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EDITOR'S NOTES

The 2011 meeting of the Mississippi Philological Association was fortunate to return to the home of one of its founding members, Jackson State University. Patsy J. Daniels chaired the conference (she put in a full year, I think, this being alongside promoting a recent book on Southern Literature as a Postcolonial Literature), ably assisted by Elizabeth Overman. With the help of Candis Pizetta *et vir* she also hosted an elegant social hour and dinner at the opening of the conference, and prepared the way for a keynote address for the conference, given by Jerry Ward of Dillard University (well known in this area by his former association with Tougaloo). Many thanks are due to Professor Daniels and her colleagues at Jackson State for their hospitality.

Jerry Ward's justifiable celebrity has grown quite a bit recently, largely due to his work on Richard Wright. He was gracious enough to share with us his address on Wright, previously unpublished in North America. We are of course grateful to him for his generosity.

In this issue we range from local to global: for the first time we have poetry and criticism of distinctly African origin. I selected and included Joe Amoako's funeral ode for Yaw Ackah of Ghana because I thought it beautiful. Conceivably, it will lose something by not being read by Amoako's voice with its rich cadence and slight tinge of an accent, but I still trust it to be effective. We also have a Nigerian author, Chimamanda Adichie, treated in an essay by Uju Ifeanyi. For the Mississippi Philological Association to recognize a degree of African roots seems to me entirely natural.

I thank the presenters; many of those included herein have helped carry the conference through the last several years and have helped keep its quality high.

Now to some business matters. Having attended a few other conferences in our field, and having noticed a sharp decline, I thank the loyal members of this conference. Given Katrina, two ice storms, a declining population in part of this region, and a drop-off in funding in the humanities, MPA has remained remarkably steady and solvent. As you probably are aware, scholarly journals are under siege in North America. Many have responded by going strictly online, a measure responding in part to fading library subscriptions. High profile journals such as *Poe Studies* and *ESQ* were dumped this year by university administrators with an eye to the bottom line. So far, our journal remains in print and available through EBSCOHOST, though we may need to consider changes in the near future. Nevertheless, we have survived and continued to find and publish articles of high quality. So, again, you are due thanks.

The conference moves next year to one of its traditional mainstays, Delta State University, to be hosted by James Tomek. We look forward to seeing you there.

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Keynote Address:

Jerry Ward

Dillard University

Directions in the Study of Richard Wright

Contemporary studies in languages and literatures are marked by varying degrees of anxiety. The impact of new technologies on the uses of language can b noted in the alacrity with which many people engage one another in social networks. Users, particularly in the United States, instant message, tweet, text-message, or post items on Facebook in forms that contrast dramatically with tradition uses of standard American English. People who have been trained to attend carefully to spelling, grammar, syntax, coherence, and unity of ideas may find themselves either amused or dismayed or confused by the new forms of communicating. On the other hand, people who little regard for accuracy or nuances in communication willingly embrace what might be called a "rhetoric of carelessness." They seem to be convinced that playful inventiveness is the future, that linguistic conventions are arbitrary, and that minimal representation of though is the ideal. Thus, it is to be expected that some scholars and teachers fear that ne habits of writing and reading will undermine the desire or ability of younger generations to make critical judgments about literature. These new habits eschew

the discipline and patience necessary for analysis and interpretation of literature. They cannot be dismissed as trivial, because they are fundamental in changing what counts as knowledge.

Anxiety about literature and language is intensified by ambivalence regarding the changes that accompany the progress of globalization. Those changes influence how we speak of a large range of topics: emerging world orders, ecology, biocultural transformations (including shifts in the cognitive functions of the brain), and the cultural studies that have displaced or subsumed what was once called literary theory and criticism. Even if we try to be empirical and scientific in our approaches to the study of literature, we still have the onus of being uncertain in efforts to generate appropriate questions for our investigations of twentieth-century American writers. We are overwhelmed by our options; we choke on our wealth of information. We are frustrated by global theories that dismiss the importance of nations and national boundaries (which are also cultural boundaries) that have been so critical in the growth of American, or to be more accurate, United States literature. Much depends on how one conceptualizes globalization in the study of literature, or answers the question: what is globalization?

