, but yet only a moment. After Nature had taken breath awhile the star congealed and the clever animals had to die . . . This intellect is not concerned with any further mission transcending the sphere of human life. No it is purely human and none but its owner and procreator regards it so pathetically as to suppose that the world revolves around it.

-Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche explains that man “covets the agreeable, life-preserving consequences of truth; he is indifferent towards pure, ineffective knowledge; he is even inimical towards truths which possibly might prove harmful or destroy” (“Ultramoral Sense” 177). Truth is the irrevocable understanding of fallacies in the shape of tautology, and, for Nietzsche, is unobtainable because meaning is derived from metaphors that have been established as truths due to repetitive use. Truth can only be derived by identifying the metaphors and anthropomorphisms through which language, and ultimately consciousness, is constructed, and then smashing these tropes in order to obtain the possibility of Truth. In Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*, Pi is stranded in a lifeboat in the middle of the ocean, stripped from all connections to humanity, without any orientations to shore and time, and is thus given a new temporal-spatial identity. Within this new identity, Pi must recognize the ecology of the lifeboat in which he is marooned, and smash earlier structures of identity and place in order to create new Truths that are vital for his survival.

Peter Singer explains, “No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering—in so far as rough comparisons can be made—of any other being” (163). The level of suffering makes all of the animals in the lifeboat, including Pi, equal. Given this chaos, Pi is able to smash the all too human metaphors previously structures his life and create new metaphors and territories. Without this equality, there is no possibility for Pi to smash old metaphors and create new ones; in a natural hierarchical society he would find himself subservient to his animal companions. Nietzsche explains that humans are “the most endangered animal” (“On the Genius of Species” 45). Humans are defenseless compared to most other species; they were forced to create modes of communications and develop a consciousness as a defensive response. As the necessity for communication increases, Nietzsche believes humans invent a system of signs in order to more effectively communicate with their brethren, and in turn become more self-aware as social animals. Because Pi becomes equal through suffering with the tiger, he develops a system of sign-based communication with him, which allows both of them to survive. This communication allows Pi to carve out territories, and through repetition of the sign system, he establishes himself as the alpha in relation to the animal that poses the greatest threat to his survival, the Bengal tiger. For Elizabeth Grosz, through art and architecture precisely, the “frame is what establishes territory out of chaos that is the earth” and is “art’s mode of territorialization and deterritorialization through sensations” (11, 13). The territorialization and deterritorialization through art and architecture enables us to carve out spaces and define social and interpersonal

relationships. Through this concept, Pi frames the chaos of being marooned with a Bengal tiger within the frame of the Pacific Ocean and creates his own territory.

Territory for Pi allows him to engage the metaphor of the naming system set up by Adam, and smash it in order to achieve Nietzsche's concept of communication. Pi does this by creating a new metaphor based system of naming and communication. Jacques Derrida explains the naming phenomena through the concept of the call. He begins deconstructing the beginning in *Genesis* after God creates man in his likeness and brings forward the animals for Adam to name. In one account of the naming process, "God oversees while Adam summons the animals in order to 'subject' (Chouraqi) to man's command, in order to place them in man's 'authority' (Dhormes)" (Derrida 16). In the other account, Eve is part of the naming process, which suggests equality throughout humanity. Adam's naming of the animals is their answer to the call, the call that is answered in order to create subjectivity. And yet, in the first account, Adam forces a call on the animals that in turn limits his humanity. Pi must break down this metaphorical naming system in order to build a new metaphorical naming system. The new metaphorical naming system allows him to create the Truth needed to communicate with Richard Parker.

One of the first times Pi identifies, smashes and recreates meaning through metaphors can be seen through his encounter with the overarching metaphor of religion. Pi, who was brought up in the Hindu faith, becomes intrigued by Christianity and Islam, and, ultimately, he begins practicing all three. This seems problematic to his parents and the three respective religious authorities. The three authorities on each faith meet Pi and his parents in the shadow of the "statue of

Gandhi” with the intentions of forcing Pi to choose one faith (69). After much debate, Pi is asked to explain his thoughts on the matter and Pi responds, “Bapu Gandhi said, ‘All religions are true.’ I just want to love God.” Pi acknowledges religion as a metaphor, and sees each different faith as a functioning within the greater metaphor of religion. In practicing all three faiths, Pi smashes the over encompassing metaphor of religion, and creates his own method of worship utilizing all three faiths. This new method functions as a new metaphor, which allows him to obtain Truth and meaning within religion, and in his words “love God.”

