POMPA: Publications of the Mississippi Philological Association

Editor, Lorie Watkins
Assistant Editor, Seth Dawson
Assistant Editor, Pam Shearer

Volume 34
2017

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Editor's Note

By Lorie Watkins

It is with much pride that I write the editor's note for this, the thirty-fourth volume of the *Publications of the Mississippi Philological Association (POMPA).* Mississippi Valley State University hosted the 2017 conference from February 10th-11th. Conference organizer John Zheng once again designed an organized, inspiring program that included a catered banquet lunch in a private dining hall along with other refreshments throughout the conference. Of special note was an entertaining session in which blues artist Ben Wiley Payton presented an educational musical program entitled "Down Home Delta-Style Blues." It was truly a treat to hear an authentic blues artist play in the very heart of the Mississippi Delta.

Other high points for some of us who ventured off campus included visiting the remains of the old Bryant Store nearby Money.

In 2018, we look forward to returning to state capital as Jackson State University hosts the meeting. I look forward to dear friends and hearing inspired scholarship.

Lorie Watkins

2017 Program

Sutton Administration Building

Mississippi Philological Association Annual Conference

February 10-11, 2017

Held at Mississippi Valley State University

Program

Friday, February 10
Sutton Administration Building

Sutton 201 Lab: Registration: 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
2nd Fl, Sutton Administration Building

9:00-10:15 a.m.

Sutton 231
Panel 1: Poetry Reading and Photoessay on Foodways
Moderator: Shanell Bailey, Mississippi Valley State University
Presenters: Laneka Smith, Mississippi Valley State University: "African American Foodways in Greenwood, MS"
Zhanar Tastanova, Mississippi Valley State University: Poems
Akerke Boltabekova, Mississippi Valley State University: Poems by Fariza Ongarsynova
Deveon Treadway, Mississippi Valley State University: Poems

Sutton 232
Panel 2: "Using an Intersectional Lens to Identify Coming-of-Age Characteristics in Diverse Women's Literature"
Moderator: Preselfannie McDaniels, Jackson State University
Presenters: Tiffanie Herron, Jackson State University
Sam Owens, Jackson State University

10:25:11:40 a.m.

Sutton 203
Panel 3: "Back into the Dark Woods: Modern Fairy-Tale Adaptations and their Return to Violence and Feminism"
Moderator: Allison Wiltshire
Presenters: Tamara Mahadin, Mississippi State University: "Magic Always Comes with a Price Dearie": The New Adaptations of Fairy Tales in Popular Culture."
Allison Wiltshire, Mississippi State University: "Someday My Prince Will Come": The Influence and Rejection of Masculine Heroism in Adaptations of "Snow White."
Craig Gentry, Mississippi State University: "Mirror Mirror on the Wall, Who is the Most Violent of Them All: Understanding Violence and Its Resurgence in Young Adult Fairy Tale Adaptations."
Casey Baumgartner, Mississippi State University: "Reshaping at the Stroke of a Quill: Appearance of Author-Character and the Violence He Brings within Modern Fairy-Tale Adaptations"

Sutton 231
Panel 4: "Accountability, Customization, Sustainability, & Production: The Interdisciplinary Faculty Writing Boot Camp"
Moderator: Preselfannie McDaniels
Presenters: Monica Flippin Wynn, Lindenwood University: "Sustainability: Evaluation, Tenure, and Promotion"
Rico Chapman, Jackson State University: "Customization: Structure and Individual Needs"
Preselfannie McDaniels, Jackson State University: "Production: Charting the Results"

Sutton 232
Panel 5: Fiction and Poetry Reading
Moderator: Latonzia Evans, Mississippi Valley State University
Presenters: Jo A. Baldwin, Mississippi Valley State University: "Muley the Milk Cow" and "McKinley's Girl"
Deborah Purnell, Mississippi Valley State University: "Lurking"
April Lawrence, Mississippi Valley State University: Poems

11:50 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Business Meeting and Lunch (Cafeteria Dining Hall IV)
Presiding: Bettye Farmer

1:10-2:25 p.m.

Sutton 202
Panel 6: Mississippi Writers
Moderator: Robert Sirabian, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Presenters: Jeff Smithpeters, Delta State University: "More Than 'Sympathy for the Underdog': Shelby Foote's Ideology in Volume 1 of *The Civil War: A Narrative"*
Linda E. McDaniel, William Carey University: "Delta Ghosts in Steve Yarbrough's *Visible Spirits*"
Greg Bentley, Mississippi State University: "The Name-of-the-Father, Alternative Masculinities, and Female Agency in Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart*"

Sutton 203
Panel 7: On Writing Center, Technical Writing, and Freshman Writing
Moderator: Mamie Osborne, Mississippi Valley State University
Presenters: Kathi R. Griffin and Tatiana Glushko, Jackson State University: "Strategies for Advocacy: Writing Center as Site of Literacy Education and Resilience"
Christine Mitchell, Southeastern Louisiana University: "New Applications in Technical Writing: The Evolution of the Home Sewing Pattern"
Andrew Nelson, University of Arkansas at Monticello: "freshmancompoers.com: An Open Educational Resource for the Freshman Writing Section"

Sutton 231
Panel 8: African American Literature
Moderator: ShaharaTova Dente, Mississippi Valley State University

Presenters: Phillip Gordon, University of Wisconsin-Platteville: "Re-Reading *A Mercy* as Toni Morrison's Hidden AIDS Narrative"
Breana Miller, University of Memphis: "Racialized Violence and Lynching in Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*"
Rico Self, Louisiana State University: "'Nobody was minding us, so we minded ourselves:' Black Women's Dialogic Resistance in Toni Morrison's *Sula*"

2:35-3:50 p.m.

Sutton 202
Panel 9: American Literature
Moderator: Lorie Watkins, William Carey University
Presenters: Benjamin F. Fisher, University of Mississippi: "Samuel Warren: Forgotten Purveyor of the Monstrous and Spectral"
E. Kate Stewart, University of Arkansas at Monticello: "'A Celebrated Preacher' and 'A Christian Reformer': Herman Melville and Rebecca Harding Davis Respond to 19th-Century Christianity"

Sutton 203
Panel 10: English and Irish Literature
Moderator: Phillip Gordon, University of Wisconsin-Platteville
Presenters: Mikki Galliher, Blue Mountain College: "Refusing to "Tend the Needle": Lady Gregory's Folk History Plays"
Kenneth Mitchell, Southeastern Louisiana University: "Coleridge's Ironic Child: The Sonnet Sequence on Hartley's Birth"
Robert Sirabian, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point: "The Limits of Game Playing: Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*"
Sutton 231
Panel 11: Fiction and Nonfiction Reading
Moderator: Deborah Purnell, Mississippi Valley State University
Presenters: Craig Albin, Missouri State University-West Plains: "His to Give"
Exodus Brownlow, Mississippi University for Women: "Love & Nappiness"
Peter R. Malik, Alcorn State University: "Stop Sign"

4:00-5:15 p.m.

Sutton 202
Panel 12: American Literature and Music
Moderator: Greg Bentley, Mississippi State University
Presenters: Antonia Eliason, University of Mississippi: "Contracts and the Blues: The Contracts of Trumpet Records"
Brian Kehler, Alcorn State University: "Haunted by Hidden Knowledge: The Chinaberry Tree in the Southern Short Stories of Flannery O'Connor, Kate Chopin, and Zora Neale Hurston"
Laura Scovel, William Carey University, "Gospel Music Writing in *Bastard Out of Carolina*"

Sutton 203
Panel 13: Pedagogy and Techniques
Moderator: Andrew Nelson, University of Arkansas at Monticello
Presenters: Muhammad Alasmari, The University of Memphis: "Same Writer, Two Different Languages: The Existing of Voice in Written Discourse"
Shanell Bailey, Mississippi Valley State University: "Reforming the Composition Classroom: Assessing Flipped Learning Techniques"
Ernest R. Pinson, William Carey University: "Innovative Techniques by Modern Immigrant Writers"

Sutton 231
Panel 14: William Faulkner / Race and Law
Moderator: E. Kate Stewart, University of Arkansas at Monticello
Presenters: Craig Albin, Missouri State University-West Plains: "The Mask of Race in Faulkner's 'A Bear Hunt'"
Amanda Ringer, Oakwood University: "Teaching about Race and the Law"

Lorie Watkins, William Carey University: “The Walking Dead: Mapping Digital Yoknapatawpha”

Special Event – Sutton Administration Building 108
Friday, February 10
5:30-6:30 p.m.

Ben Wiley Payton, Blues Artist

“Down Home Delta-Style Blues”

Introduction: Ben Arnold

Ben Wiley Payton of Jackson, Mississippi is an acoustic blues artist with roots in the Delta, but he's only a relatively recent convert to the vintage style. Born in tiny Coila in the hill country just east of the Delta, Ben lived in Greenwood—the resting place of Robert Johnson—before moving as a teen with his family in the early 1960s to Chicago. There Payton fell in the city’s vibrant blues and soul scene, performing with artists including Bobby Rush. In the late '60s jazz pianist Randy Weston recruited Payton for an extended stay at a club in Morocco, which widened his musical outlook. In the late '70s Payton laid down his guitar and concentrated on raising his family, but picked up the acoustic guitar again in the '90s. Payton soon returned to his home state of Mississippi, and began studying and then performing the music of early masters including Robert Johnson, Charley Patton, and Mississippi John Hurt. He also applies his rich voice and considerable guitar skills to his own compositions—his debut CD, *Diggin' Up Old Country Blues*, features all originals that build upon early Mississippi blues traditions. The CD received heavy play on XM/Sirius' station "Bluesville." Payton has a great passion for blues history and teaching others about acoustic country blues and its connections to broader themes in African American history. In addition to working with various programs in Mississippi, he's served as a guest instructor at renowned Berklee College of Music in Boston and at the Centrum music camp in Port Townsend, Washington. This year, Payton was honored by being chosen to represent the state of Mississippi for the American Folklife Center’s Homegrown Concert Series at the Library of Congress, which included an additional concert at the prestigious Kennedy Center in Washington DC. Other noteworthy performances for 2011 are the upcoming Chicago Blues Festival, and the King Biscuit Festival. When not on the road, Payton plays locally in his current home of Jackson and at venues across the state.

Saturday, February 11

9:00-10:15 a.m.

Sutton 202

Panel 15: Poetry and Fiction Reading

Moderator: Thomas B. Richardson, New Hope High School

Presenters: John J. Han, Missouri Baptist University: free verse, tanka, kyoka, Etheree, and haibun

James Fowler, University of Central Arkansas: Poems

Rusty Rogers, University of Central Arkansas: "Findo's Campaign"

Sutton 203

Panel 16: American Literature

Moderator: Alan Brown

Presenters: Ellie Campbell, University of Mississippi: "Law and Illness in Speculative Fiction: A Survey of Recent Works"

Delilah Dotremon and Ruben Gonzalez, Alabama State University: "A White Preacher's Message on Race and Reconciliation"

Alan Brown, University of West Alabama: "Jack London and the 'Nature Fakers'"

Sutton 231

Panel 17: "The Returnee and the Question (Meaning, Experience, Complexity) of *Home*"

Moderator: helen crump

Presenters: Laura Miller, Jackson State University: "Home Is Not a Dream, Home Is Not a Nightmare: The Struggle between Nostalgia and Despondency in the Quest for Home"

Helen Chukwuma, Jackson State University: "The Returnee's Enigma and the Redefinition of Home in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana's Daughter*"

helen crump, Jackson State University: "Home Is Where the Heart Is, What the Mind Imagines, and Where the Ancestors Reside"

10:25-11:40 a.m.

Sutton 202

Panel 18: Poetry Reading

Moderator: Barbara JP Washington, Mississippi Valley State University

Presenters: Maura Cavell, Louisiana State University Eunice: "An Echo of Poems"

Diane Langlois, Louisiana State University Eunice: "An Echo of Poems"

Joseph Goss, Union Baptist Academy: "See the Magnolias" and other poems

Thomas B. Richardson, New Hope High School: Poems

Sutton 203

Panel 19: World Literature

Moderator: Deborah Purnell, , Mississippi Valley State University

Presenters: Karen Bell, Delta State University: "More than a Metaphor: Rollo as a Character in *Effi Briest*"

James Fowler, University of Central Arkansas: "Balancing the Two Cultures in Djerassi and Hoffmann's *Oxygen*"

John J. Han, Missouri Baptist University: "Three Liners for Amusement and Reflection: The Rise of Entertainment Haiku in America"

Sutton 231

Panel 20: English and American Literature

Moderator: Roy Hudson, Mississippi Valley State University

Presenters: Selah Weems, Mississippi State University-Meridian: "*Frankenstein*: A Runaway of Imagination"

James B. Potts, III, Mississippi College: "Ghosts and Spirits in Postmodern Gothic"

ShaharaTova Dente, Mississippi Valley State University: "Writing beyond Endings: Reading Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Sapphire's *Push as Linking Narratives* from the Blues Aesthetic to the Hip-Hop Aesthetic"

Special Thanks
MVSU Academic Affairs
MVSU Department of English and Foreign Languages
MVSU Department of Fine Arts
MVSU Department of Social Work
MVSU Facilities Management
MVSU International Programs
MVSU Police Department
MVSU Public Relations
MVSU University College

Creative Work

“Detour Route” and Other Poems

By Maura Gage Cavell

Detour Route

Along Highway 13’s detour route on Oro Trail Road
a decoy mannequin cop sits his wooden way
in the driver’s seat of a state patrol car,

uniform, hat, and all. Earlier, with a friend at a coffee shop—
after talk of a fragmented angel--the waiter switched our mugs—
liquid pure black versus a touch of sweetener left behind.

We had sipped from each other’s mugs awhile—
she noticed; we exchanged a bit of each other’s
spirits—a bit of her soul got through to me,

a bit of my essence became part of her life,
the magnolia scents of Highway 13’s
bypass preying on my mind.

The broken backyard angel lingered with me
as I drove. The police car mannequin
pointed out how once the angel stood

among swirls of ivy encircling her base.
For three years she slowly melted
in the heat of Louisiana’s summer.

She folded into herself, shrinking
a little more each year, slowly shriveling
until she fell over, her praying arms and hands

breaking away, her pretty face turned downward
instead of slightly skyward, a mangled angel
with unfinished prayers. I try to shake free

of her hold as my journey continues through this place
of crawfish ponds, rice fields, and mystique, this early
June canvas of heat, bright sun, and vast blue sky.

Jesus, Pirates, and the Fishermen

For Billy and Tommy

From his white boat, he and a friend
fish on the Mermentau River
in search of white perch under
a cloudy sky that opens to full sun;
the river reflects and flashes
back with the stash of gold of Jean Lafitte,
and the echoes of Congo slaves.

Like Jesus near the sea of Galilee
asking Peter to lower his nets,
to find them full of fish,
he and his friend fill their ice chests
with sacalait, bream, bass, and redfish
as they travel along the cool
deep spots and the bank—
long ago pirates' hollers echoing.

The water's silvery and green
under the sun's golden rays.
Some fish have sharp spines,
some fight hard against the hooks,
but these skilled fishermen gain
a treasure trove, the nets of Peter
reflective of this abundance.

Open Window

The black and ivory
piano keys
make noise
like waves
under the brass candelabra
on the piano.
White lace
with diamond patterns
has grown dark
with dust around
the edges. A plum-
scented candle,
a candy dish
with empty
cellophane wrappers,
a torn piece of velvet,
a green lamp,
half-dried flowers,
and remnants
of last night's party
linger. Her
dress is draped
over a chair
covered in a gray fabric
and trimmed with red
cord that calls one
to touch it
or to rest there,
apple blossom
scents drifting
through the cracked
open window.

A World of Beauty and Madness
for Michael

White cloud dreams, burning candles;
his place in New Orleans--an iron balcony.

The moon over the cemeteries,
throws strange light on stone.

Here, the barflies drink bloody Mary's
with ghosts; transvestites strut past a blue light.

A man croons in the corner—
"Johnny I hardly knew ye."

The whispers and the nightmares,
the babies in strollers;

voices touch stained glass
where prayers are heard;

the homeless are caught
by the painters around Jackson Square.

Vampires tap-dance at the Faulkner House
not noticing legs swinging out of night's windows

nor the shadows that dance on Bourbon
under decadent Spanish moss hiding

hotels, spilling over the sundown
as cobblestone streets come alive.

“Hwy 9.35.49” and Other Poems

By Joe Goss

Hwy 9.35.49

Mighty oaken doors set ajar, with
graying beards grown
thick, humbly stand guard. Cracked skin,
reminiscent of a past ignorance once taken
for innocence, welcome healing
amidst brokenness. Green needled pines, prickling
at the bright blue, surf-tormented shore above,
reach in desperation for the home they claim. Tin rusted
roofs contrast against the fallen brethren
who lie scattering the quilted ground.
An array of wilting yellow, growing green,
and hard-packed red
spread over crawling hills and cutting plains,
hidden amidst overgrowth and underbrush:
rustic wreath of the south,
where thirty white steeples smile on every city and town
–her two belts fastened together as one,
one a canvas, the other a kiss.

With progression
on the feet of white-walled tires, she presses
on despite charred lines drawn from her
own, once blazing, desires;
with crooked letter charm, humpback hope,
honeysuckle harmony, dogwood dreams;
magnolia melodies: lullabies for silken sleep,
there is paradise in her pastures,
fortune in her forestry,
comfort in her coast; with God breathing her breeze
to cast aside the sands of time
from her youthful face.

Simple elegance,
side to side with silent radiance,
a Southern Belle if there ever was, my lady,
she whispers, commanding
my love, and,
a hasty
return.

Natchez, MS –May 13, 2016

There's a spot on the bluff,
I told her, where you
can watch the sun dip down
below the horizon
every evening to swim in
the muddy Mississippi and set
cool fire to its surface.

“I want to take you there.”

My heart sank in much the same
way as the spectacle
I had longed to take her to see,
when she lacked interest
and asked instead to leave.

“A sunset is a sunrise is a sunset,”
she said, “river or not,
when I have my own at home
whenever I want
in dual canvas pools
of crystal blue, streaks of forest green,
little hints of firefly light.”

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Did I mention how from that
very same bluff you can watch the
sun’s return
come into view in a thousand hues
like the lighting of a rainbow
match growing
to a prismic flame?

See the Magnolias

What you need to know about
home
for me is that mine is the state of
hospitality —despite what
you may have heard while walking
through her halls,
drunken in her naked streets.

May I remind you that our state
flower is the magnolia?
not the thistle, even if everywhere
you step you must
watch out for starving thorns
and prickles.

If you want to understand why I love
my home, know that I love
it's good fruit, and that like any true
caretaker, I am working
tirelessly, with countless
others, to rid her gardens of these
suffocating weeds.

If you want to love my Mississippi,
see me, see my brothers, see my sisters
see the magnolias
blooming on forgotten roadsides
for you.

To friends and strangers at William Carey University
Hattiesburg, MS –January 21, 2017

Started the year with student
loans and now
homeless
transcripts signed by the heavens'
long, gray, roaring
fingers
slammed shut in metal
doorframes

you made a mess of our halls,
our homes,
our heads
are heavy with questions of how
to move on
with powerless
offices held by
collapsing ceilings, sheetrock
and bookshelf confetti

Swept away in the middle
of a fitful sleep

we search through the rubble
for justification,
for direction
we cannot see
through windows
that are no longer there
light ~~peeks~~ in.
roars

Traveler's Disease

I have heard it said that there is
something about the water in Mexico,
something in it to make one lose
his mind, forget his
senses, abandon all reason;

far from there, I feel its effect,
surely that very water hangs here
in the air, suffocating me, this heavy heat
–where Montezuma burns at my bowels,
Mississippi sticks to my skin.

“Two Autumn Tanka” and Other Poems

By John J. Han

Two Autumn Tanka
(*With a salute to Ono No Komachi, fl. ca. 850*)

autumn evening
the sound of crickets louder
than ever
today my longing for you
grows even more intense

*

autumn night
a nightingale’s sad, sad song
from atop the pine tree
I also walk alone
on this moonlit path

Late Autumn on Campus
(Kyoka)

1
heavy rain
I spill my coffee,
which quickly spreads
to the book
I prize the most

2
a student says
he wasn’t able to access
his online class for days
my search shows he has

accessed it every day

3
my colleague says
she'll be happy to write
a foreword for my book
I thought she had no time—
she's willing in my dream

4
in my e-mail,
I wrongly address Jim,
my colleague, as Ji
in his reply, Jim wrongly
addresses me as Jon

5
the sixty-year-old
professor wears a hearing aid
which makes him look
dignified until he giggles
in the hallway

6
an older colleague
explains how Medicare
and Medicaid differ
I take notes but, as usual,
lose them

7
the next day
I again ask him to explain
the difference
shaking his head, he says
old folks are "cared" for

8
he then mentions
Medicare annual enrollment
and health insurance
marketplace, both of which
perplex me

People Think I Am…
(Etheree)

a
Chinese,
a martial
artist, a North
Korea expert,
a math wizard, and an
Asian man surprisingly
good at English. I respond by
remaining calm and wearing a smile
mysterious enough to perplex them.

The Space Bar
(Etheree)

When I almost finish composing a
story, my laptop space bar doesn't work.
My words now look likethis.
Panic then despair grip me.
Why me? An IT guy
says it can't be fixed.
Not knowing what
to do, I
slam the
bar.

Caring, So Caring: An Old Father's Monologue
(Etheree)

My
dear wife
faces big
tests. She is scared,
so am I. After
a night of no sleep, I
call my son, who is fifty.
When I explain the situation,
he replies in one breath, "She will be
OK," as if he knew she would be OK.

Deathbed Reading
(Etheree)

A
poet
died while her
lovely daughters
were reciting her
poems. What a way to
depart this world! I wonder
if I should ask my daughters to
do the same. My only concern is
that they may read the ones that need edits.

Korean Americans' Table Talk
(haibun)

Four empty nesters in their sixties sit around the coffee table, complaining about their grown-up children. They once bragged about them—their top-notch education, their current titles—but not anymore. If one did, nobody would care anyway. The parents once sought fame and fortune for their children, who turned out to have their own minds.

a fallen dental crown
feeling the depths
of emptiness

One says he should not have paid his children's expensive tuition immediately. They would come home more often, with a wider smile, if he were still paying it. The next person says one of his two daughters wants nothing to do with him, the other wants nothing but his portrait. When he complains about his ex, they say, "We don't want to hear about it." The third one says that his sons keep asking him whether he has written a will. At first, he thought their advice was well-intentioned. Now, he wonders. The last person complains that for every three e-mails he sends his daughter, he receives only one reply. He feels grateful for getting a reply.

late autumn
a longer pause
among crickets

The four empty nesters laugh after each complaint, thankful that their children are not living in their basements. As the chatting session ends, they go home to watch Korean dramas, to google their friends they left behind in Korea forty years ago.

winter encounter
a deer stands
frozen

Autumn Colors
(Free verse)

Once upon a time,
my daughter was a cute little girl
of many words.

She grew up to be an attorney
who speaks less than a Zen monk
in meditation.
When I send her a three-paragraph e-mail,
she replies with two words: “Call me.”

Today, I enter autumn sunlight,
gather three maple leaves of red, yellow, orange,
a dozen red-red burning bush leaves,
and a dozen red rose petals.
Returning to my office,
I put them into a sheet protector
and seal the opening with Scotch tape.

On the way home, I mail the collection
to my daughter four states away,
hoping she will take the time
to touch each leaf, each petal,
and send me an e-mail
longer than two words.

“Stop Sign”

By Peter Malik

I stopped there 50 weeks a year for 10 years in a row, the corner of Pearl and Jefferson, a four-way stop, right by the cemetery. It’s the way that I used to go to work at 6 a.m. Nobody is ever around except those dead people; one of them’s my sister, killed in a tornado about ’82. It was either dark at 6 a.m. or just getting light in the summer. I must have stopped there about 5,000 times, I reckon.

But that day, September 4, 2002, was different. It was a Wednesday, just another Wednesday. I was rolling up to the stop sign just like always when I decided to run it. I wasn’t mad at anybody, I just decided to run it. Just like that. I ran the stop sign at Pearl and Jefferson. I looked around real quick (my heart was pounding) but there was no policeman or anything around. Come to find out that Frog Johnson saw me but that’s later in the story.

God, it felt good. I had broken the law. I was a criminal in a blue shirt that said, “Natchez Refrigeration” and “Ed” over the pocket. And I thought I had gotten away with it.

I didn’t do anything wrong for a whole year after that. I stopped every time. But then one Tuesday night I was tired of watching TV so I decided to go to the casino. It’s right in town, a small casino but a casino same as the big ones. It’s on the river, a riverboat that never goes nowhere. I went in and the first thing you know a woman in a low cut blouse handed me a beer and said, “Welcome.” Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. I have always been single, didn’t care to have a family, too tough, not enough money. So I sat down at a slot machine, put three quarters in and won $250. Three sevens straight

across, first pull. It came showering down, made a big noise. Everybody looked me like I was somebody. There's a first time for everything, I guess.

Well, that's what started me going to the casino on Tuesday night, every other Tuesday night; that came to be my night out. I started losing the money back I had won and once I lost $200. Just like that, like the first time, but in reverse. Nothing is worse than leaving a casino drunk and broke. It's all legal but it seems like stealing to me.

Once I woke up real hungover and I hadn't missed a day in 10 years so I called the office and told Sarah I was sick and wasn't coming in and she just said, "OK, feel better" and that was it. I watched TV all day, on a work day, a Thursday I think it was.

So I started doing it, calling in sick every once in a while and staying home and watching TV all day. I had money in the bank so why not? No one was really my friend there anyway.

Then came the big day, Wednesday, March 3, 2004, the day I quit. It was cold and rainy and I was hungover from the casino but went in anyway and now we were writing a bid on some ductwork on an old house on Washington Street. Carl told me it was my turn to go under the house and so I did and I dropped the flashlight and I said, "I dropped my flashlight" and Carl said, "Can't you do anything right?" and I said, "Hold your horses," and he didn't like that too much and began to curse me. I can take anything but cursing. So I crawled back out and said, "I quit," just like that, "I quit," and it was just like the stop sign. I walked back uptown to the office and I told Sarah what I told Carl and I got in my old Pontiac and left, still muddy in my work clothes.

There are only three heating and cooling places in town, and they wouldn't hire me because they heard I was a "troublemaker." "Troublemaker," that's what Fern Jones said right on the phone when I called him.

So I just sat in my rented apartment and drank beer and thought about everything. Then one Monday I saw Frog Johnson at the Walmart and he said, "Don't you know I saw you run that stop sign? I saw you did it" and I believed him even though it was two years ago. He lives right there and has nothing better to do than to watch that corner. I said, "Screw you, Frog" and took a swing at him right outside the entrance to Walmart and I missed but then Frog jumped on me and starting hitting me in the face over and over again. The security guard came and pulled him off me. Frog hit good for an old man and I was bleeding and they wanted to call an ambulance but I told everybody I just wanted to go home.

Now guess what? I started running that stop sign every morning right at 6 a.m. even though I had no job to go to. I wanted to rile old Frog and I guess I did. About the third morning, there was no one around like always but I ran it and then a cop who was parked around the corner chased me and arrested me. Frog must have told him I did it every morning.

I started going to the casino every night after that. One night, Anita the cocktail waitress met me after her shift at the bar across the street from the casino. "The Loser's Lounge" they call it. She was pretty, blond and not too old. "It was a pretty rough shift," she told me when she got her bourbon and Coke. "I made $25 all night and those men just kept staring and staring at my chest. That's why they make us wear those uniforms. Remember the men are sitting at those machines and I am standing up."

"Yeah, I know," I said. Anita talked about having no sitter for her child because she was on day shift tomorrow. I said, "I'm not doing anything" and she thought for a minute and said, "OK, Ed, just this once."

So next day, I am watching a girl that's three years old and I dozed off for a little while and now she's in the kitchen getting the Clorox out and drinking it. Five minutes, I was asleep for five minutes. I called 911 and they sent cops not an ambulance and they arrested me for child neglect and it's not even my kid. It cost me $500 when it was all said and done and now Anita won't even look at me when I go to the casino and so I stopped going at all.

On Wednesday, April 14, 2004, I packed a bag and started driving with my last $800 in the world. There's something about driving, not the interstate but the back roads around here and in Louisiana. All those nature shows are right, there are places in Louisiana no one knows about, just swamps and gators and a few people who live like they did 100 years ago or maybe 200 years ago.

So I found a motel off the side of the two-lane road and stayed there for awhile, I don't know how long, a few days, just staying in, going to a little store where I could buy baloney and white bread and mayonnaise and I ate that just like I did when I was a little feller and Dad and Mom were still around. Mom, Dad—where are you? I need you now more than ever. First you were always around, then you weren't around, and you will never be around again.

I heard there was a gun show in Lafayette so I cleaned up and went and some guy offered to sell me a gun in the parking lot before I even got in to the show. It was $100 and

$50 for ammunition and he said he was getting rid of it because he was afraid he was going to kill his wife when he was drunk. I gave him the money and took the gun and the bullets.

It was better than being eaten by gators, I thought. That was the other way I was figuring on ending it, going out in a boat at night and jumping over the side and waiting for the gators to get me.

I knew I shouldn't have run the stop sign but a man has to be forgiven once in his life at least. I was tired of living anyway. I was sick of sunrises and sunsets. I was looking forward to the last one.

I wanted to make it easy on everyone so I drove down the road that led to the river. There used to be a ferry across the Mississippi but they stopped it when I was a kid. You could ride across for a dollar. I remember doing it, sitting in the car with Mom and Dad, eating baloney sandwiches, just enjoying the ride.

My obituary in the town newspaper will go something like this:

> Edward Simmons, 39, of Natchez went to be with the Lord on May 25. He was born in Sibley, Mississippi, and moved to Natchez when he was two years old. He was employed by Natchez Refrigeration. He is preceded in death by his father Wayne, mother Marcy and sister Sarah. Interment will be at the Angels Aloft cemetery at the corner of Pearl and Jefferson.

“Grading School” and Other Poems

By Thomas B. Richardson

Grading school

Hunter failed his essay.
You wrangle
the paperwork
(a five-page proof
that you did your job),
and you decide that maybe
Hunter did not fail his essay,
after all.

But then Hunter will think he’s a good writer.
And just look at his fucking face,
his pompous pores contorting
each grin into a taunt:
I didn’t even read the book, he’d sneer.

So mark the paper up,
make it look like a Tarantino film,
Leave no doubt you’re in charge.

Hunter will be turned off of your class.
Cue the mounds of carbon-copied referrals:
When prompted to begin working,
Hunter boasted, Writing is for pussies.

You’ll call his mom and
haul your notes to the office—
Document everything, the vets told you
in teacher school.
But with Principal Good Ol’ Boy as mediator,
your three degrees stand no chance
against Mom’s v-neck and yoga pants.

So you click the red pen,
offer tepid praise,
scribble a few notes about usage—
to show you tried—
and give Hunter a B.

Eupora High School Gym, 2002

Off the bus, we find the usual heavy air of
stale popcorn,
the faint notes of mildew from Jordans
left in gym bags,
each doorknob, threshold, bench
streaked with rust.