Is globalization primarily a way of thinking about historical processes, or is it a conviction that post-modernity has succeeded in compromising our ability to

locate ourselves and our cultural expressions in a history that can be verified? These questions do not have simple answers. Theory notwithstanding, we can be sure that twentieth-century literature is indelibly marked by national origins. It is unethical to pretend that older works can or should be read as if they were written under the conditions of electronic revolutions. Globalization may make us sensitive to the metaphor of the uncertainty principle, but it neither can nor should erase historical consciousness in literary and cultural studies. Historical consciousness existed prior any newfangled global consciousness. Cautionary hypotheses ought to govern directions in the study of the literature of the United States or of any nation-state. Awareness of the limits of knowledge is crucial, for example, in the study of Richard Wright (1908-1960).

It is remarkable that many contemporary studies of Wright's works tend to recycle old ideas about "universal" themes, naturalism, modernism, the writer's ideology and political intentions, and the much overworked notion of "double consciousness" as an innate feature of African American thought. The more progressive or future-oriented studies, however, attempt to be interdisciplinary. They may adapt some version of intersectionality research, which "is defined principally by its focus on the simultaneous and interactive effects of race, gender class, sexual orientation, and national origin as categories of difference in the United States and beyond"(185). Studies that borrow from intersectionality theor

have the potential of making us more discriminating in our investigations of Wright's works. They can assist us in distinguishing between which of his works have immediate **productive relevance** (the potential to provoke synchronic thinking about contemporary human issues) and those which have **reflective relevance** (the potential to invite diachronic thinking about change). For example, Wright's novella "Down by the Riverside" provokes thought about human behavior in the aftermath of natural or man-made disasters; in contrast, *Native Son* and *12 Million Black Voices* may invite thought about the historical consequences of migration and urbanization, whereas *Black Power* may urge us to ponder the vexed outcomes of twentieth-century liberation struggles in the post-colonial African nation of Ghana. It is reasonable to argue that future studies of Richard Wright and other American writers of his generation should examine both the writer's and the reader's assumptions about the function of literature in his or her own time. It is illuminating to know whether harmony or discord is more prominent. Otherwise, we shall only compound anxiety and confusion what makes literature relevant in the contexts of globalization.

Directions in the study of Wright are most valuable when they are aligned with questions about what his works reveal or seem to predict about human beings and change. For what revolutions in human thought do Wright's works continue to

be germane? Does the impact Wright wanted his fiction and nonfiction to have stil affect us? Will continuing study keep interest alive?

Explorations associated with the 2008 Richard Wright Centennial allow us to sketch how Wright scholars have begun to reposition their engagements with hi published and unpublished works and how those works may assume new significance for readers and thinkers. The celebration of Richard Wright as an internationally honored citizen of the republic of American letters and culture did not officially conclude, at least for those who respected the wishes of the Richard Wright Estate, until November 28, 2010, the fiftieth anniversary of his death. Thi conclusion, however, was a resumption of efforts to secure memory of Wright's significance beyond his writing the classic texts *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945), staples of American cultural literacy in schools where censorship is not tolerated. New directions point to Wright's presence or absence in the reorientations of the Barack Obama Era, which is especially marked by post-racia claims that paradoxically co-exist with an increasing significance of race.

It is noteworthy, for example, that Mark Bracher's "How to Teach for Social Justice: Lessons from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Cognitive Science" provides remarkable footnote on the philosophical and psychological qualities of *Native Sc* which can provoke "a recognition that entails, for all white readers, the further

recognition that we are ultimately responsible for all the Biggers (white and black) and their horrific and brutal actions" (384). Perhaps Bracher unintentionally reifies a black/white binary formation, forgetting that some of the Biggers among us in the second decade of the 21st century are Hispanic or Asian-Americans or as mixed-race as a Tiger Woods. In the context of the Centennial, Bracher's idea is a red flag. If Bigger Thomas and other characters from Wright's fictions are used as sociological icons without rigorous qualifications, we risk intellectual impoverishment; we miss or dismiss the importance of the salient points Wright made in the essay "How 'Bigger' Was Born" regarding the origins of fictions and the No Man's Land "which the common people of America never talk of but take for granted." One of the more valuable lessons of Centennial activities was how lack of skepticism about limits promotes blindness rather than insight. For just such a reason, new directions entail remembering.