Pi also faces creating new territory. The spatial situation of the houses of worship Pi visits lends to Pi’s need for new religious territory. Each Godhouse resides on one of “three hills within Munnar . . . The hill on the right . . . had a Hindu temple high on its side; the hill in the middle, further away, held up a mosque; while the hill on the left was crowned with a Christian church” (Martel 51). The close special situations reflects the metaphysical situations in relation to each religion’s doctrine. Because of his decision, Pi is ostracized by each religion, and somewhat banned from worshipping within each religion’s territory of worship. Pi decides to attend each service at a busy time in order to worship undetected. His method of worshipping outside of his habitual time sphere allows him to carve out his own territory for worship and repeat his new metaphor.

Pi explains, “Repetition is important in the training not only of animals but also of humans” (Martel 23). Pi explains how repetition in training animals can be used in the same way to train teachers and peers at his school to call him Pi instead of Piscine. The function of repetition as described by Pi parallels the importance

Nietzsche puts on repetition in its function: “A nerve-stimulus, first transformed into a percept! First metaphor! The percept again copied into a sound! Second metaphor! And each time he leaps completely out of one sphere right into the midst of an entirely different one” (“On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense” 178). Nietzsche understands repetition as being the most influential component of integrating a metaphor into routine vernacular. In a sense, repetition gives a metaphor a semblance of truth. Pi practices this repetition just before his teacher calls his name on the first day of school. Each time he rushes to the blackboard in front of the classroom, he writes, “My name is Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as—I double underline the first two letters of my given name—For good measure I added $\pi = 3.14$ and I drew a large circle, which I then sliced in two with a diameter, to evoke that basic lesson of geometry” (Martel 22-23). By repeatedly doing this, Pi ingrains his new nickname, which is a metaphor for his given name, into the vernacular of his peers.

Repetition is the key to solidifying any communication Pi creates between him and Richard Parker. The only way for Pi to achieve communication with Richard Parker is by identifying the existing set metaphors that govern his relationship with Richard Parker and then smash them to create new governing metaphors. Once the new metaphors have been created, Pi knows he must repeat them until they become a part of the natural vernacular between him and Richard Parker. In order for Pi to establish himself as the alpha and carve out his own territory, he sets up training sessions with Richard Parker in order to make [each territory]. Pi rocks the lifeboat broadside to the waves of the ocean while

maintaining eye contact with Richard Parker and trilling the whistle. Once Richard Parker becomes seasick and submits, Pi must stop rocking the boat and allow him to retreat to his den and fully recover. Pi notes that the “treatment should be repeated until the association in the animal’s mind between the sound of the whistle and the feeling of intense, incapacitating nausea is fixed and totally unambiguous.

Thereafter, the whistle alone will deal with trespassing or any other untoward behavior” (205). By this process, Pi literally breaks the already established metaphor that Richard Parker is better equipped for combat and could potentially be alpha in relation to Pi due to differences in defense their respective species have.

In the training sessions, Pi creates chaos with the intentions of giving it a particular frame for Richard Parker to interpret in a specific way. In Grosz’s terms of territorialization and deterritorialization, the rocking of the boat created by Pi and Richard Parker’s seasickness functions as chaos for Richard Parker. The trill of the whistle functions as a frame for Richard Parker to make sense of the chaos. Through the frame, Richard Parker is forced into his designated territory and understands which territory he is not allowed to intrude into. Through this, the initial hierarchical metaphor is broken, and a new metaphor is created where Richard Parker identifies Pi as the Alpha.

Jacques Derrida explores the phenomenon of eye contact with an animal, which, in turn, helps to explain why it is so important for Pi to maintain eye contact with Richard Parker through these training sessions. In *The Animal That Therefore I am, and more to follow*, Derrida discovers this moment of the gaze when he stands naked in front of a house cat. The situation fascinates him, and he questions “*who*

am I—and who I am (following) at the moment when, caught naked, in silence by the gaze of an animal, for example, the eyes of a cat” (3-4). He finds this moment fascinating not because of the shame felt by being caught naked by “*a little cat,*” but because of the effect the animal’s indiscernible gaze has on him. The gaze, for Derrida, sparks questions on the hierarchy between humans and animals. It attempts to discern who holds the key to reflection or signification, in other words, who answers the call. (The call is answered in order to create subjectivity, and, argued by Derrida, forced upon the animas by Adam.) Since Richard Parker is not a small tabby cat, the proper utilization of the gaze is all the more important because it allows Pi to begin to chip away at the already established relationship metaphor that exists between him and Richard Parker.