In our locker room, teammates—lank-legged
black and white boys—
tape ankles, slip on jerseys that should
label us the enemy.
But the bigger battle, a backwoods
cold war,
heats the stands naively marked
"Visitor" and "Home."

On one side, black fans back their all
black team,
punctuate dunks, and echo
every *swish*.
Across the floor, white parents ignore
court action,
flip through magazines, braid
hair until
their all white dance squad takes
the halftime stage.

At intermission's end, waves of camo
and blond hair
pour through exits as our dribbles and
sneaker squeaks
reverberate through a
half-drained gym.
We visitors can't explain the tableau
we're performing
between the baselines, but it feels
like Mississippi.

When the buzzer sounds, teams shake hands
and we bus back home.
Eupora tidies up, shuts off the lights, and readies
for another game tomorrow.

Reading Shakespeare with teenagers

Romeo, Romeo, let down your hair,
Juliet said back in Bible Times
(somewhere between Vietnam and World War III).

Why didn't he just write in plain English?
He sounds like a douche:
More like, Shall I compare thee to a Summer's Eve?

Wasn't Shakespeare gay?
Mercutio is gay.
To be or not to be gay?
Lady Macbeth wears the pants.

Do not tell me Ophelia jumped
In the water for that freak.
Ham-and-Cheese Omelet needs Zoloft,
or at least a date with Freud.

On top of undersized desks, The Bard arrives.
He swoops in through ears,
carves past thickets of estrogen, testosterone,
and plants himself on the banks of
head and heart's roiling rivers.
Love, Beauty, and Yearning pitch their tents
beside Ambition, Desperation, Deceit.
We—student, teacher, artist, instinct—
commune at this tempest-edge,
and for a moment the centuries converge.
We stay until the tedium—maybe trigonometry—
calls us back to our routines,
but we'll return.
Shakespeare lives here now.

Critical Essays

Sterling Plumpp and Blues People

By Jo A. Baldwin

The Judeo-Christian ethic features God as the thought, articulated and active word that created the world and everything in it (see Gen. 1:1), including people (see Gen. 1:27), although God set aside his creative speech to form man with his hands (see Gen. 2:7), then gave him a voice in various forms as a tool for worship.

Sterling Plumpp has such a talent. Plumpp features his awareness of the presence of God in African American blues and jazz musicians he calls "blues people." Plumpp presents these blues people as authentic worshippers of God in poems that highlight the gifts blues people possess in their musical performances. Devoutly listening to blues people over a span of sixty plus years, Plumpp reveals his knowledge of the gifts of Willie Kent in *Home/Bass*, Fred Anderson in *Ornate with Smoke*, and Von Freeman in *Horn Man*. His body of work also references Muddy Waters, Bessie Smith, B. B. King, Koko Taylor, John Lee Hooker, Howlin' Wolf, Charlie Parker, Bobby Blue Bland, Dizzy Gillespie, Big Mama Thornton, Thelonious Monk, Percy Mayfield, Billie Holiday, Robert Johnson, and others. Plumpp's work presents blues people as gifted musicians anointed to riff.

Scripture is replete with verses indicating that gifts are rewards from God to selected people. James, the Lord's brother, says in his book, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17). In the Old Testament, King Solomon refers to a gift as "a precious stone in the eyes of him who has it: [for] wherever it turns, it prospers" (Prov. 17:8) and that "a man's gift makes room for him and brings him

before great men" (Prov. 18:16). According to Plumpp, the blues people are these great ones.

The Holy Ghost fills Plumpp's work with deliberate, uncommon sensitivity. The Apostle Paul says, "Every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. 7:7). Plumpp's extravagant sensitivity enhances his writing gift, the foundation of which is his knowledge of history, the use of language, and personal experience. For example, Keith Gilyard describes *Ornate with Smoke* as "a jazz poetry solo at its technical best" (257). Being able to sense and put into words longing, disappointment, gratitude, anger, resentment, fear, desire, relief and acceptance permits memory to keep alive grand moments allows Plumpp to identify blues people's gifts to right wrongs, calm nerves, deliver pleasure, express regret, and end sorrow through their instrument. Plumpp performs such moments in ink. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15) is reversed with Plumpp who *speaks* through his poetry things obvious, subtle, confusing, clear, remembered, forgotten, appreciated and despised.

In *Bible Verses Given to Me: A Memoir*, I argue that the spoken word is superior to thought (7), and in Plumpp's case the written word is superior to the spoken word when it comes to preserving blues people's art. Plumpp's written descriptions and explanations preserve the performance long after the music has ended. Plumpp explains the situations and feelings the music expressed, enabling the reader to hear again in his or her imagination the sounds that conveyed the strong emotions. This is important because people need to believe that someone cares enough to remember their significant experiences. Plumpp cares enough for legions:

O blues

O remembrances

O some folks get a globe to tell where blues

be/gin

O do you know the crimes whips committed

against my skin

O blues

O remembrances

O know the blues from grooves cut across my

back

O know the reason cause I born black

O blues

O remembrances

…

O my time cast in chains

O dreams in/side coffins

O blood running like water/falls (*Blues The Story* 88)

Blues people turn suffering into art that Plumpp recognizes and identifies with. Indeed, his poems reveal a connection with the emotions of blues people initiated by memories of his maternal grandparents that he elaborates on through poems in memory of his mother, father, and paternal grandfather and imaginings that celebrate his status as a blues person himself.

According to LeRoi Jones, Ralph Ellison coined the term "blues people," and they are "those who accepted and lived close to their folk experiences" (qtd.. in Jones 176).

Jones further states, "The blues was conceived by freedmen and ex-slaves—if not as the result of a personal or intellectual experience, at least as an emotional confirmation of, and reaction to, the way in which most Negroes were still forced to exist in the United States" (142). This means that blues people are not just musical. Some are verbal so they write, others are social so they fellowship, the ones who are political make speeches, the sexual ones make love, and, of course, all are terminal, so they die. Where is Plumpp in this scenario? In writing poems about blues people who sing and play, Plumpp shows that he too is a singer, speaker, writer, definer and an explainer of moods and feelings, meaning that, in Plumpp's case, he is an unavoidable blues person by choice. Nowhere is this more visible than when he writes of his family.

Victor Emmanuel, Plumpp's maternal grandfather, started it all. He lived to see Plumpp's gift emerge. Plumpp pays poetic tribute to Emmanuel when he writes:

Ah, boy/either
you a man or
you ain't
…
Never had much
just my man
hood/my family
and my church
and my God
I fix up a place

for in my heart (*Blues Narratives* 46)

Plumpp respected his grandfather calling him Poppa, requiring the lips to pucker when his name was spoken.

His grandfather's wife seemed as strong as he was. Plumpp writes of her:

That's how I met

Victor/he was ugly and evil.

But he was good

to me/all forty-two years;

he was good

to me and never let

nobody mistreat me. (*Johannesburg* 36)

Plumpp has a gentility in his selection of words that is quiet and masculine but also vulnerable. Consider the following:

Momma says "She is your momma;

I am your grandmomma". I could not

Understand her meaning and my thirst

Became bitter mosquito bites. Shucks

In the mattress played hide

Tickling feathers in the pillow

So they flapped in my face. I lay

Listening to snores of unanswering wall. (*Mojo Hands* 21)

Plumpp loved his grandparents, but his heart belonged to his mother. He constructs her memory in verse through hearing and feeling the blues.

Sugar Woman

She was black

And we called her sugar.

In the dense briars

Of life's uncertainties,

A pie.

We called her love.

Our sight strengthened

By soft beauty. Our

Manhood molded in

Her ways.

We called her queen,

(Beautiful black queen

Sugar……

and mother. (*Mojo Hands* 9)

Elsewhere, Plumpp writes of her:

For you are

a memoir

crying in

to my pen

breathing tears

I shadow

box my

self to sleep

with (*Blues Narratives* 36)

These words indicate that Plumpp's mother was a mystery, complex in her simplicity. There's something about a mother that forces the poet to sing. Plumpp sang the blues the whole time he was constructing alternatives to his imaginings about his mother:

A male

child imagines

his mother

and you stole

part of my fantasy (*Blues Narratives* 15-16)

…

I long for stories

I know as you (*Blues Narratives* 17)

Plumpp's mother was complex in that she downplayed outcomes. She ignored likely results and obvious possibilities. But, I must admit I'm glad she did, because look at what her behavior made! Still, Plumpp has questions:

I can under

stand you not

being concerned a

bout the formality

of a license

And I can under

stand you not

being immaculate

But I can

not under

stand why you did

not bring home

a carpenter (*Blues Narratives* 8)

Evidently she deserted all her children. Plumpp writes:

…you were

only with me

long enough for

my umbilical

link to be

severed but not

long enough for

me not

to be introduced

to you years later

by your mother (*Blues Narratives* 9-10)

She was so complex that Plumpp had to reconstruct her in his mind to be able to make her elusive behavior stay still long enough to redefine:

I accept
you and I
love you though

you are an
invention a
bout origins

after I had
invented your
mother and my own
secret cosmology

You are an
other star
in an
other galaxy (*Blues Narratives* 29)

But it was her death that was the most grueling for Plumpp that pulled from him "words / they don't have / words for" (*Blues Narratives* 21). He writes:

The Pilgrimage

to the hole

is brief

I will

not take flowers

from you since

petals of your dreams

and memories

are sequestered with

in my senses

…

as echoes of

your laughter in

side my moans

have their way (*Blues Narratives* 36-37)

Plumpp's father, however, was another story. There's something about his father that silences the poet temporarily, and the blues is in the silence. But, when broken, that silence becomes blaring:

I am a photograph of death

and my world

is a gallery Each riff

between silences is

an opening (*Ornate* 33)

Where/I

revoke/echoes

from/silences

I/heard

my daddy

surrender. (*Home/Bass* 18)

some say I am illegitimate

they lie

I am a bastard

there is no legitimacy

in this land

for a skin

like mine where songs

are not mandatory (*Blues Narratives* 55)

Plumpp did not like how his father treated his mother, although his father was probably afraid of her. I say that because it's not easy dealing with a cavalier spirit, someone who doesn't seem to care about outcomes. Such a person is threatening while at the same time irresistible. What I mainly glean from Plumpp's work is that his father was parenthetical to his mother. She merely used him to make a baby. It's like she knew one of her children would capture her spirit and preserve it. So Plumpp's father was a necessary yet dispensable spoke in his mother's wheel, seen as missing but not stopping the wheel from turning. Yet to be fair, Plumpp's father had a right to be afraid of his mother because

she was so unpredictable. He didn't like that she was erratic. He saw her as dangerous. He knew she chose him and that she had the power to emasculate him, so he fled from her.

Plumpp suggests that a father does his son a great disservice when he fails to prepare him for manhood in a hostile land but that he understands the reasons for his father's absence. Still, Plumpp thinks of his father when hearing Louis Armstrong. One of the "women who are close relatives / to head / rags. And / mops. And / brooms" (*Johannesburg* 98) could have been his mother for all his father cared.

Plumpp futher writes of his paternal grandfather's coarse jewelry:

> I got lost and the lynchers
> find me they
> call me Plaited Fear
> say the best way to show
> a nigger how not to act
> give him a special fashion
> show where all he wears
> is a rope (*Ornate* 30)

Elsewhere, he reverts back to thoughts of his maternal grandfather and his awkward physique:

> What gave
> my grand
> daddy his humped back. (*Blues The Story* 75)
>
> I

was told that

the hump

on your back

was your ornery

knoll where

you kept

your manhood. (*Blues Narratives* 48)

But, Plumpp had Victor Emmanuel to "prop him up on his lean down side," as some rural black preachers say, and help to turn resentment into wisdom. It becomes obvious that his mother's father knew how to grow a man in the land of the blues. So Plumpp's family is the precursor of the blues people to whom he chose to devote his life. He followed the AACM (Association of Advanced Creative Musicians) from 1966 to 1977 to get *Ornate with Smoke*. He studied Fred Anderson, a member of the AACM who owned a club, the Velvet Lounge, following him the last fifteen years of his life. And, he covered Von Freeman fifteen years to get *Horn Man*.

I have heard Plumpp say that blues people play to live, not just live to play, and that playing keeps them alive. Blues people identify with Jesus whose axe was the cross where he riffed his seven last words, the last of which he cried out with a loud voice, hanged his head, then held his breath and died. So rather than being just a musical mode, the blues is a major mode of African American cultural expression.

One reason blues people are so attractive is they multi-task in their performances by engaging the self-healing process, while at the same time comforting listeners whose painful

memories are caressed and, in some cases, washed away by the shed tears of longing and regret the music names. Consider the following:

Blues shop

lift lost tones from Muddy

Waters/as a guitar in

forms tomorrows (*Blues The Story* 72)

Blues people are the choir, the preacher, and the congregation in their own version of church.

Blues/the

closest thing

to talk

in

g to god. (*Blues The Story* (73-74)

…

Night on

its knees/praying

for a song. (*Blues The Story* 74)

Plumpp knows blues people are experts at praise, which is all about celebrating our breath. Inhaling and exhaling keeps blood running through our veins. We can "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). We can talk, sing, laugh, pray, fuss, fight, cuss, yell, scream and cry. We can moan and groan, applaud and spank, give birth and kill. But Plumpp knows that blues people do all that day and night, never tiring, because the blues, like blood, is their lifeline.

Plumpp holds blues people in high esteem because, regardless of their axe, when riffing they start out calling on the name of the Lord then end up dancing with him, something the oppressor can't do because his axe is destructive:

> though my pride rises
> in what i do
> to destroy the masters' blade
> sinning against my skin
> true believer, i survive
> yes, i survive, i keep going
> though they take everything away
> i survive america (*Mojo Hands* 37)

Blues people are determined to stay connected to the Spirit. If the connection is broken, they die. They have to worship at the altar of music because it's a main characteristic of God. Before God made human beings to fellowship with, he enjoyed the music of birds singing in the trees, leaves rustling in the wind, sheets of rain falling on the ground, and the rolling sea with the ebb and flow of the tide. Blues people know that about God and act accordingly: they play and sing the blues.

Playing in nightclubs and juke joints where eating and drinking go on is an exaggerated version of the Lord's Supper where Jesus shared food and wine with his friends, the disciples, before experiencing the gamut of emotions prior to and during the crucifixion—the ultimate riffing—and three days later the sensational climax, the resurrection. As Plumpp writes:

> Art is the/Main course

and/Dessert. Be-Bop/Cured ham

bones/Boiled collard green

onions/With a

wee/Bit

of mo onions/And bread pudding

on dog/Pudding on

the dog/Pudding on

dog. (*Velvet BeBop* 64)

Scripture doesn't say what food other than bread Jesus and the twelve ate. But, at the original Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before they left (see Mt. 26:30). So, it's easy to see that music is a God thing to Plumpp, to me, and to all blues people for that matter.

I'd like to end on a personal note and say that I'm writing this article because Plumpp introduced me to the words "riff" and "axe" defining them for me, enabling me to apply the terms to myself. Axe is the instrument, the horn, guitar, piano. Riffing is celebrating the instrument, loving it and using it to purge the sorrow that brought on the blues in the first place. It's also a form of worship, again when considering that blues people instinctively know that just as they enjoy riffing for life, God gave them the breath and stamina with their axe to resist death.

I too have a prayer language, which is speaking in tongues, that is my axe, that the Holy Ghost allows me to riff, which is the vocal act of magnifying God.[i]

This poem of Plumpp's shows that he too can speak in tongues if he asks for the gift.

Every day.

Every day.

…

Speaking in

bric

brac

tongues of desire. (*Horn Man* 14)

So riffing overall is an expression of the prayer language, regardless of the axe: the horn, piano, voice, drum, guitar, harmonica, are all forms of riffing, which, again, is dancing with God. And I believe the deaf and dancers riff with movement, moving their bodies, their fingers and, if paralyzed, their eyes. And, I believe the body is the lover's axe. But there is also more.

Plumpp's axe is a pen on paper. He riffs words that call like a servant and respond like God himself. He answers his own questions and drives his own point home while at the same time dancing his heart out. By that I mean he seems to understand that making something out of nothing is how God operates. According to the Apostle Paul, at creation God called those things which be not as though they were (see Rom. 4:17), which is what blues people do that Plumpp describes.

Suffering positions us to riff. Blues people are usually poor yet they possess everything when they understand that the forms of suffering that aren't going anywhere need to be transformed. So they sing and play the blues. Plumpp does the same thing with his poems. He "Bops" and "Be-Bops" in *Velvet BeBop Kente Cloth* using repetition for emphasis allowing words to sing without music, or should I say allowing words to make their own music. But more importantly, Plumpp appears to know God personally as a deity

worth dancing with, a God who makes something out of nothing that heals, restores, gives hope, peace, joy and even fun. I define the blues as a celebration of sadness, because blues people are walking miracles, descendants of ancestors who survived the Middle Passage and are still able to love and riff in spite of memories of atrocities that normally drive the mind into insanity. But rather than go crazy, black folks riff, proving that people can be fruitful in the land of affliction with God (see Gen. 41:52).

Finally, that poet Sterling Dominic Plumpp is gifted by God and that his muse is the Holy Ghost is evidenced in Psalm 27:10: "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." His parents hurt him but they blessed him, because he can write poetry like nobody else.

Note

[1]The Holy Ghost lets me riff my prayer language and when I do I feel like a Horn Man. A brief sample of my Prayer Language follows:

O sho ne ma ra el.

Ich le bay nee ka see

Ko eck ze reese mo dey.

Hock po zo te vey ni bay.

Zooooo is ca dar

Me mo se door.

Reeeee ray kadish

Los cell de ma.

Doe na box clair fo lo mish

En ga zee hey pin rim re.

Ste un wah yo de foom.

Al la ha el Jesus.

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Jack London and the "Nature Fakers"

By Alan Brown

Jack London and Theodore Roosevelt hailed from two entirely different backgrounds. London was born in to an unwed mother, Flora Wellman, in San Francisco. His biological father was a lawyer/astrologer named William Chaney. Because his mother was unwell, London was raised by an ex-slave, Virginia Prentiss. Flora eventually married a disabled Civil War veteran named John London. As a boy, London worked at a variety of factory jobs. He became an oyster pirate; shortly thereafter, he served as an officer of the fish patrol and arrested oyster pirates. In 1894, London joined Kelly's Army of Unemployed Working Men and hoboed around the country. During this time, London developed his empathy for the working classes that became the basis of his socialistic beliefs. In 1897, London traveled to the Yukon as part of the gold rush (Biography.com). London found no gold, to speak of, but he gathered the material for a collection of stories and two of the greatest dog novels ever written: *Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1903) (Biography.com).

By contrast, Theodore Roosevelt Jr. was born to a life of privilege in New York City on October 27, 1856. He parents were socialite Martha Steward Bullock and glass businessman and philanthropist Theodore Roosevelt Sr. As a boy, Roosevelt traveled to Europe in 1869 and 1870 and to Egypt in 1872. For the most part, Roosevelt was homeschooled by tutors and his parents. He eventually attended Harvard, where he studied under eminent professors such as William James. After graduating from college, Roosevelt entered the world of politics. In 1882, 1883, and 1884, he became a member of the New

York State Assembly. Following a short stint as a cattle rancher in Medora, North Dakota, Roosevelt returned to public life in 1886, when he made a failed attempt to run for mayor of New York City. President Benjamin Harrison appointed Roosevelt to the United States Civil Service Commission where he served until 1895. He was appointed New York City Police Commissioner in 1896. Between 1897 and 1898, Roosevelt served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Roosevelt's headline-garnering charge up San Juan Hill during the Spanish American War led to his election as governor of New York, as vice-president under William McKinley, and as President of the United States from 1901-1909 (Whitehouse.gov). The only common ground that connected Jack London and Theodore Roosevelt—their love of and their respect for nature—was also their greatest point of contention.

Roosevelt's love of the great outdoors was in sync with the nation's burgeoning interest in leaving the confines of the city and experiencing wild landscapes first-hand. Yellowstone, the country's first national park, was founded in 1872; it was followed by a half dozen similar venues at the turn of the century. Railroads made it easy for people to travel to these out-of-the-way destinations and bask in the glories of nature Stewart 83). At the same time, the general public was becoming interested in books that claimed to offer a view into the secret lives of wild animals. The first of these "new" books about animals was Ernest Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known*, published in 1898. It was followed by Reverend William J. Long's *School of the Woods: Some Life Studies of Animal Instinct and Animal Training* in 1902 and Canadian writer Charles G.D. Roberts' collection of animal stories titled *Kindred of the Wild*, published the same year (Carson). Actually, anthropomorphic treatments of the lives of animals had been around long before Seton

founded his school of nature writing. Aesop's moralistic fables, populated by an entire menagerie of animals, inspired Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* in 1894. Anna Sewell's 1890 novel *Black Beauty*, told from the horse's point of view, was used by the Humane Society to wage war against animal cruelty (Lutts 22).

Naturalists and biologists were incensed by the growing popularity of what John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, called a "cult of nature," which obscured scientific fact with sentimentality. Naturalist John Burroughs referred to literary works that blurred the line between fact and fiction as "yellow journalism of the woods" (Carson). In 1903, Burroughs submitted an article to the *Atlantic Monthly* titled "Real and Sham Natural History." Although Burroughs heavily criticized the sentimental works of Ernest Thompson Seton, William Davenport Hulbert, and Charles G.D. Roberts, his primary target in this piece was Reverend William J. Long. Burroughs took issue with Long's assertion that animals do not derive their early instruction from instinct; rather, they are trained by their mothers (Mazel 118).

President Theodore Roosevelt, who admired Burroughs, weighed in on the controversy in 1907, following an informal meeting with his friend and hiking companion Edward B. Clark, who was a correspondent for the Chicago *Evening Post*. During their conversation in front of a log fire in the White House, Roosevelt confessed his dislike for writers of unrealistic stories about birds and animals. When Clark asked Roosevelt why he did not go after them, Roosevelt replied, "I think I will" (Carson). His article, simply titled "Nature Fakers," was published in the September issue of *Everybody's Magazine*. Clark coined the term "nature faker"; Roosevelt changed the spelling of "faker" from "fakir" to "faker," and created an instant colloquialism in the English language. In his article,

Roosevelt said that Nature Fakers were "an object of derision to every scientist worth of the name, to every real lover of the wilderness, to every faunal naturalist, to every true hunter or nature lover" (260). He attacked the depictions of birds and animals in the writings of three of the most popular nature romancers of the day: Ernest Thompson Seton, Charles G.D Roberts, and William Long. Roosevelt claimed that these writers (do not know the first thing about the habits and physical structure [of animals]" (262). Roosevelt compared their imaginary creatures to the literary creations of Uncle Remus, who seem to be furry little people. He mocked these so-called "students of nature" who "see not keenly but falsely, who write so interestingly and untruthfully, and whose imagination is used not to interpret facts but to invent them" (259). Roosevelt's primary objection to these writers was the delight they seemed to take in "fill[ing] credulous strangers with impossible stories of wild beasts" (260). Roosevelt was appalled by the issuance of these wildlife romances in schools at low prices. He was concerned that the ignorant, credulous young readers would grow up believing these "impossible stories of wild beasts" (260). However, he had no objection to works that humanized animals as long as they were offered up as fairy tales.

Roosevelt illustrated the literary offenses of these "nature writers" with specific examples from their works. He describes the impossible acts of characters like William Long's wolf, who "with one bite, reaches the heart of a bull caribou, or a moose, or a horse—a feat which, of course, has been mechanically impossible of performance by any land carnivore since the death of the last saber-toothed tiger" (262). Another target of Roosevelt's wrath is Seton's story about a species of bird called the "fisher": "This particular story-book fisher, when pursued by hunters on snow-shoes, kills a buck by a bite in the throat and leaves the carcass as a bribe to the hunters, hoping thereby to distract attention

from himself! "(263). Roosevelt describes with sarcastic glee William Long's "woodcock genius," who make sets his broken leg with a cast made of clay and straw. "It seems a pity," Roosevelt quips, " not to have added that it also made itself a crutch to use while the splint was on" (264). Roosevelt saves his most ludicrous example of nature fakery for the end of his article. To Roosevelt, Long's "wildlife schools" were the epitome of absurdity:

> In one story, for instance, a wild duck is described as 'teaching' her young how to swim and get their food. If this writer had strolled into the nearest barnyard containing a hen which had hatched out ducklings, a glance at the actions of those ducklings when the hen happened to lead them near a puddle would have enlightened him as to how much 'teaching' they needed. But these writers exercise the same florid imagination when they deal with a robin or a rabbit as when they describe a bear, a moose, or a salmon. (260)

Another writer who felt the brunt of Roosevelt's wrath was Jack London. Roosevelt went on record as objecting to the accuracy of London's description of a dog fight in *White Fang*. London responded in *Colliers* by accusing Roosevelt and Burroughs of subscribing to a mechanistic view of the behavior of animals (Carson). Later, London mocked those "nature writers" who chose not to rebut Burrough's or Roosevelt's accusation. He accused them as "climb[ing] a tree and let[ing] the cataclysm go by" (Carson). London, in fact, shared Burroughs' and Roosevelt's disdain for the animal romanticists. In his essay "The Other Animals," London responded to the charge of being a "nature faker." He distinguished himself from those writers who had committed the cardinal sin of humanizing animals, "which, it seemed to me, several 'animal writers' had been profoundly guilty" (Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*). In the essay, London insisted that "these dog-heroes of

mine were not directed by abstract reasoning but by instinct, sensations, and emotion, and by simple reasoning. Also, I endeavored to make my stories in line with the facts of evolution. I hewed them to the mark set by scientific research" (Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*).

Jack London entered the lucrative world of nature writing in 1903 with the publication of *Call of the Wild*, the story of a St. Bernard named Buck who is abducted from his home in sunny California to the frigid climes of the Klondike during the gold rush of 1897. He is beaten into submission by the "man with the red sweater" and sold to a variety of owners to work as a sled dog. After acclimating himself to the harsh life as a sled dog, Buck eventually takes over the position as leader. When Buck is sold to a trio of newcomers, he encounters the only human being he ever really bonds with. John Thornton, a prospector, is so appalled by the mistreatment Buck has suffered that he cuts the dog from the traces, just before the newcomers, their sled, and their dogs crash through the thin ice. Buck's short time with his new master is the happiest period in the dog's life. His idyllic existence comes to an abrupt end when Thornton and his partners are massacred by the Yeehat Indians. Buck takes vengeance on the Indians, killing so many that they call him an evil spirit. At the end of the novel, Buck yields to the primal call of the wild and becomes the leader of a pack of wolves.

Despite his resentment at being called a "nature faker," London does succumb to the temptation to humanize his animal characters in places, probably to make their behavior more understandable to a general audience. In *The Call of the Wild*, one of the human traits London imbues his animals with is ambition, which is closely connected to pride. Buck clashes with a sled dog named Spitz for the position of lead sled dog because, as London

puts it, "it was his nature, because he had been gripped tight by that nameless, incomprehensible pride of the trail and trace—that pride with holds dogs in the toil to the last gasp, which lures them to die joyfully in the harness, and breaks their hearts if they are cut out of the harness…And this was Buck's pride, too" (72) Indeed, after one of the sled dogs, Dave, becomes too sick to pull the sled and is cut from the traces, "he pleaded with his eyes to remain there" (89). After Spitz is defeated by Buck, his pride is injured when Perrault attempts to put another dog, Sol-leks, in the leadership role.

Buck's instinctive nature sometimes takes the form of intuition in the novel. When he is sold to the two men and a woman who know little about driving a dog sled through the Klondike's frozen landscape, he "felt vaguely that there was no depending on the two men and the woman" (98). As the men attempt to drive the sled across a section of a frozen lake, Buck "ha[s] a vague feeling of impending doom" (105).

One of Buck's traits that make him fit to survive in the wild is his ability to adapt to new situations. London clearly took issue with those nature writers, like Seton, who depicted birds being taught to fly by their mothers. Buck learns by experience. He is a product of his environment in a naturalistic sense. Soon after Buck is abducted, he learns from the "Man with the Red Sweater" that "a man with a club was a lawgiver, a master to be obeyed" (51). Once he is introduced to the life of a sled dog, Buck learns the Law of the Wild: "Kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, was the law, and this mandate, down out of the depths of time, he obeyed" (110).

Unlike the works written by London's competitors, such as Seton, Long, and Roberts, London's novel illustrates the role instinct plays in the behavior of animals. Buck's ferocious side first emerges on evening when Buck walks over to the fire to eat a piece of fish

and his nemesis—Spitz—takes over the nest Buck had made by the fire. "The beast in him roared" (66) as Buck sprang upon his enemy. Their battle is interrupted by the arrival of a pack of ravenous Indian dogs, who are lured to the camp by the smell of food. Eating in London's work is closely connected to the strongest impulse in men and animals—the survival instinct.

Buck is driven by another urge, which is awakened by the close proximity of the forest. The emerging of Buck's primal nature, London argues, parallels that of his human masters: "All that stirring of old instincts which at stated periods drives men out from the sounding cities to forest and plain to kill things by chemically propelled leaden pellets, the blood lust, the joy to kill—all this was Buck's, only it was infinitely more infinite. He was ranging at the head of the pack, running the wild thing down, the living meat, to kill with his own teeth and wash his muzzle to the eyes in the warm blood" (76). This ancient connection between man and dog surfaces in the form of a vision that comes to him as he is lying by the campfire:

> He saw another and different man from this half-breed cook before him. This man was shorter of leg and longer of arm, with muscles that were stringy and knotty rather than rounded and swelling. The hair of the man was long and matted, and his head slanted under it from the eyes. He uttered strange sounds, and seemed very much afraid of the darkness, into which he peered continually, clutching in his hand, which hung midway between knee and foot, a stick with a heavy stone fixed to one end. (86)

London's admittedly fanciful attempt to describe the dreams of dogs is based on the work of anthropologists, who trace the close relationship between man and dog all the way back to

prehistory. However, London also seems to be applying Freudian psychological to Buck's dream state. His genetic memory of the cave man seems to be the animal equivalent of the human id, which is the seat of man's primal drives. Freud believed that dreams provide an outlet for the id by giving expression to our base, animalistic impulses (McLeod). Thus, London definitely seems to be inadvertently humanizing the dog at the same time he is trying to provide a scientific basis for his dreams.

London's only real venture into sentimentality in *Call of the Wild* occurs when John Thornton becomes his new master. The love Buck feels for Thornton lifts the dark tone of the book, making him seem more like the dogs we keep as pets. Buck's love for Thornton is so all-consuming that he wins a bet by pulling a sled loaded down with hundreds of pounds of gear. Buck also shows his love by gently biting Thornton's hand, which London describes as a sort of "caress" (108). However, London seems to be linking Buck's affection for his master with the bond that brought man and wolf together thousands of years ago. Love was essential for the survival of man and dog. Therefore, love is a primitive impulse, closely connected to the survival instinct

However, Buck is a conflicted character. The pull of the primitive, which haunts Buck's sleep, is manifested in the howls of the wolves, compelling him to surrender to his wolf-like nature: 'Deep in the forest, a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call, mysteriously thrilling and luring, he felt compelled to turn his back on the fire and the beaten earth around it, and to plunge into the forest, and on and on, he knew not where or why; nor did he wonder where or why….But as often as he gained the soft unbroken earth and the green shade, the love of John Thornton drew him back again" (111). Following John Thornton's untimely death, Buck yields to wolf within him: "His great throat a-bellow

as he sings the song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack" (140). "The Old Song," as London calls it, is clearly a reference to Buck's genetic make-up, his wolf-like nature that hearkens back to his lupine forbearers.