David A. Taylor's *Soul of a People: The WPA Writers' Project Uncovers Depression* American (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009) and Brian Dolinar's "The Illinois Writers' Project Essays: Introduction," *Southern Quarterly* 46.2 (2009): 84-90 bid us to examine Wright's use of ethnography more closely than did Carla Cappetti's book *Writing Chicago: Modernism, Ethnography, and the Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). Rereading of Wright's 1930s proletarian poems (only "Between the World and Me" seems to get notice for its

lynching theme) and stories (*Uncle Tom's Children*) will beget re-examination of *Lawd Today!* and the topic of spousal abuse and fresh examination of domestic workers and organized labor in the unpublished novel *Black Hope* (based in part o Wright's extensive interviewing of domestic workers in New York). James A. Miller's excellent chapter "Richard Wright's Scottsboro of the Imagination" in *Remembering Scottsboro: The Legacy of an Infamous Trial* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) creates a fine opportunity to investigate Wright's perspectives on the American criminal legal system in *Native Son*, *Rite of Passage* (1994), *The Long Dream* (1958), and *A Father's Law* (2008). Indeed, Wright's importance in critical discussions of race, law, and legal ethics has yet to be tappe David Taylor's article "Literary Cubs, Canceling Out Each Other's Reticence," *Th American Scholar* (Summer 2009):136-141 provides new information regarding Wright's correspondence with Nelson Algren, and we should go to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Yale University) to discover more about Wright's correspondence with Joe C. Brown and others. Despite the biographical attention that has been given to Wright by Constance Webb, Michel Fabre, John A Williams, Margaret Walker, Addison Gayle, and Hazel Rowley, much about the fu extent of Wright's intelligence and analytic imagination has not been engaged.

We should want to learn from the applications of cutting-edge theory in W. Lawrence Hogue's "Can the Subaltern Speak? A Postcolonial, Existential Readin

of Richard Wright's Native Son," *The Southern Quarterly* 46.2 (2009): 9-39 and Mikko Tuhkanen's "Queer Guerillas: On Richard Wright's and Frantz Fanon's Dissembling Revolutionaries, *Mississippi Quarterly* 61.4 (2008): 615-642. Both articles put *Native Son* and *Black Power* (1954), *The Color Curtain* (1956), and *White Man, Listen!* (1957) in the present space of terrorism, suggesting which kinds of international theory might enable contemporary readers to absorb and digest Wright's 20th century perspectives. Likewise, *Richard Wright: New Readings in the 21st Century* (2011), edited by Alice Mikal Craven and William E. Dow, contains fresh essays that bid us to consider how the transnational qualities of Wright's works might necessitate some use of transcultural theory.

Wright's uncanny intelligence and imagination, we should remember, enabled him to warn us in *The Color Curtain* that it is not difficult to imagine Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, and Shintoists launching vast crusades, armed with modern weapons, to make the world safe for their mystical notions… (218). Ongoing re-examination of Wright's works may yet reveal other warnings that have been ignored.

"On 'Third Consciousness' in the Fiction of Richard Wright," *The Black Scholar* 39.1-2 (2009): 40-45 is a welcomed Eastern challenge from Professor Chen Xu (Hangzhou Dianzi University) to the adequacy of W. E. B. DuBois's

thoroughly Western idea of double-consciousness. If we embrace the probable effectiveness of "third consciousness" in marking a certain uniqueness in African American literary traditions, we may better understand the historical silence of double-consciousness (or playing in the dark) in scholarly considerations of American literatures as multicultural. We are enlightened by Howard Rambsy's pioneering investigations of the visual "packaging," ["Re-presenting *Black Boy*: The Evolving Packaging History of Richard Wright's Autobiography," *The Southern Quarterly* 64.2 (2009): 71-83] for these investigations open vistas on the dynamics of motive and power in marketplace politics used to manage African American literature as well as on the dominance of visual popular culture. Our interest in Wright's use of the photograph is deepened by John Lowe's sustained critique of *Pagan Spain*, ["The Transnational Vision of Richard Wright's Pagan Spain," *The Southern Quarterly* 46.3 (2009)] just as Nancy Dixon's questioning of what Wright got wrong or right about Spanish culture in "Did Richard Wright Get It Wrong?: A Spanish Look at *Pagan Spain*," *Mississippi Quarterly* 61.4 (2008): 581-591 reopens speculation about Wright's readings of African and Asian cultures. The examinations of Wright's haiku by Toru Kiuchi, Jianqing Zheng, Meta Schettler, Lee Gurga, and Richard Iadonisi in *Valley Voices: A Literary Review* 8.2 (2008) and *The Other World of Richard Wright: Perspectives on His Haiku* (2011), edited by Jianqin Zheng, create yearning for fresh commentaries on