On his journey, Pi discovers an island made completely of algae. Pi creates this island by projecting, within his mind’s eye, the life blossoming on the underside of his raft of lifejackets through meditation. The island in itself is a projection of the life blossoming on the underside of Pi’s raft of lifejackets. Pi fixates on this small, “upside-down town” of aqueous life, and through meditation, a false state of consciousness, develops the metaphor of a floating algae island he and Richard Parker, for a moment, feel like they could survive on (198). The island is made complexly of algae and trees that “were not parasites,” and are floating without a clearly defined territory (271). Pi explains, “the roots [of the trees on the island] did not go their own independent way into the algae, but rather joined it, became it” (271). The island is its own free-floating territory, and an Eden of overabundance. Because their needs are fulfilled, Pi and Richard Parker are able to coexist on the

island. It is a vegetarian and Bengal tiger paradise. With this island Pi creates the perfect space outside of territorialization for all of the metaphors he has created to coexist. Having the ability to live amongst his metaphors, Pi feels he can live within the wholeness of God.

Eventually, Pi discovers that his island of salvation is rather an island of deconstruction of body and soul. Pi discovers the island is carnivorous after finding a tree containing “fruit” filled with human teeth. This precipitates Pi’s decision to leave the island because with this discovery Pi faces with his own mortality, realizing the full extent of his impending death. He would rather “perish in search of [his] own kind than to live a lonely half-life of physical comfort and spiritual death on this murderous island” (283). The island represents the grounded story and how the story cannot be, because even if Pi thinks he has found that in-between, the wholeness of God, he cannot exist within it. When Pi leaves the island he finds nothing of the island can be kept if Pi intends to find civilization and survive. If any of the island remains in Pi’s territory of lifeboat and raft, it causes conflict through the irony of basing identity within the wholeness of God and yet that wholeness devouring itself and all within in. The result of smashing the metaphor of the island sparks the development of Pi’s duplicitous story.

When Pi washes upon the Mexican shore and is rescued, he is visited by two men who are international constituents of the Maritime Department in the Japanese Ministry of Transport. These men intend to learn, through Pi’s account, the truth about why the ship Pi and his family were aboard sunk. They continually question aspects of his story to which he responds by breaking down the metaphor, again, for

them to experience a semblance of the Truth the metaphor holds. When they tell Pi that it is hard to believe that he survived in a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger, Pi responds by saying,

Hard to believe? What do you know about hard to believe? I'll give you hard to believe. It's a closely held secret among Indian zookeepers that in 1971 Bara the polar bear escaped from the Calcutta Zoo. She was never heard from again . . . We suspect she's living on the banks of the Hugli River . . . If you took the city of Tokyo and turned it upside down and shook it, you'd be amazed at all the animals that would fall out . . . There is no doubt in my mind that feral giraffes and feral hippos have been living in Tokyo for generations without being seen by a soul . . . And you expect to find a tiger in a Mexican jungle! It's laughable, just plain laughable! (Martel 297).

By placing zoo animals, one of the most subjugated animals, free in a congested city, Pi creates a new metaphor from the one the two men have unsuccessfully attempted to smash in order for them to see their fallacy. The men respond by not denying "there may very well be feral giraffes and feral hippos living in Tokyo and a polar bear living freely in Calcutta," but refuse to believe that a Bengal tiger survived with Pi in a lifeboat. When the two men refuse to believe Pi's story of being stranded for 227 days with a Bengal tiger in a lifeboat on the Pacific, Pi becomes exasperated with trying to make the men understand so he decides to tell them another story. But before Pi regales them with a different encounter of the same story, he explains to them the concept of Nietzsche's metaphors: "Isn't telling

about something—using words, English or Japanese—already something of an invention? Isn't just looking upon this world already something of an invention The world isn't just the way it is. It is how we understand it, no? And in that understanding something, we bring something to it, no? Doesn't that make life a story?" (302). Through this explanation of life and how it is constructed through repeating stories, i.e. metaphors, in order to create a semblance of Truth, Pi assumes the role of Nietzsche's intuitive man. Nietzsche's intuitive man is the only being who comes the closest to creating and understanding Truth. Pi gives the men an alternate story in which he is the only survivor. The new story depicts a cannibalistic scene between him and his mother, a sailor with a broken leg and a chef. When Pi asks which story they prefer, the two men decide they much prefer the story involving the tiger. With this Pi finally makes a breakthrough in getting the men to understand the context of the metaphor in relation to the Truth he is attempting to convey.