So, in the final analysis, is Jack London's *Call of the Wild* an example of "nature fakery"? Granted, London does occasionally give in to the temptation to make his dog-hero more like us so that we can empathize with him. For the most part, though, *Call of the Wild* avoids the sentimentality that mars the ending of his second dog book, *White Fang* (1906). His portrayal of the animals that populate his book seem genuine, probably because it is informed by his first-hand observations of wild and domestic animals during the year he spent in the Klondike, a savage land that brought out the savage in man and beast.

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"Writing Beyond Endings": Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Sapphire's *Push*

By Shahara'Tova Dente

> "Once upon a time, the end, the rightful end, of women in novels was social—successful courtship, marriage—or judgmental of her sexual and social failure—death. . . . Sometimes the ends of novels were inspirational, sublimating the desire for achievement into a future generation, an end for female quest that was not limited to marriage or death."-Rachel DuPlessis *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers*

> "If anything I do, in the way of writing novels (or whatever I write) isn't about the village or the community or about you, then it is not about anything."-Toni Morrison "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation"

Nobel Prize winning author Toni Morrison's "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation" is a testament to the ways in which Morrison incorporates the community and a sense of lineage into her writing. This is one of the many characteristics that make her writing compelling and timeless. Morrison's works frequently weave ancestral ties and representations of blackness and womanhood into her characters. For many readers inside the African American literary tradition, Morrison's work is more literary and an accurate representation of African American lived experience because of its focus on ancestral ties, community, and lineage. This authenticity is an important aspect of Morrisonian writing; however, there have been texts written by other authors since *The Bluest Eye* (1970) that have continued along a similar trajectory of communal narration through the eyes of a female protagonist. For example, Sapphire's *PUSH* (1996) documents the life of Clarieece "Precious" Jones, in the inner city projects of Harlem. This novel is set against the backdrop

of the unforgiving streets of Harlem, on the cusp of a burgeoning Hip Hop culture. This culture permeates Precious' narratives and the local landscape. Precious' misfortunes are, in many ways, similar to those that affect Morrison's character Pecola Breedlove. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola is a central focus of the narrative, though she does not offer direct narration of her emotional, physical, and mental abuse to the reader. Instead, her narrative is filtered through episodic sketches, which other characters narrate. Like Pecola, Precious battles emotional, physical, and mental abuse, from her parents. Yet, the end of Pecola's narrative provides no hope, no outlet for expression, and no real insight to Pecola's emotional state. Pecola's ending is tragic, and that tone is consistent from the beginning of the text to the ending. The ways in which Precious copes with her abuse are distinctly different from how Morrison depicts Pecola's struggles; yet, these novels are very similar though they traverse different decades.

How women writers create characters, particularly those who experience traumas, is not unique. Rather, one can identify similar patterns among twentieth-century women writers. Rachel DuPlessis, in *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (1985), writes that women writers of the twentieth century "invent a complex of narrative acts with 'psychosocial meanings' . . . writing beyond the ending" (4). Writing beyond the endings means that instead of preconceived notions of what traditionally constitutes a fulfilling ending for a character, authors instead write beyond these psychosocial meanings by creating varying possibilities for characters. For example, instead of consigning women characters to prescribed roles as one dimensional domestics, twentieth century writers began to expand the possibilities for female characters. DuPlessis also argues that "there is a consistent project that unites some twentieth-century women

writers across the century, writers who examine how social practices surrounding gender have entered narrative, and who consequently use narrative to make critical statements about the psychosexual and sociocultural construction of women" (4). These narrative statements necessitate a shift in storytelling technique. Instead of romanticized stories that in no way mirror reality, writers like Morrison place their characters in roles that more closely represent the nuances of African American, female experience, during specific time periods. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison writes in a post-migratory, blues aesthetic. These narrations reflect how the African American community copes with the urban landscape, post-migration, while passing down an oral history of their families. Women certainly experience love and death, but writing beyond these limitations means to explore all points of lived experiences for women of all socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. DuPlessis further interrogates these points in between by saying, "This contradiction between love and quest in plots dealing with women as a narrated group, acutely visible in nineteenth-century fiction, has

. . . one main mode of resolution: an ending in which one part of that contradiction, usually quest or *Bildung*, is set aside or repressed, whether by marriage or death" (4). Instead of providing women with only these options, marriage or death, novelists like Morrison utilize the bildungsroman and incorporate historical events, places, or musical references which speak to the larger African American community.

DuPlessis examines novels that reject the traditional love, marriage, and death plot progression by writing beyond the ending. Though DuPlessis does not couple Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Sapphire's *PUSH*, I would suggest that these two texts do similar work. Morrison's text is written in the vein of the blues and Sapphire's text

transports the reader into a Hip Hop decade. Morrison's approach centers community and family, while also centering the abuse and mistreatment black and brown girls can experience, because of a destructive family and community. Sapphire's novel does this as well. Both novels share a similar plot and critical voice, which showcase a critical engagement of the social and economic concerns plaguing the African American community, specifically women in disadvantaged and poverty-stricken areas. By examining these two texts and applying DuPlessis' framework, I show that street literature and Hip Hop literature can be read critically. Specifically, reading both *The Bluest Eye* and *PUSH* as such allows fresh critical engagement and critique into spaces where it has not been fully accepted before. Elizabeth McNeil, in "Deconstructing the 'Pedagogy of Abuse,'" also notes key similarities and differences between Morrison's and Sapphire's texts. She writes:

> *PUSH* is not the first novel to deal with child sexual abuses, but it is notable . . . in the historical continuum of African American women's fiction . . . Critics and clinicians note that *PUSH*'s point-of-view protagonist, Precious Jones, shows a much more developed sense of agency than does Pecola Breedlove, the silent abused girl at the heart of the key predecessor text, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye.* (173)

I build upon this existing argument by showing how *The Bluest Eye* is not only a predecessor text to Sapphire's *PUSH*, but also how it is important to note the change in Sapphire's narrative technique. Janice Lee Liddell, in "Agents of Pain and Redemption in Sapphire's PUSH" also examines how Sapphire's narrative strategy empowers Precious. She argues, "By giving voice to the victim herself—a phenomenon virtually unheard of in Black

sociological, psychological, or imaginative literature—the root causes of the incest are interrogated and the agency of this violence is spread as far as possible" (137).

Sapphire's *PUSH* takes up Morrison's ending and extends it. Sapphire writes beyond Morrison's ending by incorporating specific elements of the literal and figurative street, as a way of examining how the urban landscape, socioeconomic circumstances, and community affect Precious' disposition, and more broadly, women of color. DuPlessis contends that "struggles between middle and ending, quest and love plots, female as hero and female as heroine, class and gender that animate many central novels of the nineteenth century can be posed as the starting point, the motivating inception for the project of twentieth-century women writers" (7). Both Morrison and Sapphire take up the task of writing the experiences of young African American girls; their narratives incorporate struggles between beginnings and endings and they also address issues of race, class, and gender, as they pertain to women and young girls of color. To do this kind of intersectional writing, whether Morrison names it that or not, is unique to African American writers, women specifically. I prove this by first offering a survey of existing discussions of both *The Bluest Eye* and *PUSH*. Then I provide three ways in which Sapphire writes beyond Morrison's ending, not to produce a better text than Morrison's, but to show how the texts are related and how they offer diverse perspectives of African American, female lived experience. Sapphire writes beyond the ending Morrison provides by 1) incorporating more of the urban landscape and street into the narrative; 2) allowing protagonist Precious to narrate her experiences, unfiltered through another voice or narrator; and 3) by utilizing pertinent elements from Hip Hop culture that are representative of the period and the struggles of other people of color.

Existing Discussions

Brittney Cooper, in "Maybe I'll be a Poet, Rapper: Hip Hop Feminism and Literary Aesthetics is Sapphire's *PUSH*," posits a question of connectivity between literature and blues aesthetics. She actively engages and interrogates the notion of the literary "nexus of jazz and blues" and how African American women writers navigate aesthetics, while they push back against the high art versus low art conversation, currently playing out in academe. She argues that *PUSH*, "acts as a bridge text between earlier generations of African American women's writing and the urban street dramas . . . Sapphire's invocation of Hip Hop is an early portrait of a Hip Hop aesthetic in prose form that offers relevance while avoiding the pitfalls of presentism" (3). And later, "it offers a critical model for the ways in which Hip Hop texts (might) engage with their literary forebears. *PUSH* demonstrates the need for literary works to grapple with the politics, poetics, and aesthetics of Hip Hop, while remaining connected with these prior works" (3). It is the very notion that a text can, in fact, take up the issues of Hip Hop culture, while bearing the characteristics of the novel, that make this work new and necessary.

Morrison's text is a staple, *now*, in African American literature, but there was resistance to that text, for many of the same reasons contemporary works, like Sapphire's *PUSH*, experience backlash. Only recently has Sapphire's text moved closer to the center of academic engagement. DoVeanna S. Fulton, in "Looking for 'the Alternative[s]': Locating Sapphire's *PUSH* in African American Literary Tradition through Literacy and Orality," submits that "PUSH has not garnered significant scholarly attention because of Sapphire's portrayal of Precious Jones . . . Sapphire interrogates the mother figure and motherhood in a manner that questions this image and concept in Black community discourse and

consciousness" (Fulton 162). Sapphire's text also benefits from a mainstream film adaptation, *Precious*. Until that film's debut in 2009, very little critical attention, scholarly articles, and academic engagement included the novel *PUSH*. As more attention is paid to this text, it is evident that *PUSH* has much to offer in the way of examining specific aspects of African American girlhood and African American lived experience. Today, there is still a desire to suppress these narratives' academic import; texts deemed problematic for language choices or subject matter, often find themselves on the periphery of critical engagement, much like contemporary texts like *PUSH*. That same resistance from academia is still occurring inside the African American literary tradition.

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[2] One way to eliminate this marginalization is to seek out other texts that follow the Morrisonian design, and it means seeking out contemporary writers who see the value in what Morrison began and who are committed to continuing and expanding this tradition. [3]

Sapphire's *PUSH* serves as a memoir for Precious Jones, in which she confronts a prescribed ending for her life. Though Precious' narrative is not the first of its kind, it is unique in that it affords the reader the opportunity to experience a double identity. Her story is an example of the narrative pattern DuPlessis mentions. DuPlessis says, "As a narrative pattern, the romance plot muffles the main female character, represses quest, valorizes heterosexual as opposed to homosexual ties, incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success" (5). As Sapphire's Precious struggles to find the words to properly articulate her reality, including her sexuality and health, she blends two identities and two worlds: the real, her oppressed and repressed African American body and the imaginative, her slim, white, popular alter ego. Examining these points of departure

allows Morrison's and Sapphire's texts to act as links, and it shows how two narrative techniques about similar African American lived experience can usher in diverse ways of thinking about how these rhetorical and narrative strategies work together in different periods.

DuPlessis' work provides the necessary language for articulating the connections made through works like Morrison's and Sapphire's across seemingly unrelated periods in literature. This connection is the perfect place for critical inquiry. There is a connection between the narratives Morrison introduces and the culture out of which these narratives are produced. The thing DuPlessis makes clearest is that some characters' endings are murky. Oftentimes, Morrison uses these murky endings as opportunities for the reader to bring their thoughts and critical eyes to the text. Pecola's ending is murky, yet there is still much to critique about how her story is told and why Morrison opts to mediate Pecola's voice. Morrison is committed to creating characters whose narratives closely align with her views of community and ancestral lineage.

Though Pecola's story is a kind of blues, Claudia and the MacTeers are also living a version of this blues, Pecola's blues, and the general blues of being poor in an urban space. Claudia's job as narrator is to put together the pieces of this sad summer, in Lorain, Ohio. However, since the abuse does not happen to Claudia, one wonders why Pecola is not allowed the space to relate her story. McNeil also ponders Morrison's narrative techniques and how they affect the readers' engagement with Pecola. McNeil writes:

> whereas Precious articulates her abuse story from the first sentence of the novel, Pecola's story is only told by others. Pecola remains silent and thus

> disembodied in terms of realizing/confronting and integrating the abuse so that she can complete it, grow past it, and create a future for herself. This is also a reflection of the social context Morrison critiques—both the story's 1940s setting and late 1960s era during which she wrote The Bluest Eye. Morrison's account reflects an earlier predilection in predominantly white American literature for disallowing the "ruined" girl and progeny to taint society by being integrated into it. (McNeil 176)

By stripping Pecola of her agency, Morrison compounds Pecola's blues, and she makes her a mute, flat character that must rely on other characters to narrate her experience. McNeil also contends that *PUSH* reveals a greater sense of agency and that "PUSH affords the reader an even greater possibility . . . to respond and react to Sapphire's more complex understanding of that lived experience. The specific ways that Sapphire creates a more intimate and relevant incest story include the unusual mother-daughter incest and Precious's confusing sexual responses" (176). While it is important that Morrison allows another young African American girl to narrate Pecola's story instead of a male voice or a non-African American voice, she still does not permit Pecola to narrate her story. This is key to understanding the ways in which Morrison's narrative technique differs from Sapphire's narrative technique. In *Conversations with Toni Morrison* (1994), Morrison comments, "It's not just about telling the story; it's about involving the reader. The reader supplies the emotion . . . even some of the color, some of the sound. My language has to have holes and spaces so the reader can come into it" (Taylor-Guthrie 164). These holes and spaces are evident throughout Pecola's progression. There is no place for her to express anything instead the reader must come into the text and interpret Claudia's narration of Pecola's

experience. It is as if Pecola is unable to vocalize her pain, so Morrison places the agency in Claudia's possession. Though this move allows the reader to "come into the story," it does not afford the reader a first-hand, unfiltered narrative. While the reader will never get that account, DuPlessis provides a bridge for potentially understanding the narrative process for women writers in the twentieth century. If one were to take up Sapphire's *PUSH* and examine it in the same fashion as Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, there emerges a chance to continue, or extend, an existing narrative, but with a much less murky conclusion.

Writing Beyond the Urban Landscape

For Morrison and Trudier Harris, folk communities are essential to understanding the communal aspects of post-migratory realities for African Americans. Moreover, migration to urban meccas in the North yielded a false promise of security, prosperity, and success. Harris argues, "instead of simply including isolated terms of folklore, Morrison manages to simulate the ethos of folk communities, to saturate her novels with a folk aura intrinsic to the texturing of whole" (Furman 4). It is this connection to community and ancestral heritage that transports the reader into the landscape, so that they can live these experiences, through the eyes of the characters. What the Breedloves experience is the harsh poverty, blackness, and lack of private space that promotes security, prosperity, and success. Yet, the folk aura and bluesyness are still encapsulated within this community, during tragedy and violence, as opposed to decades of violence and cultural lynching, because of racism and discrimination. For example, in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's rape and pregnancy is the central blues of the text. Each character sketch adds to the larger issue of Pecola's abuse. Her tragic story is the driving force across the text. On the other hand the central focus of

PUSH is not necessarily the abuse Precious faces, but how the environment and the urban landscape are contributing factors to the abuses Precious suffers. Moreover, Sapphire shows how the same environment aids Precious in surviving the harsh environment.

Sapphire writes beyond Morrison's urban landscape in the way she uses people, music, and cultural references as backdrops for Precious' experiences. For Precious, the landscape is not a part of migration, but it influences how she reacts to certain stimuli. One of these places involves Precious running out of a restaurant after stealing chicken. Precious runs down the streets as crack addicts taunt her in the street. The text states, "Scarf Big Mama!' this from crack addict standing in front abandoned building. I don't even turn my head—crack addicts is *disgusting*! Give race a bad name, lost in the hells of norf america crack addicts is" (Sapphire 37). This is one of the many places in which Sapphire incorporates the physical street into the narrative. Not only is Precious in a poor neighborhood, rife with tenements and cramped living quarters, she is confronted with the reality of the crack epidemic in Harlem. One of the things that makes her situation so relatable is that the landscape is also a minor character. Precious comments on the things happening outside of her building, as a way of painting a picture her audience can understand. Sapphire shows the physical street and its inhabitants. Noting the crack addicts on the corner is key because during the crack cocaine epidemic the streets are littered with things and people. Sapphire parallels Precious' environment with her decision making to illustrate how Precious is forced to literally run through the streets after stealing food because she has no money. The decision Precious makes is an impossible one, but as she takes flight, she is also highly critical of the environment as she flees.

Writing Beyond Self-Esteem and Abuse

Instead of Sapphire following Morrison's lead with one victim and a separate narrator, Sapphire merges the two and allows Precious the agency to be both victim and victor as she speaks for herself. Though Precious understands her father's actions are wrong, she eventually articulates that in her notebook and to her mother. After declaring that the abuse she suffers is not her fault, Precious begins to understand her worth, and that her voice matters. This is clear after Precious meets Ms. Rain for the first time. Her appearance is both startling and intriguing. Precious comments, "My muver do not like niggers wear they hair like that! My muver say Farrakhan OK but he done gone too far…I don't know how *I* feel about people with hair like that" (Sapphire 40). This is one of many instances where Precious shows signs of independence. Here, it is the potential for having a different opinion about people who wear dreadlocks or the importance of school and this RISE program. Though both parents have abused her, she is still determined to think for herself, if only for herself. Further, Precious may not voice these opinions, particularly not to her mother, but the notion that she has these thoughts, that she is an individual with thoughts and feelings, is an extension. Pecola is still very young. Her only place to see and experience diverse modes of thinking and experience is the home of the prostitutes.

Sapphire's writing beyond Morrison's ending also nuances the ways in which readers witness and understand sexual abuse. Not only does Precious endure abuse from her father, she also endures abuse from her mother. In between Precious' lapses from dreamland to reality, she recounts her abuse, from age seven. She says, "Seven, he on me almost every night. First it's just in my mouth. Then it's more. He is intercoursing me. Say I can take it. Look you don't even bleed, virgin girls bleed. You not virgin. I'm *seven*" (Sapphire 39).

These descriptions are lucid, raw recollections of child abuse. Though Precious' father is saying anything to excuse his behavior, young Precious knows the act is wrong. Like Pecola's abuse from Cholly, in a small space, Precious also has a story of abuse from her father, but Sapphire's narrative extends the story of abuse, by assigning both parents as abusers.

Other Underrepresented Groups

Finally, Sapphire writes beyond Morrison's ending by incorporating pertinent elements from the Hip Hop culture that are representative of the decade and the struggles of other people of color. Morrison's text provides an array of characters, in Lorain, Ohio. These characters are mostly African American, except for the brief introductions to minor characters in the community. Since community building and the incorporation of communal voices are central to Morrison's writings, it is understandable that *The Bluest Eye* focuses largely on those narratives. However, Sapphire makes a prudent decision to incorporate other voices, both women of color and of different gender identities. These representations reflect the diverse representations in Precious' environment and in Hip Hop culture. For example, Precious recalls, "A big redbone girl, loud bug-out girl who find my notebook at chicken place, Spanish girl with light skin, then this brown-skin Spanish girl with light skin, and a girl my color in boy suit, look like some kinda butch" (Sapphire 43). The reader is privy to these girls' stories and Precious' perception of their circumstances. Since Precious has experienced her share of tortuous, emotional upheaval and abuse, it is equally enlightening to see a different set of experiences from other women in the same environment. This shows the reader that within this small, crowded, space, there are multi-layered traumas represented in each of these women's narratives. Sapphire brings these

issues to a common place, this place being an educational haven, not readily available in other texts. Pecola Breedlove, for example, has no such place to turn.

Conclusion

Sapphire writes beyond the ending Morrison provides, by incorporating more of the literal street and figurative street into the narrative, allowing Precious to narrate her experiences, unfiltered through another voice or narrator, and by incorporating pertinent elements from the Hip Hop culture that are representative of the decade and the struggles of other people of color. *The Bluest Eye* and PUSH are two texts in the same conversation, yet the authors set out to tell these stories in different ways. Viewing Morrison's text as a predecessor to Sapphire's text is helpful in looking at how these stories are linked. Pecola's and Precious' abuse is a defining experience in both characters' lives. Morrison's narrative technique utilizes Pecola's silence as a rhetorical strategy. Pecola does not speak, but other characters serve as voyeurs to Pecola's tragedy. Pecola's silence, while limiting in some places, is useful in others. Silence adds to the tragic nature of her story. She does this because it shifts the focus from Pecola's rape and uses other characters to reveal the circumstances, layer by layer, which constitute Pecola's tragedy. Pecola's inability to speak or react occasions Claudia, the critical voice, to step in as narrator. Through Claudia, the reader gains a critical perspective of the environment in which this abuse occurs. Morrison provides the reader with enough allusions to the rape that the reader can bring his or her own creative explanations to the text. While this allows for reader engagement on the most basic level, it limits the reader from having a personal relationship with Pecola. Moreover, Morrison's use of silence can be read as a deliberate strategy to prevent anyone from getting

closer to Pecola. For Morrison, it is unnecessary to have the entire town of Lorain, Ohio, discussing Pecola's abuse, and then follow up that story with Pecola's own iteration of said abuse. On the other hand, Sapphire's strategy is to skip the mediation.

PUSH is an example of writing beyond the ending because Pecola's story reappears in a new form, with Precious Jones. By reading this character as an extension of a previous character, critical analyses that are acceptable for Morrison's work can also be utilized in reading, critiquing, and engaging Sapphire's work. Morrison's bluesy way of depicting the Breedloves' tragedies is the same way in which Sapphire creates her characters, against a Hip Hop backdrop. What can be derived from both novels is that the decade and culture out of which each author writes directly impacts the characters' development, voices, and outcomes. Sapphire incorporates Hip Hop culture as a way of providing a backdrop for Precious' experiences. If one were to examine Morrison's other characters, particularly Claudia, there arises a nuanced way to think about how Claudia's narrative technique might function as an extension. Except, Precious could only be an extension of Claudia's voice if Claudia were articulating a personal account of abuse. Instead, Claudia is mediating Pecola's abuse. While Morrison does use Claudia to critique cultural, class, and racial differences, the reader misses out on a personal connection to Pecola. Claudia's mediation gives the reader a snapshot of Pecola's experience, but that snapshot is unfulfilling both for the reader and for Pecola's ending.

Finally, these two texts represent an opportunity to continue a literary tradition of expansion and inclusiveness in African American literature. Morrison's use of narrative technique does not make *The Bluest Eye* a narrative failure. What it shows is that there is an opportunity to give Pecola's narrative a rebirth through *PUSH*. Sapphire writes beyond

Morrison's ending by allowing Precious to give readers a firsthand account of her experiences. Through her narrations, readers witness life on the street from the perspective of a young, African American girl who suffers an enormous amount of abuse. Whereas *The Bluest Eye* is blues text about the sorrows of abuse, poverty, and the destruction of familial units, *PUSH* is a story of survival. Precious' story does not have the same murky ending that *The Bluest Eye* does because there is hope for Precious. Morrison's subject matter was taboo during the late 1960s. Incest, child rape, and other unspoken forms of abuse silently destroy the African American community. Morrison recognized the need for discussing these issues in literature. The same is the case for texts like Sapphire's *PUSH*. Her text, published in 1996, addresses the same issues, but she also incorporates awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, literacy struggles among people of color, and the effects of the crack epidemic. Instead of shying away from difficult subject mattershe makes it an opportunity to embrace texts that give readers pause; each decade or literary movement has its own set of challenges. Each generation faces its own set of cultural, social, racial, and economic concerns. Literature, whether traditional or contemporary, mirrors those experiences that are endemic in minority spaces. Expanding these literary conversations to include street literature ensures that diverse examples of African American girlhood and womanhood are part of critical conversations. It also makes plan the need for more contemporary voices in academic spaces. This is the only way to ensure that the literature continues to serve a purpose beyond that which is art for art's sake.

Notes

[2] Though Morrison's texts, not usually *The Bluest Eye*, are staples in curriculums, across the nation, there appears to be an arbitrary time where the courses end. One explanation for this is that it is impossible to cover all African American literature in one semester. However, there are ways to incorporate more culturally relevant texts into the curriculum. One way is to look for texts like Sapphire's *PUSH* that are contemporary, yet have similar themes as works like Morrison's.

[3] Here, I mean Morrison's commitment to community and ancestral ties into her works, as way of ensuring the sustainability of African American storytelling.

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Oxygen and Nitrogen: Breathing Room in Tony Harrison's *Square Rounds*

By James Fowler

While physics has occupied center stage in science-based theater over the past few generations (Shepherd-Barr 61), since the 1990s plays such as Tony Harrison's *Square Rounds* (1992) have raised the profile of chemical history.[1] Likewise, radioactive elements associated with nuclear weapons—uranium, plutonium—have an edge when it comes to fueling high-powered theater (e.g., Heinar Kipphardt's *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* or Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen*), but the work to be considered here has managed to generate dramatic heat from the common elements of atmospheric air: nitrogen and oxygen. Along with a number of other science-based plays, *Square Rounds* explores such matters as scientific ambition/compulsion, the potentially corrupting dynamics of research and application, gendered roles in the field, and the creative/destructive nature of humanity. More specifically, it points toward an ironic asphyxiation, literal and metaphoric, that has resulted from manipulation of basic gaseous elements. Ultimately, the play's audience can readily extend its wartime cautionary tale to the current climate crisis due to elemental transfers on a global scale.

Breathing figures prominently in *Square Rounds*. At the center stand the real-life German chemists Fritz and Clara Haber, a married couple divided over Fritz's commitment to developing gas weapons for the fatherland in World War I. The historical Clara denounced such work as a "perversion of the ideals of science" (qtd. in Dick). Undeterred,

her husband oversaw the German launch of chlorine gas at Ypres in April 1915. Less than two weeks later, in early May, Clara shot herself with his army pistol, likely for domestic as well as political reasons (Stoltzenberg 176).

Such an account is quite incomplete, doing justice neither to the original story nor to Harrison's unconventional treatment of it onstage.[2] Gillian Beer rightly remarks how this magic show of a pageant blends English pantomime, music-hall entertainment, and Peking opera (323, 330). The show's pantomimic quick changes climaxing in a flurry of magical stage business, coupled with long expository speeches on subject matter unfamiliar even to an educated audience, produced a total effect displeasing to critics. Richard Eyre refers to a general drubbing (46). One critic complained of "relentless striving after spectacle," with stage tricks repeated "*ad* bloody *nauseam*" (Shuttleworth). Another, more positive review criticized "passages where the only function of verse is to find ways of repeating the same point, and a notable shortage of identifiable characters," the Habers excepted (Wardle).

Partly in imitation of Haber, who occasionally wrote and even spoke in rhyme (Stoltzenberg 12; Beer 328), most of *Square Rounds* bounces along in deceptively light verse. Such doggerel with serious intent recalls Goethe's *Knüttelvers* in *Faust* (Wayne 21). The stylistic resemblance is apt given Fritz Haber's Faustian bargain with German authorities. A Jew by birth, though a nominal convert to Christianity, Haber served his country as an ardent patriot until glaringly anti-Semitic measures in the early 1930s finally made his position untenable. In general, whatever the play's performance issues, its literary strategies often appear just and historically resonant. As a play of ideas, it recalls Shavian practice. In its self-conscious theatricality and critique of capitalistic, colonial, and fascist forces squeezing the life-breath out of humans, it displays Brechtian flair (Spencer 129).

As indicated above, *Square Rounds* does not flinch from educating the audience on the chemical scene giving rise to its drama. The nineteenth-century German chemist Justus von Liebig recounts his warning that modern sanitation systems, flushing waste seaward, will cause soil depletion. Displacement of horses by automotive vehicles further exacerbated the problem.[3] To compensate, Liebig developed a method "for making fertilizer phosphates out of bone" (Harrison 12). Animal bone, that is. England, however, excavated Napoleonic and Crimean battlefields to replenish its farmlands, eerily revising the paean to Nature by Carlyle's professor Diogenes Teufelsdröckh in *Sartor Resartus*:

> Nevertheless, Nature is at work; neither shall these Powder-Devilkins with their utmost devilry gainsay her: but all that gore and carnage will be shrouded in, absorbed into manure; and next year the Marchfield will be green, nay greener. Thrifty unwearied Nature, ever out of our great waste educing some little profit of thy own,—how dost thou, from the very carcass of the Killer, bring Life for the Living! (133)

In addition to phosphates, however, nitrates would be needed to renew exhausted soil. Gas-works by-products, as well as guano and saltpeter from South America, were major sources of fixed nitrogen for fertilizers, but supplies would not be able to meet rising demand in the twentieth century (Stoltzenberg 77). The Linde process could isolate nitrogen from liquefied air (79). Haber's groundbreaking—ground-saving—innovation fixed or bound atmospheric nitrogen with hydrogen to produce ammonia (NH_3), from which fertilizers could be derived by oxidizing the ammonia and stabilizing the resultant nitric acid in the form of nitrate salts (86, 216). While Harrison's chemist pleads innocence of intent to his skeptical wife, the real Haber in 1910 wrote of "the extraordinary need for

bound nitrogen, mainly for agricultural purposes and to a much smaller extent for the explosives industry and the chemical industry" (90). Within four years, military needs would eclipse agricultural uses. Clara clinches the grim irony neatly:

> Nitrogen fixation giving ammonia NH_3
>
> [m]akes fertilizers, yes, but also TNT.
>
> Nitrogen as nitrates could make all Europe green
>
> [b]ut it blasts in even blacker as tri-ni-tro-to-lu-ene.
>
> The nitrogen you brought from way up high
>
> now blows the men you saved into the sky. (Harrison 27)

The ceremonial speech justifying Haber's 1918 Nobel Prize for chemistry "made no mention of its [his technique's] significance for the explosives industry, in which Nobel made his fortune"; the prize, after all, was intended for humanity's benefactors (Stoltzenberg 216).

Haber, however, saw himself in such a role, even when expanding war's arsenal. Chemical weapons were meant to break the stalemate of trench warfare and bring the fighting to a close—in Germany's favor, of course. The mechanical parity of the two sides otherwise only prolonged slaughter. This is where the American brothers Hudson and Hiram Maxim enter Harrison's theatrical panoply. Between them, they had provided the English with the explosive Maximite and the Maxim gun, the latter an effective rapid-fire weapon subsequently acquired by Germany. Hiram, who himself had lung problems, invented an inhaler called the Pipe of Peace, which came to be used by gassed soldiers. He did not, however, manage to find a way to protect them from gas in the first place. Of course, as the Haber of *Square Rounds* points out, the mechanical/chemical distinction is

misleading, given the chemical basis of rapid gas expansion in high explosives like TNT, and of gas-fed rounds in the Maxim gun.