Wright's early poetry and the poetry of his prose. We now have stronger reasons, by virtue of the testimonials provided by Howard Rambsy, Tara Green, and Candice Love Jackson in *Papers on Language & Literature* 44.4 (2008) and Mark Madigan and Toru Kiuchi in *The Black Scholar* 39.1-2 (2009), for asking why and how we read or teach Wright's works, for testing the outcomes of using those works in efforts to increase literacy (functional, visual, cultural, political, and rhetorical) in postmodern, technology-dependent societies. literary study. My own anxiety begins to be replaced by optimism when I wager that new directions in the study of Richard Wright shall arm us for our battles with a future of globalization, that they will help us balance the "rhetoric of carelessness" with a "rhetoric of genuine concern."

The scholarship, criticism, and theorizing that is emerging call for remembering Wright's optimism of the brilliant one-sentence paragraph that ends the 1945 edition of *Black Boy*.

With ever watchful eyes and bearing scars, visible and invisible, I headed North, full of a hazy notion that life could be lived with dignity, that the personalities of other should not be violated, that men should be able to confront other men without fear or shame, and that if men were lucky in their living on earth they

might win some redeeming meaning for their having struggled and suffered here beneath the stars.

Notes

1 A good starting point for answering the question is the January 2001 issue of *PMLA*, which dealt with the special topic: Globalizing Literary Studies.

2 Evelyn M. Simien and Ange-Marie Hancock, "Mini-Symposium: Intersectionality Research." *Political Research Quarterly* 64.1 (2011): 185.

3 *College English* 71.4 (2009): 363-388.

4 Richard Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," *Richard Wright: Early Works* (New York: Library of America, 1991), 871.

5 Richard Wright. *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*. (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1956).

6 It is unfortunate that difficulties in obtaining permission to reproduce Wright's photographs for *Pagan Spain* precluded their use to enhance Lowe's remarkable commentary.

ESSAY

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"A heap more took than just 'took'": Acquisition vs. Education in William Faulkner's *The Town*

While *The Hamlet* receives the majority of critical attention given to Faulkner's Snopes trilogy, critics pay surprisingly little attention to *The Town*. Those who do attempt to engage *The Town* cannot seem to discuss it without relegating it to a status as some strange middle-child; confused by its non-conformity to the narrative structure of the first novel, unimpressed by its content, and, generally, proclaiming it as less worthy or important within the chronicles of Yoknapatawpha County. Part of what seems to trouble critics with *The Town* comes from the focus shifting away from Flem's monetary gains in *The Hamlet* and towards his drive to acquire an outward appearance of social respectability. Despite his schemes in *The Hamlet*, until he has bought the old Frenchman Place and disrupted the community's identity, Flem does not feel successful enough to move on to Jefferson. Flem learns from his experiences in *The Hamlet* to broaden his focus as he had broadened it beyond Varner's Store. So while he takes on Jefferson's banks, he also plots in other areas, as well. Here we see Flem's desire

for an outward appearance of respectability materialize and, in the place of a community symbol, Flem's focus shifts to corrupting a core "civic virtue," education, as a means to acquire wealth and power.

Several articles attempt to address Flem's methods of acquisition in Jefferson, but most seem to get sidetracked discussing his respectability. Louisa Nichol's article "Flem Snopes's Knack for Verisimilitude in Faulkner's Snopes Trilogy," argues, using Faulkner's responses to students at the University of Virginia, that Flem "is an individualist . . . bitten by the bug to be respectable" (Gwynn 33, Nichol 494). Nichol, however, does not address Flem's actions in *The Town* in great detail–despite stating that she plans to "[deal] with the chronicle as a whole" instead of "confining [her] analysis to one or another volume" (493). In another, similar article, Raymond Wilson attempts to show how "Flem's knack for observation and imitation continues," in order to portray Flem as more than a "cold, calculating, niggardly" character (432). Wilson ends up straying from these opening statements and addresses inconsistencies between *The Town* and *The Unvanquished.* His article does attempt to address the chain of causal events in the novel, but mainly focuses on Eula's romances and treats other events primarily as to how they further those threads in the story. It appears that Flem's appearance of respectability succeeds in distracting many readers from perceiving how education fits into achieving his goal.