Pi's tale of the tiger is the ultimate form of art. With the story he takes a chaotic scene and frames it in a more palatable way. In doing this, Pi breaks the metaphor of the tale involving his mother, the sailor and the chef, and creates a new metaphor, which allows him to survive as a tiger. The image of the tiger is not just a mere representation of Pi's inner animality, but a representation of the fluid connection between humanity and animality. Nietzsche claims that the human is "the most endangered animal" who needs "help and protection" from his fellow brethren, which is only achieved through communication ("On the Genus of Species" 45). This claim positions the human, in this instance Pi, as an equal of the

animal, but an equal who is less equipped for survival. This suggests that the human is in fact not superior to the animal and communication is just a metaphorical construct developed in order to survive. And as Leonard Lawlor explains, the animal's vulnerability comes from its lack of language and lack of access to the things that humans have in order to survive (Lawlor 47). In developing a system of communication with Richard Parker, Pi uses Richard Parker as the defense system he lacks as a human in order to survive. When Pi and Richard Parker arrive on the Mexican shore, Richard Parker disappears into the jungle. Pi says, "I was certain he would turn my way. He would look at me. He did nothing of the sort . . . Then, Richard Parker, companion of my torment, awful, fierce thing that kept me alive, moved forward and disappeared forever from my life" (Martel 285). The absence of Derrida's gaze of the cat to complete Pi and Richard Parker's relationship suggests that Richard Parker was not only absorbed back into the wild from which he came, but also absorbed back into Pi's self. This is the final metaphor Pi breaks. With this metaphor, Pi achieves the Truth of humanity, which is that humanity is analogous to animality.

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Pedagogical Approaches

Web Writing in the University Community: Problem Solving through Collaboration and Convergence

By Peter B. Olson

Introduction

The academic study of *web writing* has emerged as an exciting and intrinsic component of twentieth-first century rhetoric and professional writing. In this paper I discuss web writing in the university community by reflecting on two online courses I have taught at Mississippi State University: Writing on the Web and Writing for the Workplace. I will introduce the core strategies I have developed for the delivery of these courses I teach. I will offer context from the broader concerns of rhetoric, technology, community, and learning that have impacted students. Then I will give examples of pedagogy and evaluate outcomes relevant to the objectives I have considered. Finally, I will assess the overall effectiveness of a number of approaches in juxtaposition with the overall context of the university, convergence, and the virtual public sphere.

What is Web Writing

Web writing, says Ginny Redish, focuses on the ways people read and use web content. The emphasis on the term “content” stems from the ways writers design web pages by emphasizing the economy of writing that distinguishes current

practices of designing hyperlinked pages that provide pathways to associated topics. This content approach to page design has in turn given rise to Content Management Systems (CMS) software programs such as CMS Made Simple. Redish, who holds a Ph.D. in linguistics from Harvard University and is now a consultant to web media providers in Washington D.C., specializes in evaluating web writing to enhance usability and readability. She applies reader-centered writing strategies that are premised upon the rhetorical bedrock of audience and purpose. She shows how Web writers can assist the “conversations” web users have with web sites, and she is therefore implicitly dealing with the idea of persuasive technology, the rhetorical relationships people have with computers. Much of Redish’s rhetorical theory has close ties to assumptions that have been gathered through “values and lifestyles” approaches to marketing research, where the user is equated with a consumer of information. And while usability and the persuasive aspects of technology built into the design and function of web sites can be studied empirically through the analysis of affective responses by focus groups, there is a wholly ethical side to her philosophy of web writing. Web writers need to be aware of the problems of copyright and intellectual property given the ubiquity of information and images. Moreover, the clarity and coherence of web documents has much to do with making information immediately and clearly comprehensible and that motive is fundamentally an ethical one, since users often depend on web-based information that is accurate and honest. This essay concerns the emerging field of web writing and digital rhetoric, an interdisciplinary field of study combining practical strategies for writing and managing content for websites and blogs, as well as the application of rhetorical

theory and professional writing concepts on the web platform. I will explore the persuasive aspects of web writing, or digital rhetoric as it also called, and consider the ways in which Internet connectivity, computers, and mobile devices have impacted user experience. This approach to web writing recognizes a paradigm shift in the ways people have adapted writing strategies to the digital environment with respect to content and interactivity. Along with a growing group of media theorists, I also recognize that in the digital environment audiences have coalesced in a participatory culture that has adopted emerging media platforms. Through this “convergence culture” users read, write, and respond to other writers in a rhetorical situation defined by interactivity and connectivity. Writers occupy the virtual spaces created by converging technologies and cultural industries in what amounts to a new location for the public sphere concept, a sphere in which the political and the popular merge. Given the ongoing convergence of technologies, media, and culture, I will explore the theoretical underpinnings of digital rhetoric and content strategy as these concepts apply in practical ways to web writing, interactivity, and the persuasive aspects of design.