> Without gas the Maxim gun could not exist
> and no need for me to counter his mechanics with my mist.
> The force of explosive gas that travels very very fast
> blows head and limbs off in its fearsome blast.
> It's a chemical weapon, chemicals and gas
> and yet the scruples of the moralist let that pass. (Harrison 43)

Even if Haber's rationalized defense is granted some credit, the fact remains that the introduction of chemical weapons only led to new escalation, a more diverse killing parity. After its first gas attack, the German army failed to press its advantage, partly because it was not equipped against its own diffusive weapon. The Haber of *Square Rounds* surmises that the German command did not want to rely on a second Jew—identified by Gillian Beer as Richard Wilstätter (325)—to supply the needed gas-mask technology.

In the ensuing chemical-weapons race, Haber supervised the development of mustard gas ($C_4H_8Cl_2S$), launched by the Germans at Ypres in July 1917 (Stoltzenberg 147). A year later, the French managed to produce the gas and use it extensively, leading to a shortage of gas-mask components (147). The Hague Convention of 1907 had outlawed the military use of poisons, so at war's end the Allies charged Haber with war crimes and sought his extradition, though they later dropped the action (150-51). Violating the Versailles Treaty, Haber then proceeded to collude with the German military in pursuing chemical-weapons development through secret arrangements with Spain and the Soviet Union, among other ploys (161-66). In service to humanity, though, he conducted a more

public campaign for improved pesticides. Dietrich Stoltzenberg among others has remarked the crowning irony of Haber's career:

It is indeed macabre and tragic that the Zyklon process [of delivering hydrogen cyanide] started in Haber's laboratory was used to kill countless Jews at Auschwitz and elsewhere during World War II. (235)

Or in the words of Clara Haber's ghost as she exits the auditorium trailed by her myopic husband, "He'll never live to see his fellow Germans use / his form of killing on his fellow Jews" (Harrison 52). Tadeusz Borowski, a Birkenau survivor who ultimately gassed himself using a household oven, mordantly quips how Zyklon-B "so excellently poisoned lice in clothing and people in gas chambers" (2773). Its effect when breathed is to prevent cellular use of oxygen ("Blood Agent"). Thus, the chief component of atmospheric air, nitrogen, compounded and delivered in a precise way, can obstruct the life-sustaining action of the secondary component, oxygen.[4]

Though *Square Rounds* traffics in the "macabre and tragic," it does so with a surface brightness and lightness, illustrating the kinship of levity and gravity. The exuberant rhyme— often perfect in couplets, sometimes oblique in quatrains—probably traces part of its lineage to Wilfred Owen's war poetry. Unlike Owen's prevailing pathos, however, here the tone veers toward farce and burlesque. Harrison is conscious of the balancing act he has to perform. In chemical terms, particularly the piece's dance between nitrogen and oxygen, Justus von Liebig and his dramatic sponsor must refrain from transforming modern horrors with the pantomimic equivalent of nitrous oxide (N_2O), laughing gas:

So I'll lay aside the Nitrous Oxide
our subject's too serious for that.

We need solemnity, awe, not manic guffaw

so no one must touch that top hat. (Harrison 16)

From the chemically magical top hats onstage waft various symbolic silks: black for nitrogen, white for oxygen, green for chlorine gas, yellow for sulfur or mustard gas, and unspecified colors for other airborne poisons. These bright hues recall the conversion of such substances as coal tar into synthetic dyes. The character Sir William Crookes praises his fellow Englishman, William Perkin, for pioneering this branch of "Redemptive chemistry" (19), but laments that his country has lost its lead to Germany. Consequences of this technical advantage were not just commercial but military, as "dye intermediates could be used for war materiel, particularly explosives and poison gas" (Stoltzenberg 141). So the scientific top hat that mainly seems to promise benefit by subtle sleight turns decoration into asphyxiation. As Luke Spencer observes, "Throughout the play science is represented as an at first beguiling, then increasingly terrifying conjuring trick, with explosives, poison gas and guns pulled from the hat more often and more decisively than fertilizers, inhalers and synthetic dyes" (127).

Rivalry between England and Germany gives focus to the drama's anticolonial stance. Harrison, of working-class origin, frequently critiques the imperial impulse in his poetry as well. Here Hiram Maxim, an American knighted by England for supplying his machine gun, praises an English predecessor:

James Puckle first solved how a chamber revolved

and achieved a sustained rate of fire.

In 1718 he made a machine

that killed two ways lower and higher. (Harrison 33)

That is, Puckle devised two projectiles, a round one for Christian enemies, and a more damaging square one for Muslims. This religious discrimination would involve racial aggression by the late nineteenth century as imperial nations sought to pacify restless natives through superior firepower. In brother Hudson's phrasing, "The gun seemed to need a 'lesser breed' / . . . and the Maxim floored the fuzzy horde" (36). By the Great War, however, racial privileges are revoked as both sides hurl whatever they have or can invent at one another in a paroxysm of mass killing—hence, fertilization. Playing freely on its title, Harrison's work figures the antagonists as squaring off, seeking to get square, or even, in arms escalation, then futilely trying to win the next round of battle (6, 37, 54). The theater of war is squared exponentially.

In the process, women did not sit passively on the sidelines. Large numbers in England, for example, worked in factories and munitions plants. Sweeper Mawes, plant janitor, tells the audience, "You'll see women doing roles they've never done before" (3). The sense is double: women played all but three roles in the National Theatre debut of *Square Rounds*. Sandie Byrne's claim that the piece "valoris[es] the female as the peace-maker" (76) might seem odd in light of the Munitionette chorus, their hands stained with Maximite, their mouths filled with the refrain, "TRI-NI-TRO-TO-LU-ENE" (Harrison 29). The production's programme even noted how women patented an array of military gear during the war (Beer 327). So females, by and large, do not constitute a chorus of mournful Trojan women in this modern, ironic spin on tragedy. Still, Gillian Beer seems correct in saying that Harrison does not merely intend "to accuse women of complicity" (327). Most women, like most men of the period, would have marched to a nationalistic, patriarchal drumbeat in time of war. In figures like Clara Haber, though, and the female "war-

resisters" (Harrison 32) reviled by the hawk Hudson Maxim, we sense an emergent but still stifled corrective to the boys'-club mentality entrenched in the halls of science and government. Even had Clara not sacrificed her career to that of Fritz Haber, she would have found it hard going in the German chemistry ranks.

At the height of his hubris, Haber (also played by a woman) boasts of being "The Prospero of poisons, the Faustus of the front" (49). For Ariel, who can raise a tempest on command, he has his own cloud-concocting skills. He is a modern master of elements; the original Haber was so sure of his science that he undertook to extract gold from seawater, the old alchemical trick (Beer 329-30). But this magician will not drown or burn his book. Outside the bounds of Harrison's spotlight, he will merely drift between countries after the Nazi agenda makes work in the fatherland intolerable.

Toward show's end a Chinese magician appears from a pagoda as part of a presto Chinese festival. He reminds the audience that his nation pioneered much of the weapons technology—gunpowder, rocket launching—upon which the West plumes itself. As "rockets fly faster and higher," he poses the question whether doves that his people attached to incendiaries might start to be freed "from the fire" (Harrison 61). Pulling that Aristotelian element from a top hat, he launches it as a bird "into 1992," the present for Harrison's opening-night audience (61). The nuclear overtone of the fire-bird is evident. If escalation cannot somehow be transformed into disarmament, civilization may go the way of all waste. The company vanishes, the pagoda explodes like a firecracker, and in its place stands a toilet cabin that has doubled as a vanishing cabinet throughout the performance. The last thing we hear is "a thunderous flush in which are the sounds, the drowned sounds, of the whole play in recall" (61).

Besides adumbrating nuclear threat and the continued use of poison gas, the play casts a long shadow on seemingly beneficial technologies that undergird our agricultural, energy, and transport systems, among others. For instance, there is a movement afoot to lessen dependence on nitrogen fertilizers, partly because nitrogen runoff damages waterways, causing oxygen-depleting algae blooms that effectively asphyxiate fish. These fertilizers also cause soil microbes to ramp up the release of nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas and ozone depleter (Sanders). Another forecasting line of thought goes as follows: artificial fertilizers spur increased crop production; enlarged food supplies support a steadily growing, but increasingly unsustainable, human population; in the modern petrochemical scheme of things, more people produce higher levels of greenhouse gases; resulting temperature hikes decrease grain yields; scientists respond with further genetic modification of crops (Weisman 2H).

The artificial nitrogen cycle (i.e., nitrogen chemically transferred from the atmosphere to the ground and, subsequently, water) has for complement the modern massive transfer of such elements as lead, sulfur, and, most significantly, carbon, from the earth into the air. Whereas dinosaurs were the hapless victims of their abruptly changing climate, humans have created the greenhouse conditions that will increasingly stress their well-being. The strangling or asphyxiating motif traced throughout this discussion applies as well to humanly habitable space, as rising sea levels produced by melting polar ice put a squeeze on coastal areas.

Science continues to synthesize its own chemical cycles, partly in imitation of those found in Nature, such as nitrogen-fixing by legumes, or the carbon cycle that symbiotically bonds plant and animal life.[5] So extensive and dramatic is this technological shifting of

elements that the very atmosphere has passed the tipping point of climate change. Those who see science as white magic await a new Haber who can remove surplus greenhouse gases from above and fix them below like some penned Caliban.[6] Or perhaps a future alchemy will alter them at the atomic level. Others with a yin/yang view of human endeavor find solutions and problems linked in a tangled chain, or joined at the same spine.

Notes

[1] See also Shelagh Stephenson's *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1998) and Carl Djerassi and Roald Hoffmann's *Oxygen* (2001) for their treatment of pneumatic chemistry.

Of course, borders between scientific fields can be quite permeable. As the physicist Richard Feynman observes, "Quantum mechanics . . . supplied the theory behind chemistry. So, fundamental theoretical chemistry is really physics" (*QED* 5). Later he explains that most phenomena, including chemical reactions, are the result of electron and photon exchanges (114). However, while "exploding dynamite is a rearrangement of the electron patterns . . . an exploding atomic bomb is a rearrangement of the proton-neutron patterns" (132).

[2] For a somewhat more realistic treatment of Haber's career, see Vern Thiessen, *Einstein's Gift* (2003). His postscript distinguishing fact from dramatic reconstruction may remind readers of the lengthy, tangled debate between Michael Frayn and his critics over truth claims for *Copenhagen*.

[3] Tim Armstrong cites the fact that in London between 1905 and 1911, seven thousand public-transport horses disappeared "with their steaming bodies and flowing waste" (149-50). Numerous others would be recruited for the killing fields of World War I.

[4] Nitrogen has its uses in the human body. Bacteria aids in converting ingested nitrogen into nucleotides and amino acids; the body also synthesizes the toxin nitric oxide in trace amounts to facilitate blood circulation and ward off pathogens (Bryson 380, 468).

[5] There is also a long-term carbon cycle in which small marine organisms extract that element from the CO_2 dissolved in rain water to build their shells, which are eventually

compacted into limestone. At length this stored carbon reenters the atmosphere through volcanic activity (Bryson 332).

[6] A Swiss company has recently demonstrated that it may be economically feasible to capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, dissolve it in water, and inject the soda solution underground, where the CO_2 becomes fixed as a mineral in basalt rock (Rathi).

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From Ingolstadt to New Orleans: Dystopian Visions in Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Koontz's Frankenstein Series

By John J. Han

Introduction

Dystopia is a futuristic, imagined society characterized by chaos, monstrosity, and oppression. It is "a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segments of society" (Gordon, Tilley, and Prakash 1). Although portrayals of such a society tend to be hyperbolic, dystopian fiction throws light on how this world can become nightmarish through various types of control—corporate, political, technological, philosophical, and religious. Many dystopian novels, also called apocalyptic novels, portray a supposedly ideal society that turns out to be the opposite. Those who propagate dystopia claim to have—or believe that they act on—altruistic motives, but those motives turn out to be false.

This essay compares Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (the first edition published in 1818; the second edition published in 1822; the third edition published in 1831)[1] and the five books in Dean Koontz's Frankenstein series (2004-11) as dystopian novels in which the authors portray the excesses of technological experimentations. These texts are comparable in their plots, which revolve around a mad scientist—Victor Frankenstein in Shelley's novel and Victor Helios Frankenstein in Koontz's series—and his

creature or creatures. More importantly, the two authors' novels portray a nightmarish world created by technological advancements and a human desire to play God.

Admittedly, Shelley and Koontz are comparable only in a limited sense. Classified as a Gothic novel, horror fiction, and science fiction, *Frankenstein* is a classic masterpiece open to multiple interpretations; in the words of Christopher Small, the book is "startlingly new to every fresh generation of readers" (13). In contrast, Koontz's Frankenstein novels are popularly oriented, largely one-dimensional stories in which the line between good and evil is clearly drawn and many passages not integral to the plot are included for their entertainment value. Despite these differences, Koontz borrows the basic plot of Shelley's novel and continues her story in a contemporary American setting. Also, similar to Shelley's story, his fiction is imbued with moral and religious critique, although his critique tends to be less subtle than Shelley's. This essay approaches both authors' works as philosophical novels—novels of ideas—in their emphasis on moral imperatives.

Faustian Aspirations and Playing God: Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Shelley's *Frankenstein* chronicles a young scientist's invention of a monster and its horrific aftermath, which includes the loss of five innocent lives. After his appeals for an Eve-like helpmate are denied, the Monster kills four people close to Victor Frankenstein: William Frankenstein, Justine, Henry, and Elizabeth. The fifth victim—Victor's father—dies of shock and despair.

When Victor Frankenstein envisions a new creature, he primarily seeks personal fame and glory. In his pursuit of unlimited knowledge, he is reminiscent of Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, who sells his soul to Lucifer for knowledge, power, and earthly pleasure. The hideous appearance of the Monster and possible dominance of the human race by his offspring make Victor refuse to create a female companion for his creature.

Despite its repugnant appearance, Shelley's monster is not inherently evil. Rather, he elicits sympathy from the reader—he has good intentions, is warm-hearted, and wants to be accepted and loved by humans. He is willing to leave the human society if Victor creates a female companion for him, but the Monster's request is ultimately denied. When his good intentions toward humanity are not reciprocated, the Monster acts on his violent impulses. Victor inexplicably refuses to create the Monster's helpmate, although, as a brilliant scientist, he could have produced one without a reproductive organ. Victor is intelligent enough to predict how an enraged, vengeful monster can harm his loved ones, especially his wife, but he fails to take preventive measures as well. The characterization of Victor appears to be a flaw, but his remorse is evident throughout the novel.

As a moral story, *Frankenstein* reveals the danger of playing God. Victor's repeated expressions of remorse are a testament to the author's moral intent. The author's introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* explains how she came to write the novel. As Shelley was brainstorming for her story in Switzerland, she imagined a presumptuous scientist and his hideous, ungodly creation. "The effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world" would be "supremely frightful," she recalls (Shelley, "Author's Introduction" viii). In Chapter 2, Victor confesses to Robert Walton—the frame narrative—his youthful desire to master the mysteries of the world

through all means. For him, "[t]he world was […] a secret which [he] desired to divine"; he wanted to solve "the secrets of heaven and earth" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 18, 19).

In Chapter 4, Victor admonishes Robert Walton on the dangers of overstepping the boundaries set for humans as he pursues knowledge: "Learn from me […] how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 31). Shelley makes Victor her mouthpiece as he acknowledges on his deathbed the grave mistake of usurping God's authority.

Many dystopian novels reveal the deceptiveness of a seemingly paradisiacal society. In Shelley's novel, Victor envisions a future devoid of death. In his bold, Byronic ambition, he poses himself as a benefactor of humanity—just like Prometheus whom Shelley alludes to in the subtitle of the novel. In Chapter 4, Victor reveals that he decided to create life out of corpse parts because of his desire to challenge the power of physical death itself, which in turn would benefit humanity in general. He says, "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 32). In Chapter 9, he also explains that initially the thought of the beneficial effects of his scientific experimentation excited him greatly: "[My] heart overflowed with kindness and the love of virtue. I had begun life with benevolent intentions and thirsted for the moment when I should put them in practice and make myself useful to my fellow beings" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 61). Like Prometheus, Victor challenged the unchallengeable, thereby causing a disaster. The succeeding deaths of his loved ones leave Victor remorseful and guilt-ridden; he falls victim to what he calls "a hell of intense tortures such as no language can describe" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 61).

Victor was a promising scientist who sought knowledge through vainglory, but he also desired to help his fellow humans by finding ways to overcome death. As a philosophical novel, *Frankenstein* shows how pursuit of an unlimited amount of knowledge can be dangerous. Like Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, who forfeits his soul ensnared by his desire for earthly glory, Victor succumbs to the sweet temptations of knowledge which are illustrated prototypically by the Genesis account of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He rationalized his action in the name of the advancement of humanity, yet he failed to realize that what seems good to humanity is not always good.

Nietzschean Will to Power: Technological Dystopia in Koontz's Frankenstein Series

The five books in Koontz's Frankenstein series—*Prodigal Son*, co-written with Kevin J. Anderson, 2004; *City of Night*, co-written with Ed Gorman, 2005; *Dead and Alive*, 2009; *Lost Souls*, 2010; and *The Dead Town*, 2011—continue Shelley's *Frankenstein* in an American setting. As a committed Roman Catholic, Koontz deals in these novels with the struggle between good and evil in his fiction, and the Frankenstein series clearly portrays a dystopian world created by the combination of the high tech and moral depravity.

At the end of Shelley's novel, Victor Frankenstein dies. His monster drowns himself in the cold ocean, and he is "soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 166). In Koontz's Frankenstein series, Victor Frankenstein revives as Victor Helios Frankenstein; he is now 240 years old. The original monster survives as Deucalion. His appearance is hideous: one side of his face is "ruined," his hands

look great and "brutal," and his body has "keloid scars, the enduring welts from primitive metal sutures, the strange excrescences" (Koontz, *Prodigal Son* 8). He made a living by working freak shows in America before he decided to live in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Hearing that Victor is still alive, he returns to America to thwart—and successfully thwarts—the scientist's designs for a technologically oppressive world.

Unlike Shelley's penitent scientist, Koontz's Victor Helios embodies what Friedrich Nietzsche calls the will to power (*der Wille zur Macht*). The German philosopher discredits the traditional Christian conception of morality. Instead of compassion for the weak and oppressed, he champions the powerful, the strong, and the ambitious—those who have the will to power and thus are able to move human history forward. As a Nietzschean superman (*Übermensch*), Victor Helios is intent on destroying the existing imperfect human race ("the Old Race") and replacing it with "the New Race"—a "posthuman, improved, superior" race suitable for a New Age. He has created at least 2,000 members of the New Race who now roam the streets as ordinary citizens. These "newly minted men and women" are designed to become "the new rulers of the Earth" (Koontz, *Prodigal Son* 155). They exist to glorify Victor Helios and to accomplish his goals of ruling the world, colonizing other planets, and owning the universe. In his planned "war against ordinary humanity," Victor Helios trains his creatures in a way that instills a sense of superiority, makes them disregard moral imperatives, and act ruthlessly (Koontz, *Prodigal Son* 140). Not surprisingly, one of his creations, Roy Pribeaux, exquisitely removes body parts—such as legs, hands, ears, and kidneys—from his murder victims in New Orleans so that he can create a perfect woman.

When he appears for the first time in *Prodigal Son*, Victor Helios is portrayed as a devil incarnate who knows no remorse. Victor Helios does not want to repeat his failure as in Shelley's novel. He is a sexual sadist who creates wife after wife for sexual gratification. He currently lives with Erika IV, who is better than—meaning more submissive—than the previous Erikas. "Because pleasure and power were synonymous to him, the intensity of his satisfaction was directly proportional to the cruelty with which he used her. He was often *very* satisfied" (Koontz, *Prodigal Son* 139). The problem is that Erika IV shows signs of independent thinking which is dangerous in Victor Helios's dystopian world. As she reads Emily Dickinson's poems and Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, she learns the charms of human civilization and begins to question the veracity of the world she lives in.

A cold-hearted man of reason and logic, Victor Helios disdains religious faith, especially Christianity. He scorns those who seek meaning and pursue a life of simple faith. He looks forward to the day when genocide will have annihilated all believers. Victor Helios's inspiration comes from Hitler, whom he considers his "patron and dear friend"; according to Victor Helios, "the much-misunderstood and dreadfully witty Hitler […] was tragically brought to grief by the ignorant masses, by greedy capitalists, by voracious bankers, and by religious fanatics" (Koontz, *Dead and Alive* 172). As a philosophical materialist, Victor Helios does not recognize a spiritual dimension of life; he believes that "[t]he only rational response to the forces of nature and of human civilization [is] to attempt to dominate them rather than be humbled by them" (Koontz, *Prodigal Son* 138).

Victor Helios is vulnerable to challenges from his disgruntled creatures, especially Deucalion, his original monster. Assisted by homicide detectives Carson O'Connor and Michael Maddison, Deucalion delivers a fatal blow to Victor Helios in Book 3, *Dead and*

Alive. Victor Helios's attempts to replace Christianity with a new religion—a religion devoid of mystery—miserably fail. Surprisingly, Victor Helios clones himself, producing Victor Leben, who continues to struggle against humanity in Book 4, *Lost Souls*. Victor Leben becomes Victor Immaculate in Book 5, *The Dead Town*; this time Deucalion removes his evil creator from the face of the earth for good.

Conclusion

Shelley's novel and Koontz's Frankenstein series similarly reveal a technological dystopia. They portray both an abuse of technology and the evilness of the human heart. Shelley and Koontz are also similar in their moral intent. They see technological abuse from a moral and religious perspective. As works of technological and philosophical dystopia, Shelley's and Koontz's stories sound hyperbolic, yet they describe might happen in the future. It is a well-known secret that scientists can potentially create life out of non-life. According to a 2011 article in *The New York Times*,

> a handful of chemists and biologists […] are using the tools of modern genetics to try to generate the Frankensteinian spark that will jump the gap separating the inanimate and the animate. The day is coming, they say, when chemicals in a test tube will come to life.

> By some measures, Gerald F. Joyce, a professor at the Scripps Research Institute [in San Diego], has already crossed that line, although he would be the first to say he has not — yet. (Overbye)

Meanwhile, in a 2010 research article published in *Science* magazine, "Creation of a Bacterial Cell Controlled by a Chemically Synthesized Genome," Daniel G. Gibson and colleagues reported on the creation of a synthetic cell through transplanting digitized genome sequence information into an *M. capricolum* recipient cell. The co-authors closed the article by addressing the moral and ethical implications of their research: "We have been driving the ethical discussion concerning synthetic life from the earliest stages of this work […]. As synthetic genomic applications expand, we anticipate that this work will continue to raise philosophical issues that have broad societal and ethical implications. We encourage the continued discourse" (56). Scholarly reactions to the research were divided. Kenneth Oye, a political science professor at M.I.T., was not sure about "the long-term benefits and long-terms risks" involving the construction of artificial life (qtd. in Macre). Other scholars expressed concern over the moral implications of the research. According to Julian Savulescu, a bioethicist at the University of Oxford, Gibson and his co-authors are "not merely copying life artificially or modifying it by genetic engineering"; rather, they are "going towards the role of God: Creating artificial life that could never have existed" (qtd. in Macre).

It is clear that technological advancements have reached the point where humans have the potential to create life—a realm that has been confined only to God in the biblical metanarrative. Shelley's and Koontz's dystopian novels offer a window into a hypothetical

society that seems perfect but is miserably imperfect, a society controlled by all-powerful technology. The two authors do not simply portray anti-utopian societies. Rather, they use fiction as an instrument for conveying their moral visions. In the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Shelley recalls the unsettling emotions she experienced while envisioning her fictional monster: "I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion" (Shelley, "Author's Introduction" viii). Not surprisingly, Shelley makes Victor Frankenstein regret his sin of playing God: "I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body, but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 35). Koontz's "good guys" beat "bad guys," which reflects his Christian view of history: human history begins with the fall of Adam and Eve and ends with Christ's destruction of satanic forces. As he writes in his novel *Relentless* (2009), "Evil itself may be relentless, I will grant you that, but love is relentless, too. Friendship is a relentless force. Family is a relentless force. Faith is a relentless force" (356). Koontz's Frankenstein series exemplifies his faith in higher power and in the human spirit.

Note

[1] Some scholars consider the 1818 edition of the novel more trustworthy than the 1831 edition, in which Mary Shelley supposedly moralizes the story so that it can sound more acceptable to her conservative audience. In this essay, we will use the 1831 edition, the most widely published version today.

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Delta Ghosts in Steve Yarbrough's *Visible Spirits*

By Linda McDaniel

In his 2001 novel, *Visible Spirits*, Steve Yarbrough revives or references episodes from the antebellum, Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras that occurred in and around Indianola, Mississippi, the author's hometown. The plot focuses on a version of the "post office affair" that began in 1902 during which white townspeople forced the resignation of the black postmaster; flashbacks and confrontations connect this central conflict to other more violent attacks on African Americans. Yarbrough's treatment of events anticipates recent changes in the historical novel. For instance, Peter Boxall examines works about the past in his *Twenty-First-Century Fiction*. The critic's description of approaches after the postmodern period can apply also to *Visible Spirits*: "With the new century . . . there has emerged . . . a fresh awareness of the reality of the past, and of our ethical obligation to bear witness to it" (12). While Boxall goes on to examine in later chapters how recent novels have dealt with the relationship between democracy and national sovereignty, Yarbrough's second novel examines the relationship between democracy and white sovereignty. In his fictional adaptations of parallel historical events, Yarbrough explores the continued effects of slavery and Jim Crow on people's lives and identities. His narrative demonstrates that inequities and abuse turn not only the dead, but the living into ghosts or "remnants" of themselves.

The novel opens with accounts of earlier events from the past still haunting people in 1902 Loring, Mississippi, Yarbrough's fictionalized Indianola. The central characters

include the African American postmaster, Loda Jackson, and her husband Seaborn, a prosperous insurance salesman and businessman, silent part-owner of the Rosenthal General Store. Loda grew up on the plantation with Sam Payne's two sons. After their father's death, the Payne brothers sold the six thousand acre farm. With his share, Leighton founded a newspaper and built a big house in town; when the narrative begins, he is editor of the paper and mayor of Loring. His younger brother Tandy gambled his inheritance away in three days on a riverboat and now, several years later, has returned to Loring with empty pockets. Tandy Payne will use an encounter at the post office with Blueford Lucas, a black porter who does not step aside in deference, as a pretext for circulating a petition to run Loda from office in order to take her job for himself.

Yarbrough took cues for his plot from historical materials, but as Robert Penn Warren did in *All the King's Men,* changed to names and scenes that allowed for creative latitude. In the acknowledgment at the back of the book, Yarbrough lists titles of his background reading (275-76), including *Theodore Roosevelt and the Art of Controversy* in which historian Willard B. Gatewood documents the plight of Mrs. Minnie Cox. Appointed first by Benjamin Harrison, she qualified, as a Fiske University graduate, for the position of postmaster when no local white Republicans did. William McKinley, then Theodore Roosevelt reappointed her when a Republican administration came back into power after Democrat Grover Cleveland's term (62-67). Of course, in Mississippi, the Democrats, at that time the party of white conservatives, had in 1875 voted the party they regarded as Black Republicans, scalawags, and carpetbaggers out of office and had reclaimed the state (Foner 134). Many southern whites viewed Republican Theodore Roosevelt with disdain and outrage for inviting Booker T. Washington to dinner at the White House and for

appointing African Americans to federal positions like postmaster (Gatewood 32-35). Thus, such figures as the Indianola mayor's "impoverished brother-in-law" and, eventually, the race-baiting politician James K. Vardaman would rail against Minnie Cox's handling white people's mail; and both would push hard to drive her from office (Gatewood 68-69). The mayor's brother-in-law, A. B. Weeks, succeeded in turning a "mass meeting" against her (68-72); and, in Roosevelt's words, "the mob then notified the colored postmistress that she must at once resign her office" (qtd. in Gatewood 62).

In *Visible Spirits*, Yarbrough elaborates another event that took place in Indianola around the same time. A black porter employed in Cohn's Brooklyn Bridge Store had allegedly shown a "discourteous" attitude toward a white saleswoman who also worked there (Gatewood 71). Meetings to run the accused man out of town provided the venue for Weeks to denounce the black "postmistress" and to circulate a petition for her removal. Yarbrough would join the situations of the two accused African Americans for the purposes of his narrative.

After learning of the plans to remove her from office, Mrs. Cox, apparently a discerning and judicious woman wrote a letter of resignation to the President, who sent two representatives to investigate the situation. Though the one in Jackson recommended that Roosevelt "stand by Minnie Cox," the postal inspector feared for her safety if she remained in office and recommended that Roosevelt close the post office after the intimidation and threats continued despite the president's support for her. Finally, Roosevelt ordered the Indianola post office closed and the mail routed to Greenville, thirty miles away. Rather than accept the continued exemplary work of a postmaster appointed by three presidents, the opposing whites pooled their money and hired an elderly ex-Confederate soldier and a

black man to haul the mail by wagon over country roads to and from Greenville (Gatewood 76-77).

As Yarborough's including it implies, even the story of Theodore Roosevelt's most famous bear hunt would have connections with the Indianola post office affair and the mistreatment of African Americans. Historically, Roosevelt had made the journey to Mississippi in November of 1902 not only for a hunting break, but for political considerations. For this particular bear hunt, Governor Andrew Longino had invited Roosevelt down for support before a rough election campaign looming against James K. Vardaman, avowed white supremacist, who would exploit the Indianola conflict in his "vulgar," racist editorials and speeches to defeat the moderate Democratic incumbent (Gatewood 84-85). The president's vacation proved disappointing. At the end of the hunt, TR's legendary refusal to shoot the bear made the news. He had told the guide to put the injured and suffering bear, captured and bound to a tree for the president to shoot, out of its misery. A political cartoon in the *Washington Post* depicted the scene over the caption, "Crossing the Line in Mississippi." The drawing showed the mighty hunter refusing to shoot a small bear cub the size of a pet held by a rope tied around its neck, a reference to the continued lynching of African Americans, condemned by Roosevelt, but tolerated by too many southerners. The pictorial commentary inspired a New York toymaker to create a stuffed animal, the "Teddy Bear," in honor of TR's sportsmanship (Brinkley 438-42).

Yarbrough introduces an invented scene in Greenville as prelude to the bear hunt and as a way to contrast views of the Indianola conflict. A fictional Senator Hale and a brass band welcome Roosevelt as he arrives by rail in Greenville, where Leighton Payne has also traveled hoping to speak to the president about ways of mollifying factions in

Indianola. However, a bodyguard blocks Leighton's access. Their confrontation allows for the bodyguard's outsider views of the racial tensions in the state. After the bear hunt, Leighton tries to interpret a picture in the paper. The photograph shows the hunting party standing by a dead bear lying on the ground with its "paws tied," and the president with a look maybe of "revulsion or dismay or plain old-fashioned surprise." The newspaper reports that in his refusal to shoot the injured bear, Roosevelt had said, "I just don't need to kill anything that badly" (167-73).