One indicator that education is the target for Flem's social attack appears through Faulkner's choice of narrators. In *The Hamlet*, Ratliff controlled the majority of the telling–though an authorial voice also presents itself. The front-porch, word of mouth, narration felt completely appropriate because of the rural, small-town nature of Frenchman's Bend. Varner's store-porch and the tales told among the men there were a key component of the communal identity which Flem destroys in the novel's closing episode. Just as the setting of *The Town* moves farther from Flem's rural origins, so too must the narrative approach change to reflect the new aspect of community that Flem engages. Though Ratliff serves as one of the narrators in *The Town*, we also have Charles "Chick" Mallison and his uncle, Gavin Stevens, to present their views on Flem. Jefferson is much larger than Frenchman's Bend, and its inhabitants busier and less centralized. It makes sense then that one narrator could not effectively tell the entire story. Yet more than simply serving to enrich the narrative of the text, each narrator also serves a thematic purpose, becoming differentiated by their educational backgrounds. Ratliff, as in *The Hamlet*, appears to be a man of the people, possessing street-smarts or people-smarts. He doesn't have the book-learning of Gavin, but can still deduce, through his understanding of Jefferson's citizens, where Gavin's assumptions stray from fact. Chick Mallison, throughout his narrative, "use[s] . . . "we" to describe the town's reactions and actions . . . recogni[zing] . . . himself as a

mutually constitutive product of the environment" (Robinson 63). As "Chick" and Ratliff sit in Gavin's law office, discussing Gavin's involvement with Linda Snopes, they have the following exchange (in a section narrated by Chick):

> " . . . And even if she located them ten minutes later and dragged her"
>
> "Drug," I said.
>
> "–back, the–what?" he said.
>
> "Drug," I said. "You said 'dragged.'" (*T* 229)

Chick, obviously, felt himself educated enough to correct the grammar of an adult. He goes on to apologize for so abruptly correcting Ratliff's grammar, stating, "It's because I like the way you say it. When you say it, 'taken' sounds a heap more took than just 'took,' just like 'drug' sounds a heap more dragged than just 'dragged'" (229). Faulkner's word choice here further indicates the connection between Flem's acquisitive nature and education, because both "dragged" and "took" are words with an explicit measure of force behind them—"took,"in particular, because it suggests Flem's rapine of customs, power, and wealth from the community. Ratliff responds, telling Chick, "And not jest you neither . . . Your uncle too" (229). So, not only does this exchange show Chick's education (and, as a representative of the townspeople, the value they place on education), it further differentiates him from both Ratliff and Gavin; Chick possesses education

appropriate for his age, yet he still desires to have the people-smarts or, at least, the country savviness of Ratliff and does not need the advanced, isolating education of Gavin.

Faulkner also tasks Chick with addressing Gavin's educational background in the opening section of the novel, saying "He (Gavin) was in Harvard now, working for his M.A. After that he was going to the University of Mississippi law school . . . [and] he . . . didn't [yet] know he would ever go to Germany to enter Heidelberg University" (4). Gavin's education, specifically his Ph.D. from Heidelberg, over-qualifies him for his position as county attorney. It sets him apart among, and from, the community at large. As Jay Watson points out, Gavin's education does not allow him to perceive any part of Flem's actions or plans correctly (212). Gavin operates under the assumption that "Jefferson's legal codes [will] offer a more formal set of institutional responses" to Flem's actions, but, as a result of his education and legal training, never gets any closer than participating in a "fantasy of legal containment" (209, 211). Ratliff repeatedly points out Gavin's shortcomings in the narration by saying, "He's a lawyer, and to a lawyer, if it aint complicated it don't matter whether it works or not" (*T* 260). So, not only does Faulkner make the reader aware of each narrator's educational background, he makes it clear that each narrator recognizes their differences as well. In addition to narration, a clear historical context also indicates education as an

important facet of the world of the novel and may explain why Faulkner has Flem target education in Jefferson.