Overview of Digital Rhetoric and Web Writing

The web as an interactive virtual space necessitates, by its very structure, opportunities for rhetoric and writing that draw upon a convergence of media and the potential for new modes of collaboration, modes that redraw the way we map writing in both the academy and the public square from a global perspective.

In the current discourses about digital writing, including the capacity for public access to the Internet and interactivity between users, who participate in writing genres such as discussion boards, blogging, and wikis, a consensus of digital writing pedagogues suggests that we contextualize these modes of writing from the

standpoint of web writing theory. In the relation between software technology and the ubiquity of digital discourses, web writing strategies and the persuasiveness of design, have become key nodes of interest to rhetoricians. There has been a great deal of emphasis in the literature on digital writing about usability, plain writing, and content strategy, and I will situate these topics within the context of interdisciplinary learning, with special emphasis given to the writer's commitments to ethics. Web writers view the rhetorical situation in terms of problem-solving through social engagement since the web is inherently collaborative. I will then address the issues of social engagement and the ethics of web writing by considering the ways media converge in the web environment, the interface between actual and virtual public spheres.

In discussing web writing strategies and applications I will make a preliminary differentiation between "writing for" and "writing on." Writing "for" the web assumes a facility with productivity software, a knowledge of the interface and its issues of usability; it also assumes a familiarity with cloud-based software tools and design (both instructional and aesthetic), and a thorough an understanding of the writing craft as it pertains to levels of discourse. More perspicuously, "writing on" extends these capabilities by branching web writing into a dialogue that takes place in a digital space. Digital space becomes a spatial metaphor locating the user and writer *within* (rather than before) the realm of connectivity and interactivity. Digital space finds its discourse communities interconnected within a cluster of networked computers and servers, which provide the context for online rhetorical situations and writing purposes. In turn, online communication opens the user to virtual worlds of

social discourses and socioeconomic contexts, to a public sphere where interactive writing about economic, environmental, and social conditions arise in rhetorical situations permitting conversations about issues that matter to students as they transition from academe to the marketplace.

Convergence

Students today are faced with a convergence of technologies and communicative forms—language and media—that blur traditional disciplinary boundaries and genres, genres such as the graphic novels, video games, and remixed multimedia documents. Indeed, the interactive web has spawned a plethora of genres specific to the digital space. Henry Jenkins, in *Convergence Culture*, recognizes digital rhetoric as a “participatory culture” that grows from its “collective intelligence.” Users find that the nature of collaborative communities that originate through convergence allows for a greater degree of empowerment and tolerance among community members, and the shared goals of the community foster civic engagement. The collaborative basis of engagement encourages artistic expression due to the desire of community members to represent their identities inherent in the commonality of group membership.

Convergence impacts literary reading, discursive writing, and digital rhetoric in ways that underscore student interactions attuned to new global realities. As users have adapted to converging technologies their behaviors, once associated with leisure, have been incorporated by technologies that can be adapted to more relaxed postures. The rise of tablet thus corresponds to the rapid shift in journalism from paper to “lean-back” technologies. Due to corporate mergers and acquisitions

concurrent with the rise of the Information Age, online learning has become a preferred mode of training in products and procedures. Another characteristic of web writing and publishing is space-time compression where virtual space supplants physical space and the temporality of dissemination is reduced to an instant. (Warnick 37).

Because of changes in communication engendered by digital connectivity students increasingly learn in social networks and to address this interest we deploy learning software and writing tools that exemplify the convergence of these technologies. Digital connectivity becomes an example of how media convergence and learning illustrate ways students adapt to the postmodern recontextualization of the learning community, an adaptation that impacts their own learning goals. Through convergence, in ways unthinkable a generation ago, students have become connected via the interface of new media. With digital connectivity available campus wide, students have come to expect the rapidity of online interactivity. Social networking has helped create the reality of virtual communities that extend the classroom into virtual digital space. Due to connectivity and convergence students have come to appreciate online learning for its collaborative capabilities and its capacity for feedback.

Web writing involves the writing practices that have been developed by writers who work in the fields of technical communications and professional writing, writers who are aware of the web as a circuit of audiences, purposes, and rhetorical situations where readers seek information that writers provide in “plain language” tailored to the structure of web pages. Professional writers refer to the Federal Plain

Writing Act of 2010 that mandates plain writing guidelines for all US governmental executive communications. At the same time, and in a far more desultory direction, web writing has grown out of the writing and rhetorical practices of users, whether they are responding to other writers interactively, or join in collaborative writing situations directed toward rhetorical purposes. On one hand, then, professional writers have developed best practices for content development and design that meets the needs of users of government and corporate documents, practices that can be assessed through usability testing, and writing that is characterized by its transmission from writer to reader.