Visible Spirits includes references to other episodes in the history of the Delta not so well known as the famous bear hunt. For instance, Seaborn Jackson's father, a physician in Carrollton, had gone to a trial at the Carroll County Courthouse. He explained that he had to go, "to bear witness," despite warnings to African Americans to stay away, since two black men "had charged a white man with attempted murder" (63). Dr. Jackson escaped the Carroll County Courthouse Massacre with his life and a broken leg by jumping out of a second story window after a gang of white men rode into town on horseback, burst into the courtroom, and started firing. Ten black men died at the scene of the crime (*Visible Spirits* 63).

For decades, few seemingly knew or spoke of the historical violence that had occurred at the Carroll County Courthouse Massacre. The actual tragedy occurred in 1886 when ten African Americans were shot to death on the spot during the trial, with thirteen more dying later from their gunshot wounds or falls from high windows in the second-story courtroom. No one was ever indicted or even charged. Writing in 1947, Vernon Lane Wharton reports the Carrollton killings in *The Negro in Mississippi* (223-24); and Carroll County native Elizabeth Spencer would "bear witness" to the massacre in her 1956 novel,

The Voice at the Back Door. However, since she did not know any specific context or dates, she depicted the violent courthouse scenes in a post-World War I setting. As Sally Greene explains, "Though the bullet holes in the courtroom were not covered over for decades, the rest of the story disappeared" (332). About the actual event, Spencer learned more details—like the date and background—only in the1990s. She would explain in an email that her mother "had discouraged her from asking the local newspaper editor about it, for fear of hurting the woman's feelings" (Greene 348). The author's gradual comprehension of the violent scene provides a curious real-life example of Yarbrough's method and theme in *Visible Spirits*.

Yarbrough's characters also react to yet another unremembered massacre even closer to home, on Sam Payne's aptly named plantation. As Postal Inspector Meadows gradually figures out, "something bad happened" out at the Deadening, but he "can't find out what it was" (140). Early on, of course, slavery and its abuses had "happened" out there. Leighton and others recall throughout the narrative the tyrannical cruelties of his father: Sam Payne had abused his wife and concubine and had treated his slaves worse than livestock. For instance, in one scene recalled by Leighton, his father forced ninety slaves to immerse themselves in a "reeking" creosote dip after the horses had endured an earlier bath in the same chemical mixture. Yarbrough has provided his source for the passage: "As a side note, the episode in which black people are forced into a creosote pit was something my father witnessed first-hand—in 1938, no less" (Email). The subsequent owner of the failing farm, Ephraim Barnes, wants to get rid of the deteriorating seventeen-room house and the polluted land. He complains to Tandy about "a hellacious bad smell hovering around" the

place (85) and people's reluctance to talk about past happenings there. A conspiracy of silence or forgetfulness seems to surround a terrible event.

Veiled abstruse references to graves and dead people link some kind of tragedy to a Dr. Sellers, a black preacher, who rode around the country recruiting freed families—first to follow him west to Kansas in 1878 (201-04). Many so-called Exodusters did migrate during that time from Mississippi to found communities in Kansas (Wharton 112; Painter 184-87). Then in *Visible Spirits*, in 1880 Sellers returned to persuade hungry black tenant farmers and field hands to follow him to "the promised land" of Liberia in Africa, where they allegedly could establish their own colony and live in real freedom. Wharton briefly reports efforts of a black recruiter around that time: "Through the river counties in 1878 went a Negro called Dr. Collins." In a year of dismal crop failures, he went about persuading the blacks to leave and catch the boat to Africa: "With frenzied oratory, he told the laborers of a great mass migration that they were to make into the wonderful land of Liberia, where food grew on trees and no one would have to work" (113). The fictional narrative thus links Yarbrough's Dr. Sellers to a Dr. Collins and to the great Exodus of 1879 when white planters had to face an alarming, bankrupting shortage of laborers (Cobb 82-83; Painter 140-41). The reader of the novel has to patch together scraps of conversations and characters' memories to guess that one day as Dr. Sellers led about fifty men, women, and children across a piece of land owned by Sam Payne, armed white men had attacked and killed them.

Only late in the novel does Leighton Payne, who had witnessed the killings on his father's land, tell the whole of the horror story to the postal inspector. When the planters and overseers had charged on horseback, they shot and killed several of the black men. After the attackers had wounded and tied up Dr. Sellers, Sam Payne himself slit the

preacher's throat with a razor. The rest of the black men, women, and children ran to shelter in a former landowner's house, built on stilts to protect it from rising flood waters. The planters' overseers piled brush under the house, torched it, shot anyone trying to escape. Sam Payne counted fifteen dead on the ground, and nobody could say how many perished in the flames (213-23). When Leighton finishes the "horrific story," Meadows says, with tears I his eyes, "So . . . you just go on and live as if none of it ever occurred?" As a kind of ghost himself, Leighton replies: "I wouldn't call what we do around here living" (224).

Although Wharton and others have briefly reported several massacres and/or riots that occurred during the period, dates and circumstances do not quite mesh with the atrocities covered in the novel on Sam Payne's plantation in 1880. Wharton notes that "dozens" of race "riots" took place in Mississippi between 1865 and 1890. Around twenty of these clashes brought about the deaths of "more than two hundred blacks" and "some seven or eight whites" (221). James C. Cobb includes accounts of conflicts that occurred not far from Indianola, in Sunflower County or across the line into Leflore County. Just over a decade before the 1880 date in the novel, a black politician, William T. Combash, led about twenty men toward Greenwood. When whites blocked their march, he threatened to return with five hundred more men. A skirmish followed (Cobb 62). Yarbrough mentions Combash in another publication and notes that the event took place in Sunflower County in 1869 and that Combash "was later killed when Adelbert Ames, the Reconstruction governor, sent troops to quell the disturbance" (Introduction 10). The student has to sort through various accounts about the number of dead and the manner of Combash's death.[1] Yarbrough basically follows Cobb, who also records another event near Indianola that took

place twenty years later, in 1889, when black "organizer" Oliver Cromwell led a group of armed African American farmers; and "a posse of local whites apparently killed as many as twenty-five blacks" (Cobb 85). Queried about his likely source for the killings in the novel, Steve Yarbrough replied that "the episode is based" on "the Combash rebellion"; according to the author, "There was little or no information about the circumstances of the massacre" (Email). The Combash episode, however, apparently did not involve a conflagration. Though lynching mobs often burned bodies (Cobb 113), no examples of multiple live burnings appear in sources consulted. Besides the fictional characters with resemblances to Dr. Collins and William Combash, basically the massacre at the Deadening combines the wide variety of brutalities and crimes committed against African Americans during that era.

In *Visible Spirits*, it is memories of the suppressed and repressed atrocities at the Deadening that haunt various characters. In a long complaint about why he wants to get away from the place, Ephraim Barnes introduces the subject of local Delta ghosts. The present owner has heard what he calls blacks' "narrations about all kinds of folks being dead" (83). He wonders about other graves on the land that do not belong to the family. He says, "[D]on't nobody seem to want to talk about them, save one or two old niggers, and you know how they get to rollin' their eyes" and going on "about hobgoblins and whatnot" (85).

The author introduces one of the hobgoblins and ghosts in the scene following this conversation. Bessie, a former slave, tells Loda, "Bell been around here again." The elderly invalid describes how Bell comes in through the window that goes "flat black for two or three seconds" as the ghost moves through it. Bessie tells Loda, "He don't never say nothing. Just stand by the bed. And you can't tell if it's him being dead that make him

quiet or if it's just because he never like to say much anyway, even back when he was alive" (93).

The narrative suggests that the living too can turn into the walking dead. For instance, after Sam Payne shot Bessie's son Markham in the back as he tried to escape the massacre, Bessie had crumpled to the ground: "Anybody with eyes could see she was dead, too, that she was nothing more than a corpse which somehow had remained upright" (220). The novel also includes a story of Jewish persecution in the Old World. Rosenthal tells how his uncle was dragged out of his house near Warsaw after a Gentile child disappeared; before the boy reappeared unharmed later, the "goyim" mob tortured, mutilated, and killed the uncle. The grocer says his aunt never spoke after that: "She was not exactly dead herself, but neither could you say she was living" (155). The passages remark how the trauma of violence kills off parts of the survivors' personalities.

As he develops the gothic violence-and-ghosts motifs, the author also examines the effects of white sovereignty on each central character's sense of identity. In his study, *The Historical Novel*, Jerome de Groot discusses the effects of historical context on the concept of personal identity, from Sir Walter Scott's novels (as discussed by Georg Lukács) to the "meditation upon history and identity" in postmodern fiction and beyond (29, 54-56, 68, 119). Boxall too comments on the topic of identity throughout his analysis of twenty-first-century fiction. In *Visible Spirits,* Ephraim Barnes moves from the topic of the elderly ex-slaves' superstitions and fears of hobgoblins to their views on the subject of identity: "To hear them tell it, ain't nobody ever just been his own self—everybody's his own self and twenty-five somebody elses" (85).

In *Visible Spirits*, Loda Jackson's subjective representation resembles the kind of self Boxall labels "hyphenated" or "hybrid" identity (169-70), here "African-American" (with a hyphen). Even as a subject of the dominant white power structure on the plantation, the child of a former slave, Loda "had never dropped her head and she'd never shuffled, either, and she didn't mean to start now" (198), perhaps because her white father, Sam Payne, ruled the plantation and had promised her mother that he would educate their daughter. After getting away from the Deadening to study, Loda learned at Cold River College how to imitate the dress and behavior of the ruling class. For instance, she recalls a riverboat outing with her classmates, including her future husband:

> Everyone had worn Sunday clothes and practiced good etiquette in such matters as grammar and posture. Thus they resembled mannequins in the window of a Negro dry-goods store, stiff and stylized, having collectively deluded themselves into believing that if you looked like a mannequin and smelled like a pharmacy, you would be treated like a human being. (131-32)

Later, forced to relinquish her position as postmaster, Loda recalls her mother's advice to "hold a corner of yourself back." Loda thinks, "A corner here, a corner there" and concludes: "Sometimes she didn't know how it all added up, who she really was, or would be, if you summed her" (87). No longer able to define herself as "postmistress," Loda feels "[a]s if she were standing at the station waiting for another self to come along" (119). In her opinion, at this point, she and her husband need to leave town and start over.

Loda admires and somewhat envies the sense of security and "immunity" her husband seems to exhibit. A college-educated man, he prides himself on his scientific rationality and his ability to negotiate the color line. Seaborne sees no need to leave the

area: "We'll lay around a little and say *yes suh,*" stack up the money, then "buy them" (115). Of Seaborn's prototype, a successful alumnus of Alcorn University, Gatewood asserts that Wayne Cox knew "how to handle the typical Southern white man" (73). Both the actual and fictional husbands had established themselves as prosperous businessmen who could afford to buy and live in the white residential section of town. Nevertheless, in *Visible Spirits*, the fictional husband begins to feel the stress after the call for Loda's resignation when even the couple's black friends start to avoid them and shun his business: "Playing Seaborn P. Jackson takes its toll on me, too. I feel as if I'm parading the streets in blackface." His "unfortunate position" makes him recall playing Julius Caesar in a college production and getting into the part so well that he walked around waiting "for the moment when they pulled out the knives" (151). Before long, the situation has Seaborn thinking, "A man who was a Negro today could become a nigger tomorrow" (247). Eventually, when Loda says she needs to stay in Loring to take care of Miss Bessie, Seaborne laments, "Old times on the Deadening. Good Lord, can we never escape them?" (235).

The figure of Blueford Lucas connects not only the Deadening group, but also develops the ghost and identity motifs in Yarbrough's interrogation of how the inequities and violence of slavery and Jim Crow laws oppress the subjective individual. Blueford, who grew up on the plantation with Loda and the Payne boys, has also moved to work in town. In regard to his "place" or identity in the community, Blueford reckoned that "he was willing to be a Negro": "He'd lived too long and seen too many things to spend his life worrying about what white folk thought of him. He knew what he thought of himself. That was enough" (97). Still close to Loda, his childhood friend and love, Blueford continues his conversation with her in the post office the day the prodigal Payne walks in and takes

umbrage. Later, as Rosenthal's porter one evening goes toward his shack from the store, Tandy and others assault Blueford, strip him, paint a white stripe down his back, and strap him naked to a horse, then leave him overnight in the cold on the main street in town. Seaford calls the violent attack a "ceremonial neutering" (148) and observes that it could have been worse (109). Back at last in his shack, Blueford regards his reflection in a broken mirror and sees a scarecrow broken into many pieces (111). One night after his trauma and humiliation, as Loda waits for him on the path, she hardly recognizes her old friend: "Blueford was a ghost—if by ghost you mean the remnant of self" (188).

The Payne brothers also have identity problems. As sons of a planter who treated his slaves like livestock and who murdered freedpeople, they have not developed authentic identities under the shadow of their father's tyranny. On one hand, Leighton attempts to establish himself as a respectable family man and newspaper editor, and he succeeds well enough that town leaders ask him to serve as mayor. In national politics, he tends toward moderate views at a time when whites supposedly would vote for a "yellow dog" before they would vote Republican (39). Essentially, Leighton makes efforts to smooth conflicts over, to keep the peace and to fend off violence. When he discovers Blueford freezing and naked, Leighton removes his own coat to cover him and leads the horse to his own property. His humane rescue of a black man he has known since childhood, however, causes his wife's social group to ostracize her and consequently his wife to turn frigid with him. On the other hand, the postal inspector suspects Leighton supports his brother in a conspiracy to remove Loda Jackson from office (140). During national coverage of the post office incident, a Memphis newspaper editor sends Leighton a clipping from a Washington paper and advises him that Leighton is looking like "one of the bad guys" (191-92). Still he

tries, ineffectively, through editorials and actions. However, in dealing with the violence and conflicts in his life, for Leighton, "The ability to forget had been his own balm" (154). As Inspector Meadows listens to Payne's account of the massacre, he registers Leighton's "stiffness as he told this story without betraying whatever feelings he had" and wonders at "such blankness in the face of insanity" (223).

In a culture of blankness, remnants, and repression, a mask works well for Tandy Payne. Even he realizes that he has something "missing," that he has a "rotten core." The widow he beds who runs the boarding house where he stays, tells him, "You got a mean streak in you—don't forget, boy, I knew your daddy" (21-22). As Tandy seems to achieve importance with his persuasive influence over meetings and money drives, he muses: "It was stunning how a man made himself up day by day. Everybody was just telling his own story. That the world, or a portion thereof, should lie at the feet of a natural born liar thus seemed right and proper" (162). After the president orders the post office closure, Tandy travels the area working crowds and collecting donations to pay for transporting the mail to and from Greenville. Onlookers comment that he should go into politics (179). On a trip to a nearby town, he exhibits a new sense of discipline: After seeing "a caramel-colored whore" in Cleveland, he thinks, "*Lord, help me stay interested in civics*" (181). As he talks to crowds around the area, he finds himself making up "wild accusations": for example, he invents a story about "sot-drunk" Roosevelt "caught in a brothel in San Antonio." In the process, Tandy realizes that he has discovered an unfailing enemy, "secure and stable" to attack as an adversary, one that wouldn't change from game to game": the federal government (176). Thence he goes into politics and runs for the state legislature.

Such hidden and blank identities allow for masquerades, injustices and abuses to continue. Unfortunately, ironically, on the night that Leighton finally acknowledges Seaborn as his brother-in-law, the forces of hate and evil prevail. A brief scene in the coda, titled "Vapors," parallels the earlier scene in which Bessie talks of Bell's ghost. After returning to Loring from North Carolina, an elderly ailing Loda lies in bed fading in and out like the picture on the TV screen. The window goes "flat black," but this time the murdered husband's ghost does not come through it (269-70). A nurse summarizes the cover-up story and alternative propaganda handed down about how Seaborn died: On the night he and Leighton went out to warn Blueford at his shack about white "riffraff" coming to lynch him, the gang of attackers maimed Leighton and murdered Seaborn. Fifty years later, the story goes that two black men, presumably Blueford and his elderly friend, had killed Seaborn before they ran away and disappeared (271).

Thus, the narrative and characterizations suggest that all people living under white supremacy function as disfigured remnants or incomplete pieces of themselves, not just the African Americans, but also the whites subject to the regime. Metonymically, the post office affair and its ramifications represent the worst side of the racial history of Mississippi, from inequities, intimidation, and threats, to lynching and massacres that demonstrate the malicious pathology of white sovereignty. In remembrance, Steve Yarbrough investigates and "bears witness" to a dark "reality of the past" beneath the southern traditions of good humor and fair play, hospitality, and generosity.

Note

[1] Discrepancies in the brief references to Combash demonstrate the problems for the student. Since newspapers generally observed the policy of not reporting or of minimizing notice of racial violence during Reconstruction (Wharton 220), accounts from newspapers and hearsay vary. Harris describes Combash's "insurrection" and concludes that a "carpetbag sheriff" went after the insurgents, and a squad sent by Governor Ames "tracked down Combash in early 1870 and, rather than face the imprecise justice of 'Judge Lynch,' he died in a fusillade of bullets" (251-52). Wharton very briefly discusses Combash's "most peculiar career" in a short paragraph, but does not mention an insurrection or battle. Wharton concludes: "Defeated [for state senate], and evidently in bad standing with his sponsors, he was hanged by the Ku-Klux" (147). Marie Hemphill notes that the Klan hanged Combash, but she quotes a passage from a contemporary source about the "battle" between Captain Gibson's troops and Combash's "armed guard": "Soon the black line of Combash disappeared in the canebrakes and order was again restored throughout the County. Combash disappeared forever. Two or three Negroes were left dead on the field." And Hemphill suggests a possible connection between the Combash battle and the Minter City "riot" (90-91). James Cobb's estimate of twenty-five deaths in the 1889 massacre is based on William F. Holmes's research of the Leflore County Massacre. For his more detailed findings, Holmes uncovered contemporary out-of-state and African American newspapers that had reported between two and one hundred African Americans killed in the conflict of 1889. Holmes locates the confrontation at Minter City (271).

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Racialized Violence and Lynching in Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*

By Breana Miller

In the play *Dutchman,* Amiri Baraka puts two characters, a white woman and a black man, in close proximity to one another on a subway car and presents scenes between them that reflect on a history of racial tension and discrimination in America. In *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases* and *A Red Record*, Ida B. Wells-Barnett cites specific examples of racial injustices that lead to the unlawful lynching of many African American men based on accusations of sexual assault upon white women. Wells-Barnett noted that these many cases of lynching in the South can be traced to Southern white men allegedly protecting the purity and gentility of Southern white women, but she found that lynching was used when white men found themselves intimidated by black autonomy or success.[1] I posit that Baraka revisits these reasons behind lynching when creating this play that ends with Lula murdering, or rather lynching, Clay before he can exit the subway car. Baraka's representations of a white woman seducing and provoking a young black man revisit widely held beliefs on the reasoning behind lynching black men. It also revises the notion of the white woman's responsibility for the murder and torture of black men in American history; the white woman is not blameless, according to Baraka, because she is complicit in the violent system. Through the hyperbolic character Lula, Baraka affirms white women's complicity in the system that has grotesquely protected them.

In *A Red Record*, Ida B. Wells-Barnett cites three different reasons that the Southern

white press or Southern white men have given for lynching African-American men in the period following the Civil War and into the Reconstruction Era. Lynching was a form of "white supremacist violence" that included victims not only being hanged but also "tortured and mutilated and sometimes riddled with bullets or burned alive" (Wood and Donaldson 11). It became prominent during Reconstruction and was used to instill fear in ex-slaves (Preher 128). However, this purpose changed. Wells-Barnett notes, "The first excuse given to the civilized world for the murder of unoffending Negroes was the necessity of the white man to repress and stamp out alleged 'race riots'" ("The Case Stated"). Essentially, white men used violence as a means of preemptively controlling the black population and as a means of keeping them in their place.

Wells-Barnett's second reason was the fear of "Negro Domination"; because black men had been given the right to vote, many white Southerners feared that this political power would infringe upon their white-dominated societies ("The Case Stated"). Much like with the first justification, lynching served as a method of control. The third excuse dealt much with the fetishized symbol of the pure and honorable white woman. Considering the rape accusations made against black men, Wells-Barnett notes, "With the Southern white man, any [perceived relationship] existing between a white woman and colored man is a sufficient foundation for the charge of rape. The Southern white man says it is impossible for a voluntary alliance to exist between a white woman and a colored man, and therefore, the fact of an alliance is a proof of force" ("The Case Stated"). There could be no voluntary participation on the white woman's part concerning any interaction with a black man. The "black brute" stereotype applied to any and every black man, assuming that he had uncontrollable lusts that he would violently act upon with any nearby white woman if the

opportunity presented itself. This excuse was used very often for lynching black men, with or without due legal process, by a mob consisting of "guardians of the honor of Southern white women" (Wells-Barnett, "The Black and White of It").

These Southern white men were concerned with both the purity of their race and the societal power of their race. Wells-Barnett argues in her pamphlet, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases*:

> The miscegenation laws of the South only operate against the legitimate union of the races; they leave the white man free to seduce all the colored white girls he can, but it is death to the colored man who yields to the force and advances of a similar attraction in white women. White men lynch the offending Afro-Americans, not because he is a despoiler of virtue, but because he succumbs to the smiles of white women. ("Introduction")

Wells-Barnett presents a contradiction in the thinking of Southern white men. They violently acted out against black men for the protection and the honor of white women, yet at the same time, they would seduce black women as if they had no honor. The black woman did not have the purity of the white woman, according to white Southerners, and because of stereotypes involving the black woman's lustful nature, her honor was hardly protected. The last sentence in the above passage signals that Wells-Barnett believed there to be some seduction on the part of the Southern white woman, a statement disagreeable to their male counterparts. Her "smiles" are dangerously flirtatious in seeking the attention of a lascivious black man, and though the Southern white woman may seek this attention, she is aware that she can rely on her well-known honorable nature if caught engaging in any secret affairs, essentially hammering the nails of her black suitor's coffin. In her pamphlet,

Wells-Barnett even cited specific examples of white women engaging in affairs with black men, and upon being caught, they would claim rape to their husbands, allowing former lovers to be violently punished for the trysts.

Donald G. Matthews notes in "The Southern Rite of Human Sacrifice: Lynching in the American South" the importance of white Southern men justifying their actions with the protection of white women. Considering this excuse for lynching, Matthews argues that the white woman's body became symbolic in nature, representing white dominance and superiority. The white woman was held up as a symbol, and in order to perpetuate the significance of said symbol, white Southern men lynched black men to keep them in their place. In many cases, the law had no bearing on mob rule. Amy Louise Wood and Susan V. Donaldson noted that "[f]or most white Southerners, lynching was a just and necessary retribution against an abominable crime, a means to ensure not only white supremacy and white purity but white manliness" (12). Lynching was a means of not only "protecting" white women but also confirming white men's masculinity with the somehow implied threat of black masculinity. By lynching black men, white Southerner emasculated their victims, and they were castrated, literally and figuratively, in front of a white audience, building the Southern white man's ego and aiding in the theme of white supremacy.

Wells-Barnett, using Biblical parallels, suggests that the black men who engaged in contact or even affairs with white women had some hand in creating their tumultuous situation. She acknowledges that the "white Delilahs" may have seduced these black men, but these black "Sampsons" certainly had involvement in the seduction too (Wells-Barnett, "Introduction"). She also notes that as the African Americans' education has increased, the mob violence increased conversely (Wells-Barnett, "The New Cry"). Even an educated

black man could become a victim to a white woman's seduction, putting his life in jeopardy for a woman who could easily lie about the nature of their relationship. These black men learned too much to allow themselves to perpetuate a society that feeds white supremacy. Even if these black men had avoided white women and other troubling circumstances, they could still suffer for their color alone.

In *Dutchman*, Baraka situates a white female character with a black male character in a subway car, evoking a tension between the two that calls to mind the history between them. Dianne H. Weisgram says about the two characters, "Clay, the conformist, buttoned-up behind white conventions to keep from wreaking vengeance, and Lula, his beautiful seductress, are, as Jones makes unmistakably clear, emblems of Black and White America. The Whites premeditatedly tantalize the Blacks in order to arouse Black aggression and justify White violence" (219). In that analysis, she also argues that Lula's seduction is a method of arousing Clay's violent side to allow her to claim she acted in self-defense. Lula's seduction is a driving force of the play; however, Clay's complicity in her seduction certainly feeds into her plan. Given his hesitance to even start a conversation with her in the subway car and his embarrassment upon making eye contact with her, he knows that there is a societal norm that makes being in close quarters with this white woman very uncomfortable. He does engage in small talk with her, but once he feels that she is making a sexual suggestion, he responds with an affirmative answer: "I'm prepared for anything. How about you?" (Baraka 79). He interprets Lula's conversation as flirting and proceeds to encourage further innuendo. He affirms again what he perceives as a sexual suggestion when Lula asks, "Would you like to get involved with me, Mister Man?" (Baraka 81). Clay responds, "Sure. Why not? A beautiful woman like you. Huh, I'd be a fool not to" (Baraka

81). Despite knowing this white woman for all of ten minutes, if that, he has shown interest in engaging in a sexual encounter with her without knowing her real intentions. Clay's sexuality aids in his complicity in Lula's seduction. Matthew Rebhorn argues that "Baraka raises two important issues…: one, black men are equated with their sexuality, their manhood, and two, this sexuality is threatening and leads to castration by white society" (804). Clay's sexuality will lead to his castration, his lynching, in the subway car as he continues to engage with this white woman on the basis of her attractiveness and her attempts to rope him into conversation. This cause-and-effect condition related to Clay's sexuality and his murder is similar to a comment from Wells-Barnett on how the white Southern press described the "black brute" stereotype as a real representation: "He sets aside all fear of death in any form when opportunity is found for the gratification of his bestial desires" ("The Malicious and Untruthful White Press"). Clay has certainly set aside any reservations about having sex with Lula so soon after meeting her, thereby falling into her seductive plan and also conforming to stereotypes concerning black men's sexuality. Wood and Donaldson note, much like Wells-Barnett argues in her pamphlets, that "[t]he image of the black brute rapist seized the white Southern imagination and became the primary justification for lynching" (12). Although Clay attempts to conform to white culture and society, he retains characteristics that can be misconstrued to render him a stereotypical hypersexual and violent black man.

In his attempts to conform to American culture, Clay has earned a college degree and considers himself a black Baudelaire. Clay's assimilation includes not just his education but also his middle class socioeconomic status. Lula uses this information when she provokes him on the train: "Clay! Clay! You middle-class black bastard. Forget your social-

working mother for a few seconds and let's knock stomachs. Clay, you liver-lipped white man. You would-be Christian. You ain't no nigger, you're just a dirty white man" (Baraka 94). She even calls him an "Uncle Tom." (95). Lula recalls Clay's socioeconomic status as well as his mother's (assumed) occupation in provoking his verbal and physical outburst, using that information to deny his blackness and to call him white: the ultimate insult. Lula accuses Clay of denying his blackness by assimilating into white culture, and by doing so, she aims to provoke him even further. These outrageous jokes bring Clay out of his mild-mannered and calm stupor, falling into Lula's true plans for him.

Once Clay is provoked and reacts accordingly, he feeds into the violent black man, or "black brute," stereotype that allows for Lula's justification in killing him. Clay's tone and demeanor change when he has had enough of Lula's insults, and he tells her to "sit the fuck down" (Baraka 95). He then begins to claim his blackness and his masculinity in the face of Lula's demeaning insults and name-calling. In this rush of anger and understanding, Clay says to Lula, "I mean, if I murdered you, then other white people would begin to understand me. You understand?" (Baraka 97). Baraka suggests that the only way white society can understand black men is when they fit existing stereotypes. Because Clay poses a threat due to his new understanding of his violent capabilities, Lula has reason enough to kill him; white society has reason enough to feel threatened by this self-aware black man and consequently chooses to lynch him. After explaining how threatening black people will soon be to white society, Lula stabs him in his chest as he reaches for his books just as he was ready to move on from this long, drawn-out interaction. Clay asserts himself only to be killed soon afterwards. Concerning this violent moment, Rebhorn argues that

> Baraka undermines [Clay's] masculinity by having Lula metaphorically castrate Clay—enticing him into her arms—just at the moment of the protagonist's clearest and most profound articulation of his own masculine identity. If indeed Clay asserts his manhood in *Dutchman*, then this manhood is always haunted by the specter of black male castration and the anxiety this phantasm propagates. (Rebhorn 805)

His murder at the hands of Lula, or his lynching at the hands of white society, emasculates Clay as a black man and reinforces the power of white society as well as the symbolic purity in white women. Christopher Baker suggests that Clay is no longer a man and is now reduced to an animal, a beast: "the ox that is slaughtered, the stag pierced by an arrow, the bird that dies in the snare" (119). Baker's suggestion feeds into the "black brute" stereotype that Clay tends to fulfill closer to his death once he is riled up and angry; as a "black brute," he is not considered a reasonable person but an unruly animal.

The relationship between Lula and Clay presents uncommon symbolic binaries. Weisgram notes that Lula and Clay represent white and black American cultures (219). However, Clay's lynching suggests that he does not represent masculinity. The wielder of the knife that killed him (a definite phallic symbol), Lula, represents a masculine power in the play, having taken it away from Clay in murdering him after his self-reflecting monologue. This image recalls Wood and Donaldson's argument that lynching affirmed "white manliness" while acting as a form of retribution (12). George Piggford argues that Baraka has toyed with these binaries in the play: "Blackness signifies in this text virtue and naïveté; whiteness vice and disingenuousness. Maleness signifies castration, and femaleness phallic power. The text inverts the typical significations of the tropes of whiteness and blackness in white American culture" (82). As the bearer of the phallus, Lula harkens back

to white men's intentions in lynching black men by metaphorically castrating Clay and, in turn, reinforcing white male dominance and white supremacy.

Within her violent plan, Lula represents a white society that violently dominates and emasculates black men. Weisgram argues that

> Jones presents Lula as a symbol of not only white racists and fading Cleaverean belles who want to be attacked by black men, but of *all white people*: racists, belles, liberals, rationalists, missionaries, and educators alike….white people tease the Negro into asserting his identity, into demanding justice, and then murder him, using his demands as justification. (221)

With Lula's insults, Clay is provoked and reacts violently, giving justification for her to call out to other passengers on the train for help. In her provocation, Lula attacks Clay's racial identity and heritage: "Boy, those narrow-shoulder clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by. A three-button suit. What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and striped tie? You grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard" (Baraka 86). Because of his suit and appearance, Lula attempts to weaken Clay's claim to his blackness as well as his masculinity, referring to him as "boy." Her act of lynching becomes justified as Clay restrains her forcefully and asserts his masculinity and his blackness. Before his monologue, Clay restrains Lula in order to keep her from dancing and yelling in the subway car, making a spectacle of the both of them amongst the passengers. Lula, who has intentionally incited Clay's aggression and anger, yells at him, "Let me go! You black son of bitch. Let me go! Help!" (Baraka 95). She makes herself the victim in the way of a "black brute."