Flem's actions have roots in the history of Mississippi's higher education system, some if which directly involves Faulkner. Joseph Blotner points out that Flem "was a part of the phenomenon in which poor whites had flocked to [Governors] Vardaman [and] Bilbo. . . . and put them in power" (192). Coincidence alone cannot account for Faulkner setting the novel in the early 1900's, as during this period "the Falkners supported Vardaman and helped with rallies held for him in Oxford" (47). Since Faulkner specifies 1927 as the date of Eula's suicide, it is interesting to note that only a few years after that, in 1931, Faulkner's father, Murry, resigned his position at Ole Miss due to financial pressure placed on university employees as a by-product of Governor Bilbo's feud with Chancellor Alfred Hume (262-263). But, beyond any biographical connection, as early as 1900, then Governor Andrew Longino, showed concern for the terrible conditions of Mississippi's education system (Sansing 77). Significantly, Longino "was the first governor elected after the Civil War who was not a Confederate veteran and the last governor [elected] by the ruling elite" (Sansing 77). Longino's concern for education, originally intended to improve economic conditions and attract industry, soon sparked expansions of liberal arts courses in several of the state universities (78-79). In 1903, as soon as James K.

Vardaman became governor, the educational system came under attack as a waste of state money because, "Mississippi was not getting a good return on its educational investment" (79). As Blotner correctly stated, Vardaman "was . . . largely elected by Mississippi's dirt farmers and day laborers, whom he promised that he would drive the wealthy elite from their positions of power and privilege" (80). Under Vardaman's watch, the state educational system became a place full of corruption and personal revenge, as those in charge of the schools frequently lost their positions after disagreeing with Vardaman or the people he selected for positions within the boards of trustees for the state's universities (80-83). Later, during Theodore Bilbo's terms as governor, many of the same problems that occurred during Vardaman's terms repeated themselves under the guise of Bilbo's plans to reform the state's educational system (90-95). Longino's expansion of higher education, intended to make Mississippi visible as more than an agricultural state, seem to be reflected in Gavin's consideration of Linda's educational prospects. While discussing the college material he requests on her behalf, Gavin sarcastically remarks:

> . . . it would finally occur to somebody somewhere that there might be someone in Mississippi capable of thinking vaguely of attending an eastern or northern school or capable of having heard of such or anyway capable of enjoying the pictures in the catalogues or even

> deciphering the one-syllable words, provided they were accompanied by photographs. (*T* 185)

This comment seems to reflect not only that the brightest educational prospects lay outside of Mississippi, but also the general view of the state's education system that Longino's expansions were trying to combat. That the "dirt farmer" elected governors who followed Longino heavy-handedly involved themselves in the states education system to increase their wealth and power strongly resembles Flem's actions in the novel; achieving power as president of the bank and then, still wanting more money (Eula's inheritance), his use of Linda's education as a tool through which to get it.

In *Natural Aristocracy: History, Ideology, and the Production of William Faulkner*, Kevin Railey comes close to exposing the important role education plays in *The Town* by recognizing that Faulkner makes clear the relationship of Flem's drive for material acquisition to the "redneck Progressives," of which Governor Bilbo was a prime example (156) . However, Railey's argument that "Gavin no longer fights Snopesism, [but rather] concern[s] himself with the development of Linda Snopes's inner culture" (159) derails this line of examination. It seems Gavin does attempt to use Linda's education and the possibility of her escape into

academia as a way to fight Snopesism, but, since Gavin misjudges Flem's motive for keeping Linda from leaving, Flem renders Gavin's efforts impotent.

Until Flem understood he could use Linda's desire to attend college for personal gain, he shows little interest in Gavin's attempts to persuade her to leave the Academy for a state university. Flem certainly knew of the situation, as Mrs. Mallison points out after she and Gavin purchase Linda's graduation gift. Gavin decides to include the entire family's names on the card, saying, "All four of our names. . . . At least her father wont know a white-headed bachelor sent his seventeen-year-old daughter a fitted travelling [*sic*] case," to which Mrs. Mallison responds, "One of them wont know it" (*T* 177). As Ratliff later suspects, Flem wants Linda to stay at the Academy partially out of his need to keep an eye on her and because he realizes he can gain something from the situation. After Flem has played his games with Linda, offering her vacation trips and a graduation picnic, he pretends to soften his attitude towards her continuing education and allows her to attend college, provided she "forget about Virginia and the Northern schools . . . and enter the University" (*T* 285). Flem even plays up his own lack of education in the situation saying, "I never went to school and didn't know any better" (285). Here, though his statement seems to be telling Linda that, since he lacked an education, he didn't realize how important it was to her, it could also be read as

Flem admitting that until it became obvious that he can gain something through it, he didn't concern himself with education.