On the other hand, through the capabilities of hypertext and the convergence of media, another cluster of genres of web writing has arisen emphasizing the capacity of web software to provide a platform for user interactivity that is social in nature. This interaction of multiple users, whether on news sites, retail sites, blogs, list-serves, discussion boards, or micro-blogs, facilitated by the rapid introduction to the market of PDAs, hand-held and tablet computers that take advantage of expanded connectivity and bandwidth, has caused a shift in emphasis from the traditional sender-receiver transmission-as-communication model to a multiplex and interconnected community of users that approximates a transactional public sphere concept. User groups and communities spring up to interactively discuss any number of topics; consumers contribute product reviews for the benefit of other consumers; political sites form grass-roots communities to further their participation networks; and marketers mine users' email for consumer interests.

The interactive web, or Web 2.0, relies on cloud technology where digital data storage resides on host servers, allowing document retrieval from any computer on any browser. The impact of Web 2.0 on the university learning community has been significant in that classrooms have become virtual spaces, and learning has shifted to course management software, such as Moodle, that takes advantage of connectivity and interactivity to connect writers and teachers in ways that enhance possibilities for collaboration. Moreover, digitally-enhanced learning also allows students to experience the way web writing works by shifting writing from traditional essays to web-based documents. As a consequence university learners become immersed in web writing practices that are current in the workplace, in social spheres of communication, and in the political public sphere. This immersion, moreover, has the potential to create greater openness to opportunity for learners from differing socioeconomic backgrounds.

Core writing strategies

Background

In the spring of 2011 I took the Center for Teaching and Learning's CTL 101, Best Practices in Online Instruction at Mississippi State University, a four-week course designed for instructors simulating the online student's learning experience. That experience confirmed what I was already discovering as an online teacher, that online instruction involves rethinking the teaching environment. My work in teaching web writing involves undergraduate students learning technical communication and rhetoric in interdisciplinary situations. These situations stem

from a mix of academic concerns in which students develop a repertoire of discourse strategies that can be applied to literary research, workplace communication, and service learning.

Writing for the Workplace students, for example, collaborate online to discuss problem-solving strategies in workplace case narratives. They create online documents such as texts, presentations, Wikis, blogs and web pages. Students discover through writing that these case narratives are concerned not simply with document and content strategies that are found in technical communication discourse communities, but they also delve into issues involving ethics, multicultural discourses, interactions between users and technology, interactions deployed by user communities which mediate rhetorical aspects of the virtual public square. In *Writing on the Web* we explore web writing from three interrelated vantage points: writing content (design, strategy, and usability), online rhetoric (persuasion, interactivity, and dialectic), and convergence (media, ethics, and social responsibility).

Writing for the Workplace

I began teaching Writing for the Workplace in 2008, an upper-division and interdisciplinary intensive-writing course that fulfills core curricular requirements, and therefore reaches a diverse population of students. The course was initially designed by Dr. Rich Raymond, the chair of the Department of English at Mississippi State University. At his suggestion I adopted Mike Markel's *Technical Communication*, now in its tenth edition (published by Bedford/St. Martin's). As I taught the course over a five-year period I saw how students responded positively to

Markel's emphasis on the rhetorical fundamentals of audience and purpose, and that persuasion takes place in rhetorical situations that arise in cultural spaces such as the workplace and on the Internet.

My students became critically engaged in writing for specific audiences and purposes situated in case narratives where they role-played in scenarios involving workplace problem-solving through writing, revising, and creating and designing web-based documents.

Using Markel's chapter cases students in Writing for the Workplace begin the semester by analyzing résumés. They reflectively consider how measures of excellence influence the way they see themselves as future professionals. Next, we turned to ethical questions concerning the ways students view the fairness of subsidizing plagiarism-detection software. As writers begin to think about revising in productivity software environments they consider the limits of automated editing tools, and think about their own concerns for their ethos as writers. As students turn to collaborative writing we consider how to effectively critique the writing of peers in positive ways by developing rubrics for heuristical analysis. We also consider cultural issues that impinge upon the goal of effective collaboration. At this point students encounter the potential issue of dealing with a collaborator who brings scheduling issues to the table and how to treat the team member, the group, the project, and the project manager fairly and ethically. Students write a recommendation memo to their team as a proposed solution. As students begin to consider networking in their professional lives we cover the use of social media as an instrument of community building, a goal that leads to writing audience profiles and writing computer-user scenarios to begin the process of thinking about usability. Extending the idea of networking, as well as anticipating the proposal project that is a major assignment in

the course, students learn effective interviewing. They create a questionnaire, revise questions to clarify their audience and purpose, and conduct an interview.