A point of dispute is whether or not the passengers on the train are complicit in

Lula's plot. These passengers in the subway are not visible, or do not enter the car rather, until the second scene of the play. When Clay notices their emergence into the subway car, the following conversation takes place:

> CLAY: Wow. All these people, so suddenly. They must all come from the same place.
>
> LULA: Right. That they do.
>
> CLAY: Oh? You now about them too?
>
> LULA: Oh yeah. About them more than I know about you… (Baraka 93)

Clay may take Lula's statement as another one of her jokes, but she does yell out to them following his monologue in such a way that implies premeditation. After agreeing that the two will not be leaving to go anywhere together, including Baraka's stage directions, Lula says, "….[She turns to look quickly around the rest of the car] All right! [The others respond]" (98). Lula's command as well as Baraka's stage directions imply that there is a procedure in place for the passengers to follow concerning what will transpire after Lula's command. Once Lula kills Clay, she tells the passengers to throw the body off of the subway car, and she tells the passengers, "And all of you get off at the next stop" (Baraka 99). These passengers witness Clay and Lula's conversation, their altercation, and the lynching, and they follow her orders in disposing of the body. They continue to follow her orders by leaving the subway car, coming back to the emptiness of the car at the beginning of the play.

Baraka notes in the character descriptions that these passengers consist of both black and white people, but all of them, including the black passengers, have now become complicit in a lynching. Weisgram sees these passengers as "surrogates for the people in the

audience as viewers of the immediate sadosexual encounter, and ultimately as witness-accomplices who first observe then participate in the primal scene. Thematically the passengers represent the American public as conspirators in the plot to get the Negro…" (230). Weisgram's identification of the passengers' symbolic significance certainly adds to her interpretation of the two main characters representing black and white American cultures. However, her interpretation does not account for the black passengers concerning their participation in the killing of one of their own. Wells-Barnett makes a point about white Southerners who stood by silently and allowed lynching to continue in their communities: "The men and women in the South who disapprove of lynching and remain silent on the perpetration of such outrages, are…accomplices, accessories before and after the fact, equally guilty with the actual lawbreakers who would not persist if they did now know that neither the law nor militia would be employed against them" ("The South's Position"). Wells-Barnett's assertion informs the roles of these passengers as they allow Lula's plot to continue to its inevitable end; they are accessories to the lynching despite having no lines in the play, and they are Lula's accomplices in her plot.

Reading Ida B. Wells-Barnett's pamphlets and other historical sources alongside Baraka's *Dutchman* illuminates the history of racialized violence and lynching in the American history. The characters in Baraka's play represent more than a black man and a white woman in relation to one another. Lula carries out the action of a white society by seducing and lynching Clay in an underground subway car. This play propagates Baraka's perception of the black man's place in white American society and shows him being consumed by the society in which he attempts to assimilate as society passively sits by and allows it.

Note

1. My explication concerning lynching is limited to the reasons that were used to justify its utilization in the South.

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The Bell Jar Insanity as a Coming of Age Narrative

By Sam Owens

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* is a resurrection story, one that possesses many coming of age elements. The story centers around Esther, a young woman who desires to come of age on her own terms but finds herself trapped within a patriarchal society. This society would define her roles in every facet of life, and Esther finds none of the choices palatable. Insanity is the only volitional choice when every other option would be decided for her. As Linda W. Wagner writes, "No incident is included which does not influence her maturation, and the most important formative incidents occur in the city New York. As Jerorne Buckley describes the *bildungsroman* in his 1974 *Season of Youth,* its principle elements are 'a growing up and gradual self discovery,' 'alienation,' 'provinciality, the larger society,' 'the conflict of generations,' ordeal by love' and 'the search for a vocation and a working philosophy'" (55). *The Bell Jar* serves as a feminine coming of age novel beset by hostile patriarchal impositions.

The Bell Jar centers on a Christian narrative of the death of self and being "born again." This can be traced by Plath's use of metaphor. Much of her initial language reflects negative imagery that centers in her inability to express herself and is coupled with negative metaphors, whereas her rebirth signifies more agency and action language. Coyle noted, "The novel contains veritable cadences of death and remarkable images showing the hostility of the world around Esther, but the metaphors of primary interest are the ones that concern self, that reflect her states of mind" (161). Esther's state of mind consists of morbid

fascination with gruesome scenes, the Rosenburg trial, and especially on how hypocritical Buddy was. Much of Esther's quest for identity surrounded the fact that she could not define herself the way a man could. This was especially true in regards to her sexuality. Buddy Willard expected her to be sexually "pure," while he did not hold the same expectations for himself. She remarked on this when he told her how he had slept with someone. She declared, "What I couldn't stand was Buddy pretending I was so sexy and was so pure, when all the time he'd been having an affair with that tarty waitress and must have felt like laughing in my face" (Plath 83). Buddy Willard is a symbol for how men reduce women to expected sexual roles. Society tricks women into shouldering the entire responsibility for societal stability so they can enjoy freedom without accountability. Esther is upset by this, but does not say anything to him. Like in other instances, the way things are prevent her from having a voice against the constricting expectations of patriarchal society.

It is a mistake to assume that Plath was only concerned with herself. Throughout her work one finds many issues related to double standards that affect her personally, an emphasis on social issues is reflected in her work. Academic careers in the 1950s were a man's game, and that reality triggered an acute frustration in Plath that culminated in her eventual suicide. Much of that tension is symbolized in the magazine that Esther is writing for, and that Plath belonged to. Smith argues that "1950s consumer culture—a culture that encouraged women to navigate beyond the private sphere of the home while limiting those options simultaneously discouraging that navigation—contributes to Esther's metaphorical starvation." (Smith 1) Much of Esther's descent was socialized to that effect. She was put in a position where she had a choice between submission and madness, as her wishes were deferred. The inaccessibility is painfully relevant in her suicide attempt after her rejection

from Harvard. She internalized much of this rejection into feelings of inadequacy, as she adopted the critical attitude of her detractors. In Esther's coming of age tale, she too faces similar problems that transcend simple suicide. It would be easy to treat the novel as a morbid tale of mental illness, but that would only serve to distract from the patriarchal reductions that severely limited Esther's options. Esther faces the fact that many choices are being made for her, which are shaped by external expectations. She is expected to be a mother and wife to a man that she finds contemptable, and is constantly fighting being reduced to a sex or a love object.

Esther thinks that there is something wrong with because she resists being reduced to a few predetermined options. Perloff writes, "The novel's flashbacks make clear that Esther has always played those roles others have wanted her to play. For the mother, she has been the perfect *good girl,* 'trained at a very early age and…no trouble whatsoever'" (509). This is a pattern repeated throughout the madness segment of the novel. Her inability to align herself with what society wants from her results in her playing a role for what everyone else expects her to be. This illustrates a fracturing of her personhood. This is not meant to illustrate a simple identity crisis, but rather demonstrates how it is impossible to reconcile being an honest dignified woman and find a place in an oppressive patriarchal society. Such an environment makes it difficult to have a voice. She attempts to bridge this gap by having imaginary conversations with her boyfriend Buddy Willard that would stem from real insults. He once remarked that a poem is "a piece of dust" and that she would be uninterested in creating poems once she was married. She remarked on the satisfaction of these imaginary exchanges, "And of course, Buddy wouldn't have any answer to that, because what I said was true. People were mad of nothing so much as dust, and I couldn't

see that doctoring all that dust was a bit better than writing poems people would remember and repeat to themselves when they were unhappy or sick and couldn't sleep" (Plath 62). Her descent into madness in part had to do with not being able to find her voice, or have a healthy outlet to express her rage. Although much of this is autobiographical, much of what is wrong with her is that the external world holds too much power over her agency, and her "illness" is her unwillingness or inability to submit to the external programs selected for her.

Esther seems to have a bright future. She is talented, has a scholarship to New York University, and has the means to find her place in the world. By anyone else's standards she has it all. That is not how she feels. She is neither a purely passionate devil may care rebel, nor is she a good girl. Patriarchal dominance defines several acceptable binaries where she must fit in. Unfortunately, she becomes paralyzed by expectations and does nothing, culminating with a suicide attempt. Patriarchal dominance fits any "type" of woman into a mold that serves a man's desire, and she does not fit into that mold. Her relationship with buddy represents how she spurns his desire. He represents the hypocrisy of Patriarchal authority. Being an independent woman coming of age in a patriarchal society presents the possibility that there is no mold for her to choose, and that she must receive professional help or die. Her mental condition is a metaphor meant to raise suspicion for the health of a woman who would want to come of age on her own terms apart from patriarchal expectations, which confine her to shame or obedience, and in so rejecting this binary, is driven to consider death instead of subservience.

Amidst placating other expectations of her, she finds escape in obsessing about the Rosenburgs. Esther compared its presence in her mind like the first time her boyfriend Buddy showed her a cadaver. She claimed that "for weeks afterward, the cadaver's head-or

what there was left of it- floated up behind my eggs and bacon at breakfast and behind the face of Buddy Willard, who was responsible for my seeing it in the first place, and pretty soon I felt as though I were carrying that cadaver's head around with me on a string, like some black, noseless balloon stinking of vinegar" (Plath 1). Behind the face of Buddy Willard was "a dead head." The Rosenburg trial represented a betrayal of the United States, but who does Esther perceive as the betrayer? A simple reading would assume that Buddy is the betrayer. The cadaver seems to represent the "real" Buddy Willard, and describing it as a domestic scene suggests that although marriage may seem to offer domestic tranquility, horrors may haunt behind the hypocrisy. Other people expected her to be steering New York like "her own Private car. Only I wasn't steering anything, not even myself" (Plath 2). It is apparent that her decisions are shaped by other people's expectations. People pushed and prodded her to embrace an ideal that did not harmonize with her identity. Esther surrendered her agency to fulfill other people's expectations, and therein lies the tension. Women archetypes serve as role models for her. Her first role model was Doreen. She represented a rebellious character that would spend her time doing everything she should not do. She declared that people who went to Yale were stupid, and Esther noted that Buddy went to Yale. The problem with Buddy now, according to her, was that he was stupid. "Oh he'd managed to get good marks all right, and to have an affair with some awful waitress on the Cape by the name of Gladys, but he didn't have one speck of intuition. Doreen had intuition. Everything she said was like a secret voice speaking straight out of my own bones" (Plath 6-7). Esther lacked agency because she lacked an identity. It was apparent that the patriarchy meant that her identity was defined by another. Rejecting being a wife and a mother left her in a vacuum. It is telling that she was comparing Doreen to

Buddy. Doreen's voice became fused with Esther's body. Esther lacked direction and a voice, so she borrowed Doreen's. Patriarchal authority had defined and shaped how she could acquire an identity. Although she wished to rebel, she could be thrown into the cold and expect to adapt. In the end, she rejects Doreen, and embraces Betsy because Betsy's innocence is what she resembles at heart. In her rejection, she immediately attaches to another woman's identity.

However, throughout the book, she never truly identifies with any woman, and this could indicate a general distaste for feminine identity. Sakane wrote that although she ultimately refuses to identify with any woman she encounters, "she is desperate to find the ideal person with whom she can identify" (Sakane 31). This search for a role model is precisely what seperates her from other women. Albeit briefly, Esther perceives Doreen as a role model, whereas Doreen seems completely self-contained. This suggests that it was not a partnership of equals. Doreen is indifferent to Esther's presence, and Esther goes home. She has to walk 45 blocks to get home, but she does get home sober and strong. This contrasts with Doreen, who comes in drunk and passed out on the floor. There seems to be a compulsive need for an unequal relationship that typifies the classic patriarchal ideal between men and women. This void is what is "wrong" with her. We see her confusion in the following passage:

> One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Ee Gee , the famous editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America... and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out. I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this big tree, starving to

> death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. (Plath 62-63)

Esther is in an identity crisis. In Erikson's model for growth, there is a stage called "Identity resolution vs. role confusion. One of the symptoms is to develop a negative identity, and that includes an inability to make defining choices about the future. It is important that a person be able to freely experiment and explore, and this is precisely what Esther cannot excite herself about" (Stevens 48). The first fig available to her is being a mother with a husband and children, and second is that she is a great poet, and third is being a brilliant professor. This may be construed as a list of priorities. The cadaver hiding behind her husband's face suggests that the idea of a happy home is a lie, and that is the first breach of cognitive dissonance.

Her inability to find the first role that was selected for her could be viewed as having a domino effect on all "lesser" roles. Perhaps it is that she believes that she should reverse the order. The number 2 option, "being a great poet" may have a greater attraction to her than number 1, and that is why she feels guilty. Esther felt guilty for not fulfilling her role as an honest student. Her preoccupation with hypocrisy begins with not having an honest occupation within a male dominated society. Suspicion of hypocrisy is a theme that she had with Buddy. Although she is told that being married to him promised her a happy home, she saw death behind that existence. A common theme in this novel are competing languages. Ostensibly one is raw science, and the other is poetry. However, it would be a mistake to take this at face value. Budick, writing for "College English," wrote that the chemistry teacher represents a "masculine language. This language 'shrinking everything into letters and numbers,' abbreviates, restricts, and reduces the universe into physical

principles" (Budick 874). From this point of view the male world attempts to control a female's world by reducing their existence into shorthand "signs and symbols." When male language is forced upon her, she deceives them and writes poetry instead, which in this world, represents female language, the female voice or female agency. It is this agency that she feels guilty for, and perhaps wonders if she was cheating herself out of the happy home she had desired. Or that she may already be dead in her own deception, and that life awaits her on the other side of patriarchal authority. It is important to note that the only classmates that he is dazzling with his chemistry are female students. Female agency is the target of masculine language in this context. Perhaps she is pondering if she would be happier if her existence were reduced and governed by masculine principles. In some instances she seems to coddle up to sexist individuals as a means to define herself sexually, or at least these people tend to be the ones that she finds herself attracted to.

Another person from Yale, Eric, said he thought "it disgusting the way all the girls at my college stood around on the porches under the porch lights and in the bushes in plain view, necking madly before the one o'clock curfew, so everybody passing by could see them. A million years of evolution, Eric said bitterly, and what are we? Animals" (Plath 150). He is not shaming the human race for their sexual behavior, only women. In some ways one can see her moving away from domesticity. When he proposes that she is the type of girl he could see himself loving, she lied and told him that she was marrying someone else. This is in contrast to the quote where a bunch of girls were charmed by the tricks of the chemist. Both quotes illustrate one man's engagement of women. In both instances Esther wishes to be among the women who are used by men. This would suggest that the latter quote is a reflection of the earlier quote. Man's language reduces women to their sexual

qualities, and in both instances she expresses a desire to be so reduced. Patriarchal authoritarian language expresses its power over women by controlling their sexuality. She seems to be attracted to that power. She expresses a desire to be among the many "animals" that he describes. However, this could be the best of multiple bad options. Sexually, there are only two choices available to her. Either she can be hyper sexualized, be shamed and treated with contempt, or submit to being the sexually deprived housewife deemed to "pure" for sexual behavior. This is reflective of the shame and guilt that she felt for choosing her own language over masculine language. The act of choosing a feminine language is shown to be subversive. Men have power in open, so she must choose her power in secret. It is not that she lacks agency, but that agency comes with the shame of secrecy. She can choose openly to embrace masculine power, but deception is the only way to make a choice for herself and her own identity. Deception has been known to prompt feelings of isolation, and so patriarchal power is reinforced with social isolation and emotional deprivation. The man himself feels no guilt for exerting his power. It is an entitlement. Eric feels free to categorize women into two separate camps. They are either hyper sexualized animals, or they are hypo sexualized wives. He considers the ideal wife to be too good to be sexual. He is only content to find a prostitute or promiscuous woman to have sex with, and spare his wife the ignominy of sexual intercourse. The shame that is connected to the sexual behavior of women is what Esther identifies with. The original quote is meant to connect shame to freely choosing her professional path, whereas the second is meant to do the same thing feminine sexual freedom. It is also pointed to remember that what she is asked to participate in is not a serious education in chemistry, but reduced to a few childish tricks. This reflects the stereotypical 1950s woman as a simpleton who cannot be trusted nor be deemed capable

of a serious education. This is the reductionist language that was referred to. Science as a reductionist metaphor symbolizes the patriarchal languages attempt to reduce women to their most primal biological functions that serve men best. It is her desire to choose for herself that becomes the abnormal mental illness plaguing her as she attempts to define herself in a society that would wish to define her place for her.

That place also included making her into a prop to be exploited. "Come on, give us a smile" (Plath 222). This was her command as a means to promote her school. Today, it is considered an expression of patriarchal authority to demand that women smile for them. Then, "At last, obediently, like the mouth of a ventriloquist dummy, my own mouth started to quirk up" (223). Her humanity is crying out to be heard, It is common for someone to express sympathy if someone is uncontrollably sad; however, in this world, female humanity is expected to be suppressed in favor of obedience. She did not wish to smile, but was being made to. When she could not control herself any longer, she found that she was abandoned by those wishing to control her. Any expression of humanity that flies in the face of propriety or obedience is viewed as a betrayal of the power structure. "When I lifted my head, the photographer had vanished. Jay Cee had vanished as well. I felt limp and betrayed, like the skin shed by a terrible animal. It was a relief to be free of the animal, but it seemed to have taken my spirit with it, and everything else it could lay its paws on" (Plath 222). Esther chose to choose her humanity above obedience, and she was left. This instance is different in that she no longer framed herself as the betrayer, but as the betrayed. Esther is becoming loyal to herself above other people's expectations, and expects to be treated humanely. She understood that she needed compassion and "Christian tolerance," and she validated that need by drawing a heart on her face with her makeup. This represented a shift

from seeking outward confirmation of her worth. Her language continued to change with how she understood male misogyny. "I began to see why woman haters could make such fools of women. Woman-haters were like gods: invulnerable and chockfull of power. They descended, and then they disappeared. You could never catch one" (Plath 227). Before this she did a Tango, and she protested that she did not know how to dance, but found that it only "takes one" to dance. She did nothing and he did everything. Even though she understood how "some women" could have been made fools for this type of man, she would not have remarked on this if she did not find this surrender to a man's control attractive. Previously, she was "grateful" that he had ordered her drinks so that she did not have to say anything. She is self-aware enough to recognize this, and although her attraction still speaks to the socialized hole meant to be filled by a man, she has enough agency to not let herself be "fooled" by it. This climaxes in her leaving college to recuperate at home, where she finds her grasp of sanity even more tenuous.

The mirror test is a test that people give to animals to test for consciousness. If they are self-aware, then they are conscious. In "The Bell Jar" Esther Greenwood begins to fail this test. At the beginning of chapter 10, she thinks, "The face in the mirror looked like a sick Indian. I dropped the compact into my pocketbook and stared out of the train window. Like a colossal junkyard, the swamps and back lots of Connecticut flashed past, one broken-down fragment bearing no relation to each other. What a hotchpotch the world was!" (Plath 242) Not only was Esther beginning to lose her sense of identity, she can no longer connect a relationship between herself and the world. The world bears no relationship to her, and she has no relationship with herself. When she is looking at the mirror, she identifies as a disenfranchised Native-American. This is frequent in Sylvia Plath's poetry. For example, in

"Lady Lazarus," she identifies with being Jewish and envisions herself as someone who is persecuted. This is likely a metaphor for how women are disenfranchised in the novel. She is someone who is broken down who can only find safety in making herself invisible to the outside world. Danger presents itself in being seen, therefore in a "hotchpotch" world security can only be found in not being seen. However, this presents a quandary, as not being seen means you will not be noticed: "'My mother climbed behind the wheel and tossed a few letters into my lap, then turned her back…I think I should tell you right away,' She said, and I could see bad news in the set of her neck, 'you didn't make that writing course.'" Society's refusal to recognize her resulted in her not being able to recognize herself as she might want to, but how she is treated. This resulted in her career choices being just as marginalized as her sexual choices. She thought, "I'd better go to work for a year and think things over. Maybe I could study the eighteenth century in secret. But I didn't know shorthand, so what could I do? I could be a waitress or a typist. But I couldn't stand the idea of being either one" (Plath 262). Her descent into suicide is broken down into her being forced to accept an increasingly limited set of acceptable choices available to women. In order to define herself sexually, she could either choose between being shamed into a male pleasing sexual object, or be a sex deprived "pure" housewife. In the same way, her rejection seemed to limit her choices in the same fashion. This is the last instance that finally broke her, and explains the imagery of her being swallowed alive, leaving nothing but empty clothes behind.

After her suicide attempt, she is put into the hospital. There a female doctor greets her, which surprises her because she did not know that there were any women psychiatrists. There she undergoes electroshock therapy. She expresses some hesitation about the

procedure, but the psychiatrist assures her that many people are helped when it is done correctly. Many critics have come to interpret this as a simple "rewiring" of the female brain so that it can better accept the limitations of being a woman in a male dominated society. Diane S. Bonds even argues against the idea that Esther recovered, saying, "This 'recovery' denies the rationality of the self and leaves Esther to define herself unwittingly and unwillingly in relation to culturally-ingrained stereotypes of women." (Bonds 49) However, her experience in the hospital breaks down her hetero-normativity when she is confronted by women having sexual relations with each other. One woman makes a pass at her, and Esther says it makes her physically ill. Esther then proceedes to ask her doctor what women could get from each other what they could not get from a man. The psychiatrist answers "tenderness." Esther has no response for that. Further, Esther finds a sisterhood in silence that transcended language. She meets a patient who does not talk, and Esther gravitates toward this silence. "I pulled up a chair opposite her at the table and unfolded a napkin. We didn't speak, but sat there, in a close, sisterly silence, until the gong for supper sounded down the hall." (Plath 302) This passage expresses the profound empathy that she finds in meeting another woman who had no voice. Throughout the novel she is unable to express herself to people in an authentic manner, but this passage suggests that silence is the most authentic method for her to bond with other women. However, she is ultimately made free by defining herself by her agency, rather than her being. In the end she defines herself as something separate from Buddy. She views her experience as something separate from how Buddy treats her. Buddy asks her if there was something about him that triggered suicides, as two women he dated attempted suicide. She says simply that he had nothing to do with her. Her coming of age climaxes in her defining herself as a separate person from patriarchy

by taking responsibility for her choices. Buddy did not make her do it, she did. Her perspective is reflective in how she comes of age.

The novel is built on several coming of age elements, but in a reverse negative. She is unable to choose any of the limited choices available to her. Her descent into madness reflects on every limitation that is forced on her. She can only be promiscuous or a wife, or she could only be a typist or a waitress. None of these options are acceptable to her. However, as bleak as it is, there is hope. There is no grand moment where she finally has the job she always wanted, but her maturity comes in being able to define herself as something separate from men.

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Postmodern Ghosts and the Comic Apocalypse in a Post-Secular Age

By J.B. Potts

Language is a virus. Religion is an operating system. And prayer is just so much fucking spam.

—American Gods.

In exploring the contemporary state of the spirit world in literature, I began with a conundrum. Umberto Eco and others Ludvig Wittgenstein and others have certainly have made statements declaring a post-metaphysical and post-spiritual age; more recently, Jurgen Habermas and Charles Taylor have famously debated whether we are, conversely, in a Post-secular age or not.[1] The Postmodern period, which debatably may or may not exist, pursues rigorous skepticism about anything metaphysical with numerous announcements that religion and a vision of a spiritual dimension to the world are a delusion, yet television, films and novels are swamped by stories of vampires, ghosts, zombies, gods, witches, and witchcraft. Traditionally, Gothic literature seems to operate around fear of sex or fear of religion, but something seems to have changed. All the contemporary forms of literature seem obsessed with filling a vacuum left in the place of a vision of transcendence complete with gods and spirits, as if we cannot have meaning without myth, but that all myths are equally empty wishful thinking. What I want to do is to look at some relatively recent work by John Gardner and Neil Gaiman as evidence of a difference in the treatment of religious myth in contemporary Gothic and of how it reflects a different source of terror.

This peculiar rebirth and ostensible explosion of Gothic begs for explication, but the problem has to be subdivided to address it. Gothic has long been an unwieldy, almost amorphous genre. First, let me clarify that I am not referring to that strain of teen-Gothic romance lately labeled "candygothic"—like *Twilight* and *True Blood*. As Maria Beville notes, popular culture aimed at teens has been capitalizing on sex-gothic for about twenty years "saturating contemporary culture with normative images of vampire teens and soul-hunting cyborgs, creating a subgenre of "candygothic" with superficial stylistic similarities, thus depleting the literary value of the genre—but real Gothic is "the literature of terror" (9). Its intentions seem more obvious and much simpler and less sentimentally romantic. Any real definition should distinguish "terror" as intense anxiety rather than simply violence and gore. [2]

For that matter, the definition in *A Handbook to Literature*, also seems completely inadequate now. "Darkness, mystery, and magic and chivalry" do not quite encapsulate or necessarily fit the field anymore (217). It is probably time to narrow the term for the vast realm of literature occasionally called Gothic. For my purposes, it usually involves either the supernatural or the unnatural, and the abuse of power. *The Castle of Otranto* covers all three, for example—the noble Manfred, needing to produce an heir to retain the castle, considers doing so with first with his son's fiancée, then with his own daughter—the unnatural. His efforts to do so despite the daughter's and the fiancés disinterest in order to sustain his hold on the throne and his usurpation of it to begin with are an abuse of power, and the giant helmet that inexplicably falls out of the sky surely must be supernatural. For the politics in Gothic, I usually have to point out to classes that Victor Frankenstein has enormous power that saves him when he really should be suspected of murder in England;

moreover, he does not bother to testify in his own village to save Justine, whom he knows is innocent of another murder—although he is a baron, so the charges would surely have been quashed. Because of his indifference, she is hung. Count Dracula would be somewhat more vulnerable if he were not a count who can own more than one castle and move freely. Traditionally, Gothic carried a subtext about political power, but it was carried forth by means of the other aspects of supernatural and unnatural presences.

The proposition of supernatural or unnatural is why Freud's explanation of "the uncanny," which explains the power of ghost stories and its uncanny correlatives, has always been central to the discussion. To Freud, anything that ought not to exist in a purely material world is merely an unhealthy psychological manifestation. Moreover, Freud's theory says that life is finite, and the invention of models of transcendence—including within religion—is a neurotic evasion of that reality. So stories with uneasy spirits reflect that unhealthy mind. When we consider that immortality and superhuman powers (consider Marvel Comics' recent success with movies) take up many of the non-Gothic movies as well, it becomes clear that the cravings of Postmodern audiences are not just for post-mimetic texts, but for imaginative experiences of a less limited, non-material, and possibly neurotic universe.

But also central to the conversation about why Gothic literature exists is a dialogue about Protestantism and Catholicism. In one of the best discussions of the conflict, Marie Mulvey-Roberts argues that although the "wounded body is a leitmotif of the Gothic novel and the central icon of the Roman Catholic Church, and traces through the many critics who examine the denominational conflict, she concludes that stories that these harsh representations of Catholicism "invariably [prove] to be less of an attack on Catholicism

than a means of opening up subversive ways for critiquing secular hegemony and repressive governments" (14-15). Nevertheless, the attacks were frequent against an "empire of superstition" (17). As Diane Long Hoevelor argues, much early Gothic literature reacted with "hysteria" against specifically Catholic religious practice (to the benefit of less ornate Protestantism).[3]

As I began the research for this paper, I never foresaw Eleanor Beal's claim that the *Left Behind* series figures into the relevant trend—not just because I have never read the series, but because I had not seen in it the revenge motive: non-Evangelicals in the series appear to take the brunt of apocalyptic divine rage. In a return to the borderline hysterical anti-Catholicism, Hoevelor pointed out, Beal describes a process known as the Rapture, which culls non-believers from salvation and is also strictly anti-Catholic, portraying the highly formal rituals of Catholicism as unnerving superstition. *The Monk* and *Melmoth the Wanderer* both involve people who have been patently imprisoned in convent life against their will. The abuse of power and repression by the church authorities provide the distress, which gradually leads to the occult for example, *Melmoth the Wanderer* involves an orphan, abused by monks, who sells his soul to the devil for more time with an attractive woman. Since another of the earliest Gothic novels features a monk/rapist and soul-selling, clearly someone, Matthew Lewis as the case may be, recognized that conflict between the sacred and the unholy suits Gothic literature well. Most but not all contemporary Gothic not only takes little notice of denominational differences, but sometimes lumps all religion together.

This subgenre produces another strain of gothic that treats religious faith as dangerous and irrational because of its insistence upon the reality of something transcendent, which means something outside our realm of knowledge or materialist

perspective. The Gothic strain I want to consider treats a lingering fear that the real scope of the world goes well beyond the materialist impression of the world into a threatening world with power over this one. I want to briefly address the stunning range of some mutations of the Gothic tradition in two widely disparate but serious writers, Neil Gaiman and John Gardner. Gardner's novel *Mickelsson's Ghosts* treats the proliferation of paranormal rumors by including real ghosts in his 1982 novel; Gaiman goes to a different extreme—inserting ghosts, religious figures and gods as anticlimactic characters in search of transcendence. My focus of study thus focuses on a general complex—do we fear corruption within holy places and men, do we fear that the existence of God is a charade to manipulate the gullible, do we fear godlessness, do we fear God's unfinished business with the Earth, do we fear God's indifference to us? We could rename those dynamics under old names within religious practice—blasphemy, betrayal, hubris, and theodicy.

Gothic had shifted away from treating conflicts of a spiritual nature involving spiritual beings in favor of psychological explanations of troubled minds. But the psychoanalytical dismissal of all things paranormal has faded noticeably of late. I thought I had noticed a curious watershed moment with *The Others*, a 1982 film. It conspicuously resembles a film of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, but reverses the trend James started. For a while after psychoanalyst William James had a brother who told a ghost story about a governess with desperately repressed sexual urges, the science of psychology explained away fictional ghosts. She only imagines the ghosts, and she creates a battle between herself and the devil.[4] If it seemed, at least for a little while, to be unscientific and superstitious to tell a ghost story, the pendulum has swung wildly back. In *The Others*, it turns out that the ghosts are real, and that it is the protagonist's family that actually, unknowingly, are the

very real ghosts in the house. Going back to the explanation that the ghosts are not imaginary psychological manifestations but quite real should be surprising in an era where the major philosophical statements come from Wittgenstein and Eco and the like. Then again, nightly television now features scientific experiments talking to ghosts with advanced equipment, so at some level science has also changed attitudes. A brief scan of the cable television schedule offers *Paranormal Witness*, *Ghost Hunters*, *Ghost Adventures*, *A Haunting*, *Celebrity Ghost Stories*, and dozens of other such shows.

So we go from *The Others* to novels such as John Gardner's 1982 novel, *Mickelsson's Ghosts*, in which the haunted house really is haunted by ghosts who are visible to the narrator, and which do figure into a subplot. The setting, in the rural Pennsylvania of hex signs and self-declared witches, offers another cluster of strange events. The haunted house once belonged to Joseph C. Smith, founder of the Mormon faith, and a story about a Mormon hit squad called the Sons of Dan factors into the tension at the end. Critic David Cowart argues that Mickelsson's struggle is against crippling "guilt" (188). He points out that the protagonist, who is a philosophy professor, hears a dialectical argument in his mind from the ghosts of Martin Luther and Friedrich Nietzsche (200). The contest results, according to Cowart, in "not the victory of Luther over Nietzsche but the accommodation of the

two" (200), and I suspect those do really reflect Mickelsson's most profound unresolved concerns. And at the source, they both represent the danger of intense religious fanaticism—Nietzsche, Mickelsson believes, is mostly tortured by holiness in a fallen world. At the philosophical/psychoanalytical level, the novel is concerned again with transcending the mundane, soiled world.