That these events (Flem's agreement to allow Linda to attend the University and Eula's subsequent suicide) occur at the very end of the novel reminds one of the closing scene of *The Hamlet*. Just like Flem's defeat of Frenchman's Bend (turning the community's beliefs about the buried gold at the Old Frenchman place back against it), Flem turns the Jefferson's ideals concerning education against Eula, Gavin, Linda, and community. In *The Town*, Flem has learned from his prior mistakes and adapts his methods not only to the new locale but also to replicate prior success. Flem still seeks money and power, he is simply more subtle while going about it; only adopting, and corrupting, the parts of society that help him advance his desires. Ratliff's repeated cries of "you're wrong" to Gavin should appear as a warning, for Ratliff already went down this road with Flem, pitting his trading skills and reputation against him. Gavin, because of his education, feels superior to Ratliff and Flem, and loses his battle against Snopesism as well.

In attempting to focus on Flem's appearance of respectability, critics have ignored the theme of education that runs throughout the novel. Not only does the historical context make this an important theme, but in its own way, this reading enriches the view of Snopesism beyond just a series of monetary transactions. At

the most basic level, Flem wants to acquire wealth and power, but he does not only use the community's financial institutions to do so. Nothing in the community appears insusceptible to Flem if it stands between him and his goals, and no amount of education can immunize one against Snopesian craftiness.

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POETRY

Yvonne Tomek

Delta State University

Fracture

Ribbons of yellow

Gold streak a sea gone

Wrong.

The oil nestles

Itself among the tall

Grasses of the

Shore.

Along pure lands

Once famous for cocoa,

Sugar, and

Spice,

The night keeps

Vigil upon the broken

Earth

That, as with an

Old sorrow,

Has opened its

Rib-cage

To show its

Sacred heart and

Let the tears

Flow.

ESSAY

Allison Chestnut

William Carey University

The Southern Spinster's Guide to Social Subversion:

Using Chivalry and Chauvinism to Achieve Her Goals

It is a generally acknowledged—if not openly vocalized—understanding among older, small communities in the South that a woman past a marrying age, lacking husband, father or other paternal figure to guide and direct her, becomes the responsibility of those males governing her community. Such lot befalls both Miss Emily Grierson, William Faulkner's character in "A Rose for Emily," (119) and Sally Poker Sash, the non-traditional college student of Flannery O'Connor's "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" (134). Although geographically and chronologically separated, these women could be first cousins thrice removed as they thwart the social norms surrounding family and civic duty. Both characters are Southern spinsters and answerable to an irascible male survivor of the Confederacy. Both endure condescending treatment from the male authority figures. Both answer to an antebellum code of social conduct. Both suffer ridicule by their communities, both are limited in their options of self-support, both seem to

follow the letter of the law while ignoring the spirit of the law, and both of their stories conclude as they are partnered with a corpse.

There are only two sure things in life: death and taxes. -Ben Franklin

Miss Emily Grierson, of Jefferson, is the last of her family, coming into her own at the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Once of moneyed status, she inherits the family house without the means to sustain it. In a stroke of misguided chivalry, the mayor of Jefferson, citing some farfetched, fabricated tale of debt and repayment, grants her immunity from the tax code. Faulkner writes, "Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it" (120). In the South, a man's word (whether written or spoken) is his bond. When the younger generation follows Colonel Sartoris into civic office, they find the arrangement apocryphal and nonbinding, and send Miss Emily a tax notice. Like Caesar rejecting the crown, she rebuffs each opportunity to comply. No matter how varied their attempts to collect her taxes, she has but one mantra: "Ask Colonel Sartoris…I have no taxes in Jefferson" (121). With that watchword, Miss Emily closes the door on both the visiting tax delegation and on all future confrontations about taxes, preying on the spokesmen's sense of etiquette and chivalry-- and rendering all other conversations about the subject a series of non sequiturs: one may ask the dead anything, but getting an answer without a

Ouija board is, well, unlikely. Miss Emily, successfully eluding the tax question, literally proves that the only thing certain in life is death – not taxes.