Midway in Writing for the Workplace students begin to write case documents based on basic document conventions, documents using well-chosen organizational patterns that exemplify good macro-level critical writing choices. In their strategies for revision they are aware of the audience-centered need for a balance between clarity and diplomacy, the strength and logic of their arguments, and the role of culture in persuasion. Students develop their skills at revision by close reading a passage and then revise it for specific audiences and purposes. They also revise documents for ease of use in translation, being made aware of the ways multicultural audiences read, socialize, and maintain contractual obligations. Students thus write across cultures with specific purposes, audiences, and rhetorical situations in mind, situations requiring diplomacy and problem solving. These skills extend to issues arising in job networking through social media. Building upon these rhetorical principles, students then consider elements of design and graphics to compose web pages for multicultural audiences. They develop critical evaluative skills by creating “decision matrices” to score their choices and test the usability of web page designs, graphics, and hyperlinks. In their major proposal project of the semester students learn to set agendas, milestones, write in conventional formats, write descriptions and summaries, and organize presentations logically by using “advance organizers,” preliminary forecasts that establish the discussion points clearly. Students then propose a campus organization, learning opportunity, or program, that is both original and provides them a service-learning opportunity. They publish their

proposal in an interactive website illustrating the “one-to-many” model of hypertextuality.

Many of these rhetorical situations promote critical thinking through the analysis and evaluation of issues specific to the way users read documents. Most of the documents we discussed are web-based; through writing case documents, students encounter an ecology of writing in spaces native to the computer and the information-age workspace. Moreover, students discover that in the global reach of digital writing many of the issues of communication involve the way documents can mediate between diverse cultures and learning styles. In order to emphasize the global implications of communication through the medium of digital rhetoric as a major project I assigned the writing of a proposal. The proposal’s purpose is to conceive and create a campus organization, a learning experience, or a community service-learning project that is well-researched. In the process of developing the proposal students find themselves discovering their audiences through interviewing with campus organizations, departments, peers, community leaders, and subject-matter experts in their respective fields. Their proposals, then, are ultimately collaborative.

At the beginning of writing their proposals students interview their informants and developed audience profiles. I also arrange for students to have collaborative training sessions in Mississippi State University’s Instructional Media Center where they learn to use cloud-based composing tools. In order to understand the rhetorical goals supporting an effective proposal, students need an understanding of audience, which becomes fundamental to the purpose of the document. Beyond writing in the

conventions of proposal arrangement and structure—executive summaries, process analysis, evaluation, writing and persuading for their recommended outcomes, part of the ethos of their effective writing—students design their proposal document using design elements as deliberate elements of persuasion. They approach design knowing that their proposals will be published in the online digital format for the computer screen. They see the need to develop web pages for usability and readability.

Writing on the Web

In 2010, as an extension of Writing for the Workplace, I began researching the implications and pedagogies of digital rhetoric. At a number of faculty meetings in Mississippi State University's Department of English, Dr. Rich Raymond, the Department Head (and an insightful rhetorical scholar and pedagogue) initiated a discussion about online writing courses for advanced intensive-writing students. Following from that incipient idea I developed a bibliography, wrote a course proposal draft, and taught a pilot course titled Writing on the Web. The course was conceived as an upper-division online writing-intensive course for majors in the humanities interested in an interdisciplinary study of digital rhetoric, convergence culture, and persuasive technology. I taught Writing on the Web as a pilot course in the spring of 2012.

In titling the course, an immediate concern arose when considering web writing and its underlying epistemological motive. The question then was to determine the relationship between the web-based writing environment and more traditional writing practices, and question how that relationship changes how we write and communicate online. A quick survey of web-writing texts reveals that the

expression “writing *for* the web (or Internet)” is not an uncommon nomenclature, whether in chapter or book titles. Through researching recent studies of digital rhetoric, it became clear to me that the preposition “for” is inadequate to describe the communication writers and readers transact in the digital spaces located “*on*” the web platform, especially when rethinking how the platform hosts converging media and interactive communication. Moreover, when we speak of digital rhetoric, if we refer to Aristotle’s injunction in *The Rhetoric*, that “rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic,” we understand that rhetoric describes the publicity of persuasion, and therefore, metaphorically the platform or sphere *on* which discourse resides. The preposition *on* implies a change of structural relations for writers. When we shift our conception to writing *on* the web we recognize that we are no longer before the computer interface but we are already within the boundaries of the digital domain. In other words, the title of my course Writing on the Web is already conceptually determined by the virtual space marked by the metaphor “online.” It is the very conjunction of the connectivity of computers and the convergence of media that promote the possibility of participatory action and collective intelligence that has given rise to this very space on which digital rhetorical situations occur.