But another major conflict in the book has to do with excessive, oppressive and even fraudulent religion. Gardner uses the Mormon sect as a fanatical and dangerous face of religion, one that is more dangerous by far than the ghosts that inhabit the house. The religion has not just mysterious, but secretive, elements, and in so doing goes beyond the factor in Christianity that seems to lead to much of the anxiety that drives Gothic—just that religious faith uses symbolic rituals to reflect a dimension not concretely available on earth. Although the rituals are rarely ominous, they still retain a slightly Gothic tone at times. Baptism reflects being washed clean of sin and simultaneously being raised from burial into a new life. Communion reflects sharing between all believers, but it also reflects ingesting the flesh and blood of a crucified man. Latter Day Saints beliefs are widely unknown outside of the LDS church, and the church did not exist until the 1800s, so that it may make an easier target for Mickelsson to represent ominous aspects of religion, but it still reflects the anxieties about all religion present in other Gothic stories.

The more active plotting of the novel builds towards the moment, unrelated to Nietzsche and Luther, when the Mormon hitman comes to make sure that nothing can be found in Joseph C. Smith's house that might compromise the Mormon faith. The Mormon hitman, Lawler, while holding a gun on Mickelsson, concedes that Mormonism is an entirely made-up religion to exploit the gullibility of ordinary people, adding "if the whole thing *is* a fraud, well, so what?!" (544). It is nevertheless useful, Lawler argues, and he says it cannot be undermined by a sentimental deference to a few lives (546). If the author of *On Moral Fiction* offers any meaning in his bizarre story, that proposition about how religions work might be the moral, presented ironically. Lawler insists that people "need inspiring fairytales" (545). Real and imagined dialogues about religion pervade the book, yet in the

end, Cowart concludes "community" wins, and on a physical plane, that is true. Nevertheless, in the most desperate moments, Mickelsson returns to prayer at gunpoint. But his prayer addresses both God and Christ, then he pleads, "somebody come help me" (549-50). Somebody, thhs trane sheriff, arrives shortly thereafter.

Oddly enough, the ghosts merely stand by in the room during the climactic scene, and the utterly inexplicable resolution is brought about by the local sheriff and other good Pennsylvanians who call themselves witches. They overlook Mickelsson's crimes and adopt him into the struggling town, as they jail Lawler. The peculiarity of the novel first offers real ghosts, then brings witchcraft to bear at the key moment. If the minimal requirements of Gothic literature have slipped to the point that ghosts are everywhere but irrelevant, *Mickelsson's Ghosts* perhaps represents another mutation of *The Others*. Here they are real but only vaguely significant background props built into a Gothic tale where religious fanaticism is the real terror again. The timely arrival of the sheriff might be driven by the prayer, the witchcraft, or neither. *Mickelsson's Ghosts* proposes new questions in Gothic that are not on the axis between psychological delusion and spirituality as real. What if a spiritual dimension exists but cannot affect physical reality? Would considerations of the paranormal then be quite irrelevant? What if spiritual beliefs are beneficial to humanity, even if baseless?

And two stranger new species of Gothic appear emergent now. One takes a metafictive or Jungian consideration of stories involving gods, ghosts and spirits; these novels seem mostly curious about metafiction questions.[5] Another trend speculates on the apocalyptic, the end of the world as imagined by some with reference to the New Testament book of *Revelations*, a book sometimes interpreted as eschatological.

In the case of Neil Gaiman, his novels have now entered that genre. They often revolve around a preoccupation with mythological immortals, with hope for a world of expanded dimension and possibilities. In fact, there's something of a conundrum inherent in his work—stories are the only thing that transcends, but the only stories worth telling are the ones about transcendence. *Anansi's Boys* clearly traces to the African trickster tales and myths about Anansi the spider, often paralleled by stories monkeys in other regions. The typical quirky-loser protagonist so ubiquitous in contemporary literature finds out that he is the offspring of Anansi, and that his half-brother's completely charmed life suggests that he might also have superhuman powers. And he does, having inherited part of Anansi's deific qualities. What makes this story "Gothic," you say? Well, the story offers a separate world occupied by gods, a villainess Raven, a malevolent tiger-god still angry about having been tricked by Anansi—i.e., supernatural beings and powers are everywhere. The resolution comes about largely as a result of the ghost of a murdered woman who declines to withdraw from activity in this world—she precipitates the justice borne out upon the villain—a sleazy, swindling travel agent. The story has comic resolution, and it perhaps treats the "gods" as the most skeptical of the ancient Greeks would: they are flawed, irrational, unpredictable and indifferent to human life. Ultimately, the story's purpose has to do with the value of storytelling, and is perhaps too benign to consider postmodern Gothic. It suggests myths transcend, but only myths transcend. It wonders "What is more powerful in the world than a body of optimistic myth?" After all, Anansi's playful spirit so clearly bears *eros* rather than *thanatos*, and the novel abounds with absurd humor.

Nearly all of Gaiman's stories still typically feature some version of immortality—that thing that Freud says drives our belief in religion—and some of his stories do not rely

upon the same lightness. *Neverwhere*, for example, fits into a category of contemporary Gothic which contemplates an apocalypse where fallen angels try to bring about a *Book of Revelation*—style second coming, end-of-the world. The idea is not unique in contemporary literature. For example, the grim 2010 film *Legion*, set at an Arizona desert truck stop features demons who attack the diners who have little choice but to protect the waitress's sacred unborn child—with Armageddon looming. The 1999 film *Dogma* seems to indicate that the genre of religious apocalypse Gothic had already reached that point of familiarity where parody seems inevitable. In this very silly film, two notorious marijuana addicts—aka "stoners"—assist in stopping a plot hatched by two fallen angels, Bartelby and Loki, who have been banished to Wisconsin for eternity.

Some level of religion is decidedly back in Gothic that is not pulp-horror or "candygothic." Eleanor Beal points to Catholic horror book series *Odd Thomas* (2003—2015), television shows such as *The Strain*, *American Horror Story*, *The Hand of God*, *Walking Dead*, and *The Following*. She finds Judaic horror themes in the *Possession*, *The Unborn*, and *The Wicker Man* and its sequel, *The Wicker Tree*.[6] Apparently, another trend is afoot—known as post-secularism. It addresses a re-emergent spiritual impulse, and at least some scholars again trace its roots largely to fundamentalist, if not evangelical, resistance. So we return to stories of a divine, and Gothic dimensions.

Gaiman's preoccupation toggles between insisting that religious myth is absurd and that myth is necessary, and includes all religious stories as myth. Gaiman's *American Gods*, attempts to treat the twilight of the gods at least a little more seriously. Many types of tribal gods appear in the novel, from to the Norse God Odin, called Mr. Wednesday, to a Slavic demon, Czernobog, to zhouzou, to Kali, to the Native American Buffalo Man. The gods

suffer because as faith in them declines, so does their actual power. The theological question, "why does God require worship, anyway?" never gets asked, and these gods hardly seem deserving of being saved, but the shallow Modern gods—technology being one of them—are at least unlikable, so sympathies tilt in favor of the older gods. The novel builds towards a peculiar battle between these gods—Twilight of the Gods, again in a pop-novel.

By the way, we also have ghosts in the novel: the human protagonist has found that his wife was *in flagrante delicto* with another man at her moment of death, but her ghost visits him on occasion. The protagonist himself will be effectively crucified on a mystical tree in a Viking-esque vigil for Odin, to save the world for the petty gods. The villains are unlovable, though, and the sacrifices made make the battle an epic—and having a *schlemiel* (if I can use that word in an academic setting) serve as the *pharmakos*—the sacrificial lamb--for the world seems perhaps endearing to some but surely trivializing to others. Gaiman treats religion as a generic category with all such beliefs equally primitive. Probably the most significant moments are when the narrator tells us that "Religions are by definition, metaphors":

> God is a dream, a hope, a woman, an ironist, a father, a city, a house of many rooms, a watchmaker who left his prize chronometer in the desert, someone who loves you—perhaps against all evidence a celestial being whose only interest is to make sure your football team,
>
> army, business, or marriage thrives, prospers, and triumphs over all opposition. …Religions are places to stand and look and act, vantage points from which to view the world (508).

And when the protagonist is ushered into the final door into nothingness, he goes with fierce happiness. But the novel doesn't end—it seems have serial endings, about four of them.

Gaiman's novel *Neverwhere* also appropriates *religious* divinity albeit again tossed in amongst cartoonish Disney-gothic characters. In it, another fallen angel, Islington by name, has been imprisoned on earth below the London Underground. His pride erupts when questioned—he concedes that he exterminated the people of Atlantis, but screeches, "They deserved it!" (291). He is furious that "they laughed. At me" (293). And when his intention to take over Heaven in a revolution such as Lucifer's become clear, he pronounces Lucifer "an idiot. It wound up lord and master of nothing at all" (291). Fortunately, when his plot to open the door into Heaven is clarified, he is sucked through an opening into something that he is quite sure can't be Heaven. The Angel Islington at least had some beauty and grandeur before his arrogance was exposed, and his reiteration of the ejection of the fallen angels is not trivializing. Nothing elsewhere in the story is consistent with the insertion of an angel cast out of Heaven though, and as is the case with all of Gaiman's novels, I am left wondering what is its point and why does it dabble in these contemporary Gothic frames?

Postmodern literature is generally qualified as post-didactic, and accused of being trivial or solipsistic (including by John Gardner), but I still had to sort out why these writers are trammeling through this territory. And I think I can at least propose a possible answer. Conspicuously, in dealing with stories about metaphysical beings, they address myth again, at least from a meta-fictive perspective. At a pop-culture level Gothic novels now sell sex, defuse anxiety about sexual alterity, reassure Protestants of exclusivity in heaven, or reassure unbelievers that stories about Hell are hokum. Instead of conducting an anti-

Catholic campaign, serious novels now tend towards dismissing exclusivity among denominations and beliefs, leaning towards the universal traits in religious stories in order to study what stories do. In many of the recent Gothic novels, the question became—what is the source of terror that drives these escapist Gothic yarns? At least within the trend in serious Postmodern literature, the terror derives from being caught between accepting a world where everything is mechanical and ordinary, or taking a leap to trust that myth has necessary sustenance in this world. Repeatedly, almost any suffering in an adventure appears worth it to escape the deadening sameness of known existence. The terror is no longer the extraordinary; it is the real, everyday, mundane world.

Notes

[1] For the basis of this debate, which has now proliferated, see Mohammed Golem Nabi Mozumder, *Interrogating Post-Secularism: Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Talal Asad. (*M.A. Thesis. University of Pittsburg. 2011.) and Charles Taylor. *A Post Secular Age.* (Belknap, 2007), and Habermas, Jurgen. "Notes on a Post-Secular Society." *New Perspectives Quarterly*. Online. September 2008.

[2] Beville locates a common point between the sublime, terror, and postmodernism, citing Jean Baudrillard on the spirit of terror, Jean-Francoise LYotard on the Postmodern Sublime, and Slavoj Szizek's consideration of "the Thing," 11.

[3] For a counterpoint contending that Gothic is pro-Catholic, see Maria Purves, The Gothic and Catholicism (U of Wales P, 2009).

[4] Of the many adaptations, I refer here to the version directed by Ben Bolt, starring Caroline Pegg, Colin Firth et alia.

[5] Given this preoccupation with spiritual metafictions, academic critics may have found the kind of archetypal studies that Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell spcialized in now out of style, but these are among the main preoccupations of contemporary novelists and film-makers.

[6] See Eleanor Beal, "Religious Fears: Fundamentalism and the Gothic" (Blog post Eleanor Beal at gothic.stir.ac.uk).

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Gospel Music Writing in *Bastard Out of Carolina*

By Laura Scovel

In an interview with Mélanie Grué published in *Southern Quarterly* Dorothy Allison describes writing in the glowing terms of music. Allison advises writers, "Great writing always sings . . . The danger . . . is ignoring that singing. What you have to do is work until it begins to sing, and when it begins to sing, then you're there" (Grué 139). In *Bastard Out of Carolina*, Allison takes her own advice and utilizes the rhythmic writing style of gospel music. Her main character and first person narrator Ruth Anne Boatwright, nicknamed "Bone," takes the advice as well. She does not ignore gospel music; she obsesses over it. Repeatedly, Bone tells the reader how gospel music affected her as a child. It brought about emotional reactions, including tears, anger, and desire. Gospel music represents all that she desires in her life including power, recognition, atonement, and love. Gospel music holds promises in both its spiritual implications and as a career of which Bone dreams, though it will ultimately fail to bring her the salvation she so desperately needs.

Bone first dreams of being a gospel singer after attending a revival meeting the summer she stays with her cancer-afflicted Aunt Ruth. She calls it her "secret ambition" and an "obsession" (Allison 137). The revival meeting experience takes place in chapter nine. Chapters ten through twelve focus largely on Bone's gospel music daydreams, her church conversion experiences, and her obsession with Shannon Pearl, her friend whose family books gospel music shows and knows all the singers. Music is present in the whole of the novel, though. Courtney George in her article, "Musical Salvation in Bastard Out of

Carolina" says that music "bookends" the novel. It is present at her grandmother's home, Bone's first "safe space," as George calls it, and present at her Aunt Raylene's home, her final "safe space." George adds, "Country music also acts as the background noise when Bone experiences both happiness and trauma" (135).

Singing gospel music means money for Bone. Bone tells of her promises to God that she wouldn't turn to secular music until she has "glorified His name and bought Mama a yellow Cadillac and a house on Old Henderson Road." This juxtaposition of doxology and wealth humorously shows how Bone wants the power to keep her mother safe and happy. She believes singing gospel music will bring her the money to make this happen. *Bastard Out of Carolina* is defined as "white trash" literature (Giles 75-76). Bone is truly "dirt poor" as a child. At times in the story, Bone's family doesn't even have enough food for a meal (Allison 72). Gospel music held financial promise for Bone in her hungry childhood dreams of a musical career.

But she doesn't want to be singer merely for financial reasons. Bone wants a miracle from gospel music. In Bone's fantasies she is "triumphant and important," not the sexually abused child of her reality. She describes herself as "covered with snot and misery" when her stepfather beats her (Allison 113). She wants music to transform her life, to get her out of her abused reality and give her the power to impact others. Bone says, "I wanted people to moan when they heard the throb in my voice as I sang of the miracle in my life. I wanted a miracle in my life" (Allison 141). Bone wants music to make her life beautiful and influence others. She wants the relief from suffering she thinks the music promises.

Bone does not draw distinctions between her general religious interest and her interest in gospel music in particular. Her obsession leads her to try and impact and change

her family by converting them. Bone dreams of the day when she will save her favorite uncle, Earle. She thinks, "How marvelous it would be when he finally heard God speaking through me and felt Jesus come into his life" (Allison 149). She wants to have such a power and influence over her uncle that she saves his soul. Gospel music, and her new spiritual awareness, focuses Bone's longings for importance and influence in the lives of her family on spiritual matters.

When converting her family fails, she seeks to convert herself for that miracle and recognition. Bone's desire brings her to walk the aisle in multiple churches for attention. She says, "You were all anyone could see at an invocation. There was something heady and enthralling about being the object of all that attention;" she even compares this experience to "singing gospel on the television" (Allison 151). She longs for this salvation experience to make her different, and to make her feel different as gospel music promised. "I wanted that moment to go on forever, wanted the choir to go on with that low, slow music. I wanted the church to fill up with everyone I knew. I wanted the way I felt to mean something and for everything in my life to change because of it" (Allison 151-2). Bone longs for attention; she wants everyone she knows to see her walk the aisle and struggle on the brink of salvation. She also mentions the choir singing, because she associates all of her religious experiences with music.

Bone also wants atonement from gospel music. Bone tells the reader that she "lived in a world of shame. I hid my bruises as if they were evidence of crimes I had committed. I knew I was a sick disgusting person" (Allison 113). She is ashamed of her sexual fantasies and of the abuse she suffers. Gospel music makes her feel ashamed, too, at the August revival meeting while she stays with her Aunt Ruth. She thinks, "I knew, I knew I was the

most disgusting person on earth." Bone continues, "The music was a river trying to wash me clean. I sobbed and dug my heels into the dirt, drunk on grief and that pure, pure voice soaring above the choir." Bone feels the distance between her own digging in the dirt as she sobs and the pure voice soaring in the air. She wants the absolution that the music promises; she wants to feel clean. She wants to apologize "for everything." "Lord, make me drunk on that music," Bone says (135-136). Feelings of her own dirtiness overwhelm her; she wants to be carried away and cleansed by the singing itself. Bone describes an emotional desire for the promises of gospel music, though the object of her longing remains unclear. She says, "The hunger, the lust, and the yearning were palpable. I understood that hunger as I understood nothing else, though I could not tell if what I truly hungered for was God or love or absolution" (Allison 148). Bone cannot discern whether she loves or wants to be loved more: if her love or desire is for God or if she hungers more that God, or anyone, should love and want her.

Bone's desire for love and admiration is poignantly clear at every turn of her story. When Bone masturbates as a child, she daydreams about others watching her stepfather Glen abuse her. Her daydreams give her people who admired her. She wants to be noticed and loved. She imagines, "Those who watched me, loved me. … I was wonderful in their eyes" (Allison 112). Bone's desperation for love is so great that she is jealous when her friend Shannon Pearl receives love from her parents (Allison 156). Bone wants to belong to a family, in particular a gospel music family, like Shannon Pearl's (George 129). The community of singers and revival circuits across the South were a place to belong. Bone thinks gospel music and its community can give her the love and admiration of others in her

reality. She says, "I wanted to be a gospel singer and be loved by the whole wide world . . . I knew I could make them love me" (Allison 141, 143).

Bone's singing in private for comfort continues to indicate her desire for love. While waiting for her mother to bring her back home to her stepfather and sister after her summer spent at Aunt Ruth's, Bone sings, "Sun's gonna shine, in my back door, someday." Bone wants sunshine in her own life. She wants love and warmth. However, she cannot expect this when she returns to Glen's home. On the same late summer day, in a scene that appears shortly after a painful confrontation with Bone's cousin Deedee who is angry about caring for her dying mother, Bone's Aunt Ruth, her despair becomes apparent. Bone asks, "What could I sing that would touch Deedee's heart or my own, comfort either one of us?" (Allison 140). Bone sees music as a power that can both teach Deedee how to love, and help her feel loved. Bone thinks that music should have the power to teach Deedee how to love her dying mother and be happy in her cancer-darkened home, though she is not sure of the exact song. Bone also thinks a song could comfort her and make her feel loved when she is going back to the home of her abuser. George calls gospel music a "'safe space' for an expression of personal trauma (128-129). Music is a haven for Bone that she hopes can supply love and comfort.

However, it becomes clear that, though Bone hopes that gospel music will provide all she wants in her life, it certainly doesn't deliver. George writes, "Gospel music represents a potential escape from the unstable and unloving home life Glen provides for Bone" (129). The words "represent" and "potential" indicate the lack of any "actual" escape. Gospel music does nothing to effectively aid Bone.

Bone has no future music career. Granny tells her, "You can't sing at all" (Allison 143). Her singing, like everything else she does, only makes her step-daddy Glen angrier (Allison 142). The feelings produced by music fail to change her and her family as she hopes. Moreover, she finds sexual abuse and alcoholism near revival tents as much as at home (Allison 163). None of gospel music's promises are fulfilled. She finds her baptism and her multiple church-aisle walks hollow. Bone says, "Whatever magic Jesus' grace promised, I didn't feel it" (Allison 152). There is no real salvation in churches for Bone. In the novel, music provides nothing directly for Bone, except comfort, in spite of her fantastic expectations. Salvation for Bone comes instead when she makes her own choice not return to the violent household of her stepfather. She achieves agency because of her own decisions. Allison portrays Bone as her own real savior.

Aunt Raylene provides the example that saves Bone by helping her make this choice. After she is raped, Bone goes to stay with her aunt to get away from Glen. Aunt Raylene lives alone along the river in a home that fascinates all the cousins. Her aunt becomes an obsession for Bone just like gospel music was. Walerstein writes, "As Bone spends more and more time with Aunt Raylene, she finds herself 'as fascinated' with her aunt as she ever was with gospel. If gospel for Bone is a way to joyfully perform one's shame for all to see, then Raylene is gospel" (Walerstein 179, Allison 180).

Readers see Aunt Raylene perform this function when she tells Bone, "trash rises," speaking jokingly of the debris floating on the river that she collects and sells. The floating garbage illustrates how Bone, defined as "white trash," can rise to the top of the flow of her out of control life (Allison 180). Aunt Raylene praises her for her skills and provides Bone with a little of the attention she is so desperate for. Aunt Raylene protects Bone from Sheriff

Cole's investigation after Glen's assault, as her mother Anney, does not (Allison 297-8). Aunt Raylene corrects Bone. She reproves Bone when she says, "I hate them," about a church bus full of children driving by. Her aunt slaps her on the shoulder, and says, "They look at you the way you look at them." She teaches Bone to try to see the world from another's perspective, before burning up with anger (Allison 262). Aunt Raylene also puts positive expectations on Bone; she tells her niece, "I'm counting on you to get out there and do things, girl" (Allison 182). Bone rises to this affection and encouragement.

Vincent King says, "[Bone] does not find that magic [which can transform her and her world] in gospel music, in the mean-hearted tales she shares with Shannon Pearl, in her violent sexual fantasies, or even in her reading. It is Bone's Aunt Raylene who finally offers her that elusive magic" (134). Aunt Raylene becomes the family member Bone so desperately needs. Bone makes her own new home with Aunt Raylene after her final, nearly deadly, abusive encounter with her stepfather. In the last pages, Bone says, "Raylene called Mama's name softly, then mine, her voice as scratchy and penetrating as the chords of a steel guitar, as familiar as Kitty Wells or a gospel chorus" (308). Aunt Raylene has come to mean all the home and comfort that Bone once looked for in music. Bone says of Raylene that she "trust[s] her arm and her love" (309).

Bone's last emotional meeting with her mother in the novel features country music playing in the background and Aunt Raylene watching protectively. Bone thinks, "The music was still playing. It wasn't God who made us like this. …We'd gotten ourselves messed up on our own" (Allison 306). Since people had "messed up" their lives, Bone indicates that it is their job, not God's, to save. Anney tries to explain to her daughter that she does love her. She tries to explain her love for Glen, and how she "couldn't believe" her

husband would rape and beat her daughter (Allison 306-7). Bone bewails the loss of love and is angry as her mother walks away, but she recognizes a need to make her own choices as she thinks about who she will become (Allison 308).

Bone concludes her story by saying, "I was who I was going to be, someone like her, like Mama, a Boatwright woman." (308). Bone becomes like Raylene, while making a home with her, as she is like her mother. She accepts her Boatwright identity, but there is no longer an "Illegitimate" stamp on her birth certificate. It is blank, giving her freedom to develop her own identity. She is not automatically defined by the title "bastard" any longer. She is a Boatwright unlabeled by society. She can build her life on a foundation of unstamped independence, like Raylene. James R. Giles writes, "To succeed …she will have to accept the bitter lesson that, in the last analysis, there is no one on whom she can depend, not even Anney" (77). In the text it is not Raylene who saves Bone, it is rather Bone saving herself by becoming like Raylene; that is, Bone must become independent. Bone absorbs her aunt's lessons as she does her love. She becomes the trash that rises from the sexual abuse of her childhood.

As the novel concludes, both Bone and the reader are left with multiple questions, but several critics see part of the answers for the reader in the book's own existence; part of the conclusion of the novel is the very fact that the novel was written. Giles writes in his book *The Spaces of Violence,* "The text itself is the primary evidence that Bone has survived. She has borne witness to the fragmentation and reintegration of her self; she has survived by telling her story" (92-93). Bone's story, though fiction, is very much the story of Dorothy Allison. The reader recognizes that a mature woman is telling the bitter, and yet gracious, story of her childhood. Bone's identity and independence continue to grow as she grows,

until she forms her own story. Storytelling shows that she has grown, that she has transformed herself. With storytelling as the final step in the salvation of Bone comes the link back to gospel music.

Creating her narrative provides the escape gospel music failed to give Bone in her childhood. It provides distance from her experience and perspective on her tragic life. Storytelling also provided for Allison the fame and financial gain that Bone once expected from a musical career. Allison speaks of writing as "magic," too, providing that which she cannot feel in "Jesus' grace." Allison tells Grué, "Writing is magic. You've got to be caught by writing …When that magic happens you've got to be willing to write it and let it do what it's going to do … I have to write this magic and see what will happen" (144). The magic of writing carries Allison with its power as gospel music once overpowered Bone. Storytelling has provided where gospel music failed.

In spite of gospel music's failure to provide all that Bone hungers and hopes it can, Allison holds no bitterness towards the music and the craft. She recognizes music's power over her writing and her history in her interview with Grué. That gospel music rhythm characterizes the pages of her novel. It is the vernacular of the South. Allison says, "When I was writing *Bastard*, that's one of the primary things that I was trying to do, to catch the rhythm. It's the thing I'm most proud of; I think I did a decent job" (Grué 133). The South speaks in the terms and cadences of gospel music. According to Allison, "Reading brings back my accent . . . you never lose the rhythms, the paces of your language" (Allison and LeMahieu 669). She has never forgotten the songs of her childhood. They are inseparable from her history and they are inseparable from her writing.

In another interview Allison uses further spiritual terms to characterize her writing. She says, "Writing for me, …it's prayer. It's the place where I have hope, where I can make a story in which people who the world sets out to destroy are not destroyed" (Allison and LeMahieu 659). *Bastard Out of Carolina* is a story of hope for Allison. The hope is not found in any song or religious observance. The hope is found in Bone's resilience: in Bone not being destroyed. Allison indicates that the music is powerless in any Christian religious sense, and yet she reveres it, because it is the sound of home: it is the sound of Mama and Aunt Raylene's voices. Writing Bone's story is both gospel music and a prayer to Allison, and telling her story is also the salvation of Bone from the bitter shame and anger of her childhood. Writing provides the comfort, escape, and even the attention that Bone looked to find in gospel music. Bone's, and Allison's, narrative in *Bastard Out of Carolina* is the song that fulfilled her gospel music dreams.

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Frankenstein: A Runaway of Imagination

By Selah Weems

A tale riddled with ruin and revenge, Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* stands as one of the greatest horror stories ever penned. While Mary Shelley is credited with adding one of the most abominable villains to literary history, her contribution to the Romantic discussion of imaginative theory has unjustly been overlooked. Upon investigation of imaginative theories with particular attention to Romantic opinions, it appears Mary Shelley offers an alternative perspective of imagination in her novel *Frankenstein*. While Romantic theorists like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge insist that imagination is a unifying process between man and Nature or God, Mary Shelley discusses the process of imagination when it is born out of isolation and has no result of unification. The process of imagination that Shelley relates is selfishly derived and driven; rather than unify man with another entity, it forces man to remain in isolation. This form of imagination is encamped in darkness and brings about destruction and remorse, which is in contrast to the Romantic opinion that imagination is uplifting and helps man perceive truth. Through exploration of common Romantic imaginative theories in conjunction with Mary Shelley's alternative form of imagination, it is apparent that the imaginative process can birth two entirely different natures of imagination.

According to Mark Cladis, "The imagination enables us to envision the world from various angles, including hypothetic ones, allowing us sight and insight into what is and what could be" (33). The imagination is the "inward eye," as Wordsworth calls it in his poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud." It is the lens that allows individuals to look more genuinely at the world and the things of the world (Cladis 33). There seems to be no limit to

the imagination, for it is "a vortex into which everything under the sun may be swept" (Lowes 426). Imagination is the very foundation of what Wolfgang Iser calls the artistic and aesthetic poles of literary works, for it is imagination that enables the author to create texts and the reader to engage in or realize the realm that the author creates (279). The virtual dimension of each text is constructed when an individual actively reads a text and constantly strives to establish connections of the text's phrases to knowledge both within and outside the text (Iser 285), and this virtual dimension is entirely contingent upon the reader's imagination.

Nevertheless, the significance of imagination does not entirely rest on what is created, whether it is a written text or virtual dimension, nor is imagination completely concerned with being able to view the world more profoundly. The meaningful facet of imagination consists of more than the individual who creates it or the product created. It is the actual process of imagination that is most noteworthy (Lowes 4). The process of imagination is the fusion of the overflow of emotions and the artist's creation. In his article "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T.S. Eliot notes that it is the "intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts" (105). Therefore, it is the intensity of the imaginative process, whether born of isolation or connectivity to other entities that most profoundly influences the author and his or her work.

Imagination is a major theme throughout Romantic literary discussion. Wordsworth and Coleridge famously discuss imagination in several of their works, such as "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," the *Prelude*, "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," and the *Biographia Literaria*, to name a few. Their conception of imagination is that it elucidates the truth. It is a

humble and spiritual act that allows man to connect with Nature or God. The humble unification that happens between man and Nature could be described as an act of love. Just as love is a humble exchange of gifts, imagination must also be given as a gift. Imagination is not learned or deserved; therefore, it must be received with a spirit of humility.

The type of imagination Shelley describes, however, occurs when man isolates himself from society, but not to have the pure act of connection with Nature. According to Shelley, man uses imagination to pursue knowledge for vainglory and fulfillment. While the popular Romantic opinions of imagination results in a loving union because of its humility, Shelley's concept of imagination is rooted in pride. Pride, of course, is the opposite of humility. Thus, this form of imagination cannot result in love or unification. Rather, it cements one's isolation and destroys relationships. Individuals who pursue this nature of imagination inevitably abandon relationships for the glorification of themselves. Unlike the positively transcendent experiences empowered by imagination that Wordsworth describes in the *Prelude*, Shelley's characters in *Frankenstein* endure unparalleled hardships because of their conceited nature of imagination.

Frankenstein introduces Walton as an ambitious young man determined to make the explorative narratives he reads a reality. Studying travel narratives like "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" no longer gratifies his appetite, nor does it satisfy the intense imagination Walton needs to write the high caliber poetry that he knows he can achieve. It is Walton's goal to better himself as a poet by creating his own polar paradise so that he "might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated" (Shelley 3). Walton views scientific exploration essential for poetry, which is similar to the philosophies of Vergil, Lucretius, Wordsworth, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. According to

Lowes, "It is small wonder that voyages into unknown seas and travels along uncharted roads have always profoundly stirred imaginative minds" (114). Walton's hopes are brimming with the belief that these uncharted seas and frosty, desolated sphere of unknown territory will fulfill his want of knowledge and trigger the second plane of imagination he seeks. Danger is simply an ingredient to his success, and Walton is entirely willing to sacrifice his life and his crew to ensure this goal. Although Walton knows men before him have attempted and failed to reach the North Pole, he writes in a letter to his sister that "success *shall* crown [his] endeavors" (Shelley 11). It is as though Walton feels he is worthier to complete this mission than those who sailed before him. Success is owed to him, and "the very stars themselves [are] witness and testimonies of [his] triumph" (Shelley 12). In a discussion Walton later has with Victor, he mentions that he would happily sacrifice his existence and fortune for his enterprise (Shelley 18). Walton goes a step further by stating he thinks "one man's life or death" is of little consequence for the knowledge and experience he pursues (Shelley 18).