The outcomes for this course are divided into five interrelated learning units:

- In unit 1 we will learn the historical and cultural development of new media and convergence theory and study through two essay chapters how popular media has adapted to and captured the rhetorical possibilities within an emerging popular culture that involves social participation through digital interactivity.
- In unit 2 we concentrate on digital rhetoric, media literacy, and narrative theory in order to understand our audiences in various discourse communities, from public

- rhetoric and politics to participation in popular discourses that involve text, images, and audio in multimedia genres.
- In unit 3 we concentrate on the application of writing on the web for content strategy, visual design, usability, and interactivity. We create a press release/brochure and a blog/website and major course assignments.
 - In unit 4 we cover the persuasive nature of technology and convergence by studying the relation between people, computers, and media, and the interactive behavior that takes place in the digital rhetorical situation. In light of digital persuasion we study visual rhetoric and design strategies and their consequences for usability and interactivity, as well as the issues of ethics in persuasion and the implications of intellectual property.
 - Finally, in unit 5 we explore the ways web writing on the digital platform impacts community and the public sphere by understanding convergence as inherently participatory, a rhetorical situation that juxtaposes audiences, media, and popular and political modes of communication.

As an online course, Writing on the Web utilized Blackboard course management software and Google email and office tools. A particularly rich discussion ensued between students who read Craig Baehr and Bob Schaller's *Writing for the Internet*. I assigned students discussion post questions that I devised from various chapters of the text. I should also note quickly the Baehr and Schaller's title reminds us that I have differentiated "writing for" and "writing on." Be that as it may, students found the book challenging and informative. I also assigned Cynthia Jeney's *Writing for the Web* (again note the preposition) and derived a number of exercises and assignments from it. For example, from Jeney's book I asked students

to create a glossary web page defining terms appropriate to a site they selected. Then, following Jeney's text, students created content for a website for a campus organization they were interested in. They used audience-oriented design concepts, developed planning and compositional strategies, and created user documents to accompany the project. They began the web-site project by using online text and drawing tool to create a mock-up of the site, creating and writing appropriate content as they built the site.

In order to work with Baehr and Schaller's *Writing for the Internet* I asked students in discussion boards to quote passages relevant to topics for their website assignments and then comment upon them. For example I asked: "Chapter one deals with issues of writing that arise in the emergence of Internet technology. You'll be interested in content management, Web 2.0, convergence, dynamic content, user behavior, media, interactivity, single sourcing, persuasion, and credibility. The chapter also discusses textuality, openness and closure (transformation theory), and collective narratives as applied to the World Wide Web as a public forum. How does the web transform writing?" One student responded, "Convergence has often been referred to as 'a place where media forms collide'. More precisely, it is more of a place where media types interact, overlap, and gather."

I also asked: "how does the realm of the social shift due to media theory? What is the 'third-person effect'? How this this shift in use media affect academia, convergence, technology, and society? What was McLuhan's point?" Another student responded critically, "Certainly our world's understanding of technology has increased (and is increasing) exponentially, but Baehr and Schaller

seem to be asking a bigger question, has our world's understanding of itself increased? In other words, are we better people, smarter people, or is this technology reducing us to 'just pointers and clickers?'"

Students also discussed and responded to issues of page design and organization where content involves "chunking" and hyperlinking. A student wrote, "Chunking 'involves writing and adapting content that follows specific templates [and] structures, as well as specific design and content specifications' (111). Writers use chunking to generate content that can be reproduced for a variety of media, such as print, video, presentation slides, or the web through the use of single sourcing and remediation. By creating this content and storing it properly, writers can 'source' it and 'remediate' it for future use."

Pedagogy and Outcomes

We have seen that Writing on the Web surveys issues of copyright, ethics, digital literacy, community, and narrative. We consider the roles of audiences and writers in interactive communication, viewing writing on the web as a communicative platform pertaining to various discourse communities from academia to non-profit organizations. Students work collaboratively to produce web writing that is rhetorically effective and demonstrates high standards for usability. We distinguish writing "on" the web from writing "for" the web by recognizing that rather than proposing an adaptive mode of writing for writing for web sites, we fully embrace convergence as a new rhetorical medium in which we re-vision writing, reading, and responding as part of a social and collective public sphere that is fundamentally participatory. This course will be taught online through course

management software. In addition, we interact via a course blog. Students create online documents (press release/brochure, blog/website) and other ancillary online documents by individually and collaboratively creating, developing, writing, designing content for delivery.

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