Although Walton's pursuit of imagination is similar to Wordsworth's in that he desires isolation from society in order to reach a higher imaginative plane, unifying or loving Nature does not at all seem to be his mission. He wants glory, which is evident by his desire to have a seat in the temple as authors like Shakespeare (Shelley 3). But Walton's vain pursuit of imagination comes with severe consequences. Because this form of imagination feeds off of pride, the imaginer remains in isolation rather than maintains relationships with other beings. Walton acknowledges that the kind of imagination he seeks deprives him of relationships when he writes to his sister that he faces the "severe evil" of having no friend (Shelley 6).

One could argue that Walton not only desires but also commits to keep a relationship throughout his journey because he constantly writes his sister letters, which ultimately collapses the foundation of an isolated theory of imagination. However, Walton writes the letters for his sake because he has no one on the ship to converse with. According to Walton, imagination has little substance if it is not shared (Shelley 6-7). Therefore, Walton has to share his imagination with someone for it to have significance. It is not a coincidence that Walton chooses to share his imagination with a person who is incapable of returning his correspondence because he is practically unreachable. Evidence suggests that he occasionally receives letters from his sister when he states, "Continue for the present to write to me by every opportunity: I may receive your letters on some occasions when I need them most to support my spirits" (Shelley 9-10). Although it may appear he is eager to hear from her, the reason is not because Walton is interested in his sister's life. Rather, he desires to receive her letters for his personal amusement. Additionally, the sister should write to him on his time frame, as indicated by Walton's statement, "Continue for the present." Walton instructs her to write every time she has opportunity right now because he is only currently interested in her letters for entertainment. Later, when Walton is entertained by his exploration and imagination, he will no longer need the distraction of her correspondence.

Walton's prideful pursuit of an escalated imagination gradually dwindles, however, as he establishes a bond with Victor Frankenstein. Since Shelley's theory of imagination is rooted in pride and isolation, Walton's imagination disintegrates when he is humbled through Victor's companionship. Ultimately, Walton's connection with Victor awakens him from his selfishness. He admits that if he and his men never return home, then his "mad

schemes [i.e. imagination] are the cause" (Shelley 234). Though it takes some persuasion on his crew's part, Walton loses his "hopes of utility and glory" and consents to abandon further polar exploration (Shelley 238).

Although *Frankenstein* is fictional and does not reveal what would have happened to Walton's imagination if he had reached his polar paradise, present day studies have found significant results indicating that Antarctic isolation actually does enhance imagination. Arreed Barabasz found that participants in his study, whether they had short-term (3 weeks) or long-term (12 months) stays in Antarctica, had "substantial increases in imaginative involvement" (299). Long-term participants became so enwrapped in their imagination that they began to ward off intrusion from others (299), which accredits Mary Shelley's theory that imagination has the ability to further detach individuals from relationships.

Victor, the protagonist of Shelley's novel, implements the alternative nature of imagination at a much deeper capacity than Walton ever assumes. The difference between Victor and Walton is that Victor pursues his imagination at all cost. Though Walton believes he is willing to sacrifice himself and other men's lives for his pretentious pursuit (Shelley 18), he does not actually follow through with it (Shelley 237-8). Victor, on the other hand, is absolutely willing to sacrifice everything around him and, consequently, loses all that he cherishes.

Victor grew up in a wealthy home that afforded him an excellent education and could deliver his demand for knowledge (Shelley 38). Cornelius Agrippa, Sir Isaac Newton, and Albertus Magnus are the "lords of [his] imagination" and lead Victor to a destiny that "decreed [his] utter and terrible destruction" (Shelley 34). Victor goes to the University of Ingolstadt, which is where he becomes detached from relationships and begins a journey of

isolation. While Walton desires to have a place in the temple with the world's finest poets, Victor's goal is more feasible. He fervently wants to gain knowledge and take up his "station among other human beings" (Shelley 38), a modest request and similar to most other young adults bounding off for college. A prideful nature does not appear until Victor begins speaking to a few professors. Soon, he hears of scientists' "almost unlimited powers" (Shelley 41). Significantly, Victor learns about an "elixir of life," a way for the human race to continue and ascend in superiority (Shelley 41). The elixir is a chimera, and hereafter Victor determines to create such a being. He resolves to "pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation" (Shelley 41). Walton's dream of becoming a revered poet suddenly seems modest in contrast to Victor's goal of escalating to a godlike status.

It is interesting that Victor would have likely never started imagining his lofty goals if he had not educated himself and studied the scientists who had gone on before him. Just as knowledge of the masters of science prompts Victor in his imagination, the poet's imagination in Wordsworth's *Prelude* is also a response to education. In book 5, Wordsworth names Milton, Homer, Shakespeare, and other poetic giants who have gone on before him as a source or an origin to the imaginative power that is applied in poetic works (Barth 61). Barth reasons that this imaginative power derived from poets of the past is a mysterious experience (62). According to Barth, "Imagination, for all its acknowledged power, remains for the poet—in its origin and in its workings—still wrapped in mystery" (62). In Victor's case, his imagination is clearly charged by his professor's lecture on leaders of science. It is a mystery, though, that Victor should experience a charge to his imagination so powerful that he is sure he will unravel the world's anonymities of creation. *Frankenstein*

only offers Victor's perspective, but it is doubtful other individuals would have left the classroom with so much electrified imagination that they would abandon life as they know it to pursue what should be an impossibility. This is the mystery Wordsworth and Barth refer to. The power of imagination is swathed in mystery because it draws upon different sources for different individuals. It is too ambiguous to define and much too slippery to grasp.

As Victor pursues creating a new being, his imagination is founded in aspirations "to become greater than his nature will allow" (Shelley 47). Much like the poet in *The Prelude*, Victor's imagination moves him beyond all sense of time (Shelley 46-7, 50). However, Victor's imagination leads him to disconnect from Nature, whereas the poet's imagination brings divine unification with Nature. Rather than delight in Nature or draw strength from its forces, Victor uses it as a measurement for his success, as evidenced when he states,

> Winter, spring, and summer passed away during my labors; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves—sights which before always yielded me supreme delight—so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation. The leaves of that year had withered before my work drew near to a close, and now every day showed me more plainly how well I had succeeded. (Shelley 51)

The consequence of drawing away from Nature and isolating himself in this conceited form of imagination effects Victor's mental and physical health (Shelley 47, 66-7). Victor is no longer the robust, calm person he was before starting his mission. Instead, he is stricken daily with a low-grade fever (Shelley 51). His nerves are so agitated that he becomes startled

at the smallest disturbance (Shelley 51). These health problems afflict Victor for the remainder of the novel, for it seems to be a consequence of abandoning Nature.

Not only does Victor detach himself from Nature, but his immersion in imagination desensitizes him to relationships. He ceases correspondence with family and friends, even though he acknowledges how hurtful this is to his relations (Shelley 50). Victor stays unsocial and neglects relationships long after he accomplishes the deed of his prideful imaginings (Shelley 67, 95). At times, Victor attempts to restore a connection with his father and friends, but he never completely escapes the clutches of his dark, isolated imagination (Shelley 178-9, 218, 225-6, 239).

Once Victor completes the monster and sees the evil he authored (Shelley 93), he finds that "not the tenderness of friendship, nor the beauty of earth, nor of heaven" can free him from the misery that his prideful imagination prompted him to pursue (Shelley 95). Love is "ineffectual" to him. Nothing can penetrate his dejected state of isolation (Shelley 95). There is a time when Victor's health is somewhat restored, however. In hopes of forgetting his human sorrows, Victor leaves home to restore his spirits in Nature (Shelley 95). He hikes through villages and up mountains, his burdened soul becoming lighter with every step (Shelley 96). But almost as soon as Nature tries to comfort Victor, he decides to ruminate on his evil creation and miserable existence (Shelley 97). The unity he feels with Nature crumbles. Victor is never quite able to reconnect with Nature, for he refuses to humble himself before it again. Instead of hoping Nature will comfort him as it did before, Victor begs for it to depart from him and leave him to the darkness of his misery (Shelley 160).

Victor not only chooses the miserable destiny of isolation, but he also dooms his very creation to a reviled existence of solitude. The Creature is the literal embodiment of the isolated nature of imagination. In the *Prelude*, imagination produces love, goodness, and truth; however, the Creature, the physical manifestation of Shelley's imaginative theory, serves to create hatred, destruction, and remorse. Produced from Victor's egocentric imaginings, the Creature is fated to live an unhappy, solitary life. No person can stand the sight of him. His presence seems to call forth hatred and fear in the hearts of those around him, even when he strives to be kind and unthreatening. No matter what the Creature does, he finds himself unworthy of human compassion and kindness. Thoughts of his creator's abandonment haunt the Creature. The more he feels isolated, the more he hates Victor for bringing him to life (Shelley 146).

Once the Creature resolves that there is no hope of being accepted into society and will remain condemned in isolation, he declares "everlasting war against the [human] species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery" (Shelley 146). Therefore, the living entity produced from an isolated form of imagination is destined to a wretched, solitary existence, and it ensures its author to a despondent, lonely life. The Creature tells Victor that he will "desolate" Victor's heart and devastate his life in such a way that Victor will regret the day he was born, just as the Creature curses his birth. The only way the Creature will allow Victor to live a life with relationships and happiness is if Victor consents to creating another being like the Creature (Shelley 158). Just as Walton believes that imagination cannot have substance if it is not shared (Shelley 7), the Creature cannot find peace or feel significant until his circumstances

are shared. However, because of the prideful and isolated nature that the Creature was conceived in, he will never have substance and will always remain in seclusion.

Likewise, as long as the Creature exists, as long as selfishness and pride remain in Victor's life, Victor must always face painful isolation. It could be said that Victor did actually make a friend out of Walton at the end of his life. However, instead of Walton being snatched from Victor like all of his other relations eventually were, Victor was taken from Walton through death. "I have lost my friend," Walton writes to his sister (Shelley 238). He continues with, "While I am wafted towards England and towards you, I will not despond." Although Victor is doomed to have all of his friendships destroyed by the very creation of his imagination, his story and interaction with Walton inspires the young captain to go "towards" his sister. Victor's tale is one of complete tragedy; though he must end his life in loneliness, his story drives Walton out of isolation, "toward" society and companions.

At the end of *Frankenstein,* the Creature realizes that with the end of his creator's life he must also die (Shelley 245). Imagination cannot endure without the imaginer if it is not shared; therefore, the creation of isolated imagination cannot subsist after the death of its creator. Victor shared his imagination (knowledge and vengeance against the Creature) with Walton; however, Walton does not take up Victor's passion for continuing a pursuit against the Creature, as evidenced when Walton writes for the second time that he is journeying toward England (Shelley 240). When Walton accidently discovers the Creature hanging over Victor's body, he cannot subject himself to Victor's request to kill the Creature. Instead, Walton is moved by "curiosity and compassion" before confronting the Creature with his duplicitous deeds (Shelley 241). The Creature looks at Walton with despondency and states,

"I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart which the imagination of it was conceived and long for the moment when these hands will meet my eyes, when that imagination will haunt my thought no more. […] I shall die" (Shelley 245). The Creature jumps from the vessel, and his body vanishes in the darkness (Shelley 246).

In *Frankenstein* Shelley successfully poses an alternative, darker theory of imagination to Romantic ideas on the subject. Ruin, revenge, and one of history's most abominable fictitious villains may very well be the most prominent aspects of this novel. Nevertheless, none of these features would exist if not for Victor Frankenstein's runaway of imagination.

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Pedagogical Approaches

Reforming the Composition Classroom: Accessing Flipped Learning Techniques

By Shanell Bailey

As an educator in higher education, I attempt to figure out diverse means to grasp the attention of students in a number of ways. One of the most successful strategies I've tried is flipped instruction, although the composition classroom is a tad bit more complex in terms of this technique. The flipped classroom is a teaching model where students do traditional classroom activities, such as listening to lectures, at home via the Internet resulting in more time for engaging practice activities in class. In flipped classrooms, teachers are more involved in practice and activities which are done in class, rather than for homework. This gives the students who may need additional assistance the opportunity to work with their peers in order to gain a better understanding of the material. Having this extra time during face-to-face instruction allows teachers to see exactly where students struggle so that they can adjust their teaching accordingly. The concept of the flipped classroom has received increasing attention based on its potential to build a student-centered learning atmosphere that integrates practical instruction along with collaborative techniques. The technique of flipping has mainly been connected to the incorporation of video technology, either in the form of student-centered learning or an instructor lecture, via on-line delivery paired with a classroom seminar involving collaboration and/or application exercises in the face-to-face lecture. The flipped approach separates itself from traditional instructional techniques that focus on the introduction of new materials in the classroom via a lecture format. In essence, the "flipped" standard introduces information to the student prior to his/her attendance in the classroom, but perhaps more importantly, it starts a dialogue between the students and the instructor prior to the presentation of the material with a

corresponding anticipation that the information presented will center on higher level cognitive processes such as analysis, evaluation, and comparison.

As I thought of the different types of students that I have encountered, as well as the different learning styles and a variety of delivery methods that have been successful inside of my classroom, I decided to do an in-depth research through the path of flipped learning. In the past, I have noticed that student facilitating, peer reviews, and collaborative learning increase student participation and involvement and reduce classroom disruptions and other hindrances. My findings will help me decide whether or not the modernization of flipped learning could help the students inside of the composition classroom.

Customarily, English composition classes focus on rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, writing processes, and knowledge of a variety of conventions. Regardless of the approach chosen, instructors are encouraged to develop assignments that will help students reach certain projected outcomes. With the recent inception of QEP, our students here at Mississippi Valley State University have spent more time outside of the classroom using the Digital Writing Center. Face-to-face learning is the preeminent and traditional way to explain the writing process and the rhetorical components of a situation in composition. My colleagues and I have noted that using academic composition articles to teach first-year students how to write can be slightly challenging. As instructors, we prepare our students to write across all of the academic disciplines and to better understand and accept writing itself. According to the article "Engaging Writing About Writing Theory And Multimodal Praxis: Remediating Waw For English 106: First Year Composition," a better practice can be used. The article states, "Incorporating hands-on invention exercises involving technology and social media platforms with which many students are already familiar" can "cushion the learning curve for students." This practice could

also help students “make the necessary connections between the texts we read and their own daily writing practices” (120). The article goes on to note that instructors should aim to maintain technological inclusions in the composition classroom by offering a stream of assignments and activities that complement our students’ growing literacies in technology and composition theory (121). With composition being the focal point, the traditional flipped approach would involve the presentation of an online

lecture and a subsequent use of the face-to-face session to discuss or debate the key issues and themes related to the lecture.

One of the early assignments in composition, and one that students often need help with, is note taking. Note taking, in addition to helping retention, allows students to become effective learners. George Dudycha, a professor of psychology at Wittenberg College, states, “The taking of notes facilitates learning. When one takes notes he attends to what is said and done; he analyzes and thinks rapidly about what he sees and hears; and finally he records his observations. Attending to, analyzing, and doing something about a class lecture means the student is actively engaged in those activities that are essential to effective learning.” He goes on to say that notes are “the cues that stimulate recall.” Oftentimes, notes are taken inside of the classroom with several options. Some students take notes by writing them down, typing them out, or simply recording the lecture so that they can go back and get a better understanding. With the flipped learning technique, this practice can be done at home. Instead of an in-class lecture, the instructor can give the assignment and have the students prepare the notes outside of class. An Internet session can even be planned so that the students can work cooperatively. Concepts and ideas can be shared amongst each other. Once the students return to class, the instructor can allow the students to share what they have learned together. This can alleviate a percentage of time used in

the classroom, since the subject has already been discussed outside of the classroom. This allows the instructor to execute all intended assignments on the syllabus. As we all know, some lectures are tougher than others.

Another major assignment in composition is revising and editing. Students are given time in between submission of their rough drafts and final drafts to make necessary changes that are needed. Sometimes the changes are limited; however, there are instances when the students have to drastically revise the entire paper. In my class, we have a day set aside to have peer reviews on the rough drafts. Each student is given a classmate's paper. A guideline on how to evaluate and grade their classmates' papers is handed out as well. The students are asked to carefully and meticulously read the entire piece of work. Once they have done so, they are to give honest feedback to the student so that he/she can make the necessary revisions towards improving their writing. By using the flipped learning teaching method, a session can be set up outside of the classroom where the students can meet and spend more than the typical 50 minutes allowed to critique the papers. I have noticed that students tend to feel more relaxed working with each other as opposed to receiving criticism from the instructor.

My experience has shown that flipped learning can certainly be used in the composition classroom. I am a firm believer that teaching methods in the traditional classroom work and are helpful to the students. But with technology and social media having such a major impact on students, using it for educational purposes can have favorable results. It will grab their attention quicker than an in-class lecture and keep their attention at the same time. Scholar Gökçe Kurt agrees. In "Implementing The Flipped Classroom in Teacher Education: Evidence From Turkey," he states:

> The call for reform in higher education due to the advent of new technologies requires changes to traditional pedagogy. The flipped classroom approach allows for such a pedagogical shift to create a student-centered, individualized learning environment based on the constructivist theory of learning. The present study adds to the growing field of literature about the flipped approach. Furthermore, it confirms the findings of similar studies by presenting evidence of academic achievement and favorable perceptions about the flipped classroom as an innovative instructional approach in a higher education course. (218)

Researcher M. Abdulrahman offered a constructive response to the flipped learning teaching strategy, too. He agrees that "Flipped classrooms are not limited to certain groups of learners, a specific curriculum or a particular content area." He elaborates:

> It seems that this learning strategy has greater influence on higher education students, especially in terms of the development of higher-order thinking skills, such as creativity. This is because the development of students' creativity is a critical task for higher education systems worldwide. Additionally, higher education students can be more open to change and have greater ability to manage their study loads, especially using technology that is part of their everyday life activities. Furthermore, through the application of flipped classrooms, higher education students have the opportunity to be more independent and autonomous learners, which may positively influence their creative thinking. (1144)

On the other hand, not everyone supports the flipped learning method. Research conducted by Alison DeNisco indicates that not all educators are fond of flipped learning. Now, the very concept of homework is being disrupted by the advent of the flipped classroom, which

involves a teacher's presentation being delivered outside of class, via a video that students view at home, while class time is used for active problem solving by students (which would traditionally be considered 'homework') and one-to-one or small group tutoring with the teacher.

She also notes that it remains difficult to show the connection between increased homework or work assigned outside of the classroom, due to influencing factors such as teacher effectiveness and class participation. Most agree that assigning work outside of the classroom should be purposeful, and that more does not translate to better. "Busy work turns students off from learning," the article stated. "If they can see the connection between what they're doing as homework and what they need to know [for class], they are much more willing to do the homework."

Findings in this study indicate that the flipped learning technique can help generate innovative ideas, motivate students to participate actively in the discussions, and provide an atmosphere for involvement and commitment. The change of atmosphere in the classroom means giving students the power to take practical and meaningful roles in the traditional classroom. As such, by analyzing both the quantity and the quality of the discussion threads in this study, it was found that the self-directed approach serves as an empowering opportunity for students. The study of flipped learning can be used to overcome the challenges of instructor-led facilitation, enhance the sense of a learning community, and encourage students' participation in class discussions inside and outside of the classroom.

This pedagogical approach is useful not only to inspire active student participation, but also to increase positive learning results. It is probable that it can decrease the instructor's job while giving him/her more time to focus on other assignments. Using successful flipped learning approaches, students are introduced to advanced techniques to participate in with the rest of the

students in the classroom. Flipped learning cannot be successfully implemented in one class setting. Careful planning has to be put into the instructional activities, such as modeling student facilitation, being present in the discussions, as well as preparing students before they take the lead in the discussions. My intended objective is not to dictate how to teach one's class, but to address some of the strategies that could be used by instructors and teachers, respectively, within the composition classroom that will allow more students to actively participate in classroom discussions.

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freshmancompoers.com: An Open Source Educational Resource for Freshman Composition Courses

By Andrew Nelson

Publishing in the field of Rhetoric and Composition has become more and more challenging. A shortage of peer reviewed scholastic journals, the competitive nature of the field, the sheer difficulty of our discipline—these are just a few reasons which may explain the challenges for Rhet/comp scholars. Faced with these realities, Open Educational Resources (OERs) may be a viable scholarly option for those of us who want to further the discourse in the field, about which, we are so passionate. OERs are free to the public, and can be used by any scholar with minimum attribution. Often in the form of documents uploaded to websites, OERs not only present the opportunity for both users and content creators to communicate with each other—facilitating discourse between colleagues—but also allow content creators to argue that their OERs have been used by a colleague; and thus, demonstrate refereed scholarship.

In addition to the scholarly advantages OERs present to Comp professors, students can certainly benefit from these resources as well. With the skyrocketing prices of textbooks, especially in the sciences and mathematics, OERs provide significant cost saving. At the least, OERs can provide supplemental instruction for students, and at most, OERs have replaced traditional textbooks entirely. In the digital age, where students desire more and more on-line instruction, OERs continue to be a real option for both teaching and

scholarship throughout the academy. In order to more fully understand contexts—both historical and contemporary—an informed discussion of Open Educational Resources involves: 1) A brief history of OERs; 2) An argument for OERs as evidence of scholarship; 3) The benefits of OERs from the student's perspective; and, 4) A presentation of a freshman writing OER, in the form of a website I developed called: freshmancompoers.com.

According to the United Nations Scientific, Educational, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) web resource, the term "Open Educational Resources" was first mentioned at the 2002 UNESCO Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education (unesco.org). In practice, a major development occurred in October of that same year, when Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced its Open Courseware initiative. MIT made course syllabi, PowerPoint slides, and lesson plans available to the public. The implications of MIT's move to make available entire courses to the public are significant: anyone with an internet connection can "take" a literature course at MIT. The readings, the pedagogical resources, syllabi: everything students need to take and pass a course at one of the top flight universities in the country would now be available to the public. In a sense, MIT is not selling the institution; they are selling knowledge. Gerd Kortemeyer suggests this marked "the birth of the open educational resource (OER)."

Since the origins on the OER movement almost fifteen years ago, libraries dedicated to housing OERs presently exist; one of which, is oercommons. Their mission statement, articulated on the homepage oercommons.org, affirms a dedication to professional learning "Our award-winning OER Professional Learning programs support instructors and curriculum specialists to gain the necessary skills required to find, adapt, and evaluate high

quality open materials" (oercommons.org). Oercommons groups learning aids into twelve different subject matter, ranging from Arts & Sciences, to Social Sciences. Resources are also grouped according to learning levels from preschool, through graduate level, and adult learning. As the result of digital libraries, such as oercommons, content contributors, and students alike, possess the ability to access the latest in teaching and learning. The implications for this are significant. Students have access to learning supplements, which can aid in student success. Additionally, content contributors have the opportunity to present materials in an open, discursive space like oercommons. This reality certainly anticipates a discussion of scholarship, and raises questions about how open educational resources fit into academic publishing.

To initiate a discussion of open educational resources and publishing, a personal anecdote may help. Recently, I was asked to apply for a position as a course developer for the newly launched, on-line branch of the University of Arkansas, called *e*versity. I applied and was hired for the job. Three other educators, and myself, were challenged with developing a first semester writing class for *e*versity. After a year of headaches, we finally completed the course, and it became part of the *e*versity curriculum. As the result of my experience, and work on this University of Arkansas system project, I was asked to participate in a University of Arkansas @ Monticello project, in which, several professors were asked to create a class without textbooks. During one of our committee meetings, the acting Provost mentioned the possibility that the courseware we developed for these classes could be shared in the digital domain. He argued that if another professor used one of our digital resources in their teaching, that could be used as evidence of scholarship. Admittedly, I had never thought of my work with *e*versity—or with digital texts in general—

that way. But why not? In "The Open Educational Resources Movement: Current Status and Prospects" Gary Matkin believes oers can "increase their reputations as leaders in their fields, showcase excellent work to a world-wide audience leave an academic legacy that others can build upon, embrace the values of innovation, collaboration, and openness. benefit learners without unduly impacting workload, become an active member of a dynamic intellectual community dedicated to excellence in teaching" (Matkin).

Matkin, the Dean of Continuing Education at the University of California Irvine, also outlines the many benefits oers can have for students; one of which, is free access to high quality educational materials. In my own teaching, I am cognizant of keeping student costs at a minimum. At one time, I used a textbook in my comp classes; however, I have since moved to teaching my Comp courses without textbooks. I upload all of my reading assignments, and pedagogically related documents on Blackboard. Until the student loan debt crisis in this country is finally addressed, I believe I need to be doing whatever I can to ease the financial burden on today's student. Keeping costs down by going completely digital makes sense. From an ethical perspective, I feel a strong need to do that. So oers make complete sense for today's student who justifiably worries about the cost of their education.

That is a brief history of oers in higher education, and some of the benefits for today's students and faculty. In practice, I have developed an oer—in the form of a website—which contains pedagogical aids in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Freshmancompoers.com is mainly directed toward educators; however, I think students, or even the public, would be able to grasp most of the concepts explained on my website. I'd like to end with a link to my website that will illustrate the work I've done in this area. I

hope that you can take the time to visit it, and I welcome all feedback:

https://freshmancompoers.com/.

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The Walking Dead: Mapping Digital Yoknapatawpha

By Lorie Watkins

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."
--William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*

My epigraph, which is the almost-ironic inspiration for my title, is probably the most famous line in all of William Faulkner's work. It refers, of course, to the theme that permeates his fiction, that the past is alive in the present as it influences the people and events of his more modern apocryphal South. Now, the fictional world of Yoknapatawpha County comes alive in a very different way in a new website at the University of Virginia where readers can actually "see" Faulkner's texts digitally unfold. University of Virginia English professor Stephen Railton and scholarly collaborators from around the world began working on the Digital Yoknapatawpha Project. The work will continue thanks to a $286,000 award from the National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Research division. It funded an editorial summit this summer at the University of Virginia (which I got to attend!) and will continue to fund the project's development. With interactive maps and timelines, the website will eventually include links to places, characters and events in Yoknapatawpha,

About two-thirds of the data have already been entered, making even the prototype usable right now as a resource for scholars, teachers and students. So what can we do with this information? Well, to quote Steve Railton:

> Using DY's narrative and chronological "timelines," students reading *The Sound and the Fury* are able visually to appreciate the way the narrative moves forward by repeatedly returning to different moments in the past, one of Faulkner's signature gestures but also, invariably, one of the most confusing for students. Plotting the novel's events on a timeline also reveals meaningful patterns and potential interpretive discoveries. At least, I had a kind of epiphany the first time we projected the novel's events onto our display and I realized that the narrative's earliest moment is in the story Rev. Shegog tells about the birth and death of Jesus; the rise and fall of the Old South comes later. For my students, being able to visualize Benjy's constricted movements in space while his memory repeatedly takes him back in time, or watching how Quentin's body moves around in Massachusetts while his mind keeps carrying him back to Mississippi have helped them move from the kind of questions first-time readers have to ask – What is happening? – to the kinds of questions that as a teacher I want them to explore: What does it mean? What can Faulkner tell us about our human condition? The technology, of course, can't answer those kinds of questions, but perhaps it can prompt novel and useful ways to frame them. (457-58)

With an eye towards making the site more useful for classroom teachers, we plan to add a section soon with educational essays, worksheets, and lesson plans. Of course, you don't

have to use those materials to use the website, but you do have to give students specific objectives. This is a lesson that I learned, painfully. I was teaching a group of undergraduates, and we were studying "A Rose for Emily." It's one of the most developed maps on the site, so I seized the opportunity to try to bring DY into the classroom. I thought I was going to introduce my class to the coolest thing they'd ever seen. Since my students regularly prove themselves more tech savvy than me, I honestly expected them to teach ME something, as I was fairly new to DY at the time. I gave them the information for the site, put them in groups in the computer lab, and told them to play around with it, and we'd come back together as a class to share our discoveries. I saw much clicking and whispered discussion as I moved around shadowing various groups, so I THOUGHT all was well. Well, they must have been discussing lunch plans or something, because when we came back together the most insightful comment from any group was, "It kind of looks old school, like Pong. My dad made me play that once." Jennie Jo Joiner describes a similar experience. She writes that she expected her students to be excited about the project, but after introducing them to the site and letting them explore it:

> I was greeted instead with silence. After waiting an excruciating 10 minutes as students clicked away, I asked "well?" One student, looking up from the screen, bravely asked "what does the purple mean?" This was not the response I expected, and, frankly, as a *DY* collaborator and teacher sharing a new pedagogical tool with students in the classroom, I left class feeling devastated. This seems a poor story to advocate for the use of DY in the classroom. But I tell it to underscore what I learned during that class: DY needs introduction and contextualization by the teacher. (473)

To that end, we've already created a tutorial with an eye toward pedagogy using "A Rose for Emily," the text that teachers arguable teach most often at:

http://people.virginia.edu/~sfr/DYDemo/TeachingEmily/TeachingEmilyDemo.html

If you want to see where I got the title of this paper, which is more clever by half than the paper itself, then play a few minutes of the bottom video.

They may not be zombies, but these dramatizations do allow Faulkner's fictions to stand up and walk. As Faulkner himself said, a story "begins with a character, usually, and once he stands up on his feet and begins to move, all I can do is trot along behind him with a paper and pencil trying to keep up long enough to put down what he says and does" (101). Now, we can do the same.

In closing, I just want to say that I began working on this project because I was interested in the digital humanities, I knew a lot about Faulkner, and I thought that I could usefully contribute to something "new" in Faulkner studies. What I've learned, though, is immeasurable. I always read Faulkner's fiction AS fiction, separate from the world that produced it. Digital Yoknkapatawpha has, oddly enough, made that world more real for me. I think I can best explain with an example. Last year I worked on "The Tall Men," an obscure story that Faulkner wrote on the eve of US involvement in World War II in early 1941 with a clear financial imperative to pay off owed back taxes. He gauged the market correctly; the story sold in less than a week to *The Saturday Evening Post*, where it was published on May 31, 1941, only ten weeks after Faulkner sent it to his agent, Harold Ober.

As I worked on the story, I realized that its commercial success was in part due to its contemporary relevance. It appeared after two key events: In 1933, the Agricultural Adjustment Act was enacted regulate farm surpluses, and on September 16, 1940, the first

peacetime draft was enacted, "The Tall Men" conjoins these two events in the McCallum family's refusal to be governed in this manner. This reluctance mirrors the historically independent spirit of the Scotch-Irish settlers of old who came to America in search of freedom from arguably the same sort of oppression that the current generation resists. Still, as we note in the Note on the Text:

> The story seems to celebrate traditional values of courage and patriotism as Marshal Gombault "interprets" these oddly independent people so that the draft board investigator, Mr. Pearson, can understand the purity of their motives. Although critics in turn praise and criticize the McCallum family's values and the story's patriotic themes, in the end "The Tall Men" is almost universally dismissed by critics as didactic in tone and lacking in subtly and substance. (Railton and Watkins)

All of this is just to say that working on Digital Yoknapatapwha made Faulkner's fiction "real" for me in a way that the fiction itself never did. Our hope is that it can do this and more for you and your students.

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