Heaven hath no rage like love to hatred turned/ Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned. –William Congreve (The Mourning Bride)

Miss Emily next uses chivalry and chauvinism to undermine the institution of marriage while getting away with murder. Alas, for Miss Emily and all other single women living in small southern towns after the Civil War, nary a man between the ages of 7 and 70 survives, and men of desirable good stock most often keep the endless sleep of war. Those eligible men who do remain are either recently freed or carpetbaggers out for a short sale against worthless Confederate dollars. Herein lay Miss Emily's matrimonial dilemma: is it more shameful to be over thirty and a virgin, to be over thirty and marry locally beneath one's station, to be over thirty and "fallen," or to be over thirty and consort with the Yankee enemy? Even the townspeople remain confused about her situation, alternately believing her to be southernly hospitable, then brazen, then fallen, then married, then separated, all the while repeating the phrase, "poor Emily," which even today is southern verbal shorthand for the kiss of social death. The townspeople and the patriarchs, however, ignore from Miss Emily that which would have raised suspicion were anyone else involved.

Yankee day-laborer Homer Barron, not far removed from those northern infidels who tread hard on Dixie, enters the Grierson home never again to be seen by the townspersons. The knowledge that Miss Emily buys arsenic under pretenses devised by a helpful pharmacist, orders a man's toiletries and intimate attire, and shortly after has the smell of fleshly decay emanating from her residence raises no real alarm for anyone. When neighbors demand that town officials do something to alleviate the odor rather than to investigate the cause of the odor, the "new" mayor, eighty-year-old Judge Stevens replies in chivalric indignation, "Dammit, sir, will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?" (122). Rather than investigate the source of the odor, they trespass upon her property and line her house foundation, porch and cellar with lime, excusing their actions because "poor Emily" cannot take care of herself or her property. Their sense of chivalry—preserving a woman's dignity at all times -- prevents them from embarrassing "poor Emily," first by allowing her to buy a controlled substance without making her disclose the nature of its use, then by refusing to confront her about her property that smells to high heaven.

Here in the south, we don't lock up our crazy people. We put them on the porch for all to see. –Julia Sugarbaker, Designing Women

Their cultural chauvinism --"poor Emily" may be crazy, and she does have a great-aunt Old Lady Wyatt who "had gone completely crazy at last" (123), but she's just a harmless spinster and could never do anything untoward -- overwhelms their common sense. And so, "poor, crazy Emily" subverts both justice and the institution of marriage and enjoys the benefits of a stay at home husband without the detriment of masculine domination. For years she had been returning to the scene of the crime and spooning with the moldering form of Homer Barron—quite literally under their noses—undiscovered until her death at seventy-four, in 1936. By then, few remained who really knew Miss Emily, or remembered well Homer Barron or her father's tight-fisted authority over her possible suitors. Those who did, the "very old men –some in their brushed Confederate uniforms on the porch" (129) even they couldn't be sure, yet they talked "of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches" (129).

"Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn." – Rhett Butler, Gone With the Wind

Fast forward to Georgia, the locale of the blockbuster (and history busting) first-book- then-film *Gone With the Wind.* This is the setting for "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," Flannery O'Connor's tale of 62-year-old local school teacher Sally Poker Sash. Like Miss Emily, Sally prefers the old way of doing things, when folks recognized a person for her abilities and breeding and didn't demand pieces of paper signed by perfect strangers as documentation of worth. When Miss Emily first owned her house, for example, she had no taxes. Only later did the whipper-snappers need written proof of exemption. Likewise, when Sally started teaching, those in charge didn't require a diploma for proof of her skills. Only long after she took charge of a classroom did the powers that be mandate a sheepskin.

And so, they require that she go "to summer school every year for the past twenty because when she started teaching, there were no such things as degrees" (134). Miss Sash, "when she should have been resting" for the new school year, had mightily resented having to "take a trunk in the burning heat to the state teacher's college" (134). To her way of mind, the whole shmiel is pointless because, when she started school again in the fall, "she always taught in the exact way she had been taught not to teach" (135). This clandestine sabotage provided "a mild revenge that didn't satisfy her sense of justice" (135). Sally, like Emily before

her, allows the "upstarts who had turned the world on its head and unsettled the ways of decent living" to assume she is following the law and "new ways of doing things" (135) because she appears to be. What Emily does in the bedroom to the institution of marriage, Sally singlehandedly does in the classroom to the community institution of education.

Now, after being a non-traditional student for twenty years, Sally is ready to graduate, ready to receive from the college representative her scroll--proof absolut that she is a qualified teacher, a symbol in truth as meaningless as the Confederate general's uniform her 104-year-old grandfather wears on the academic platform. To her, his presence on stage lends her more credibility than any college degree. She has finagled his appearance by appealing to the administration's sense of chivalry: "Even before she knew if she would pass, she had told the Dean that her grandfather, General Tennessee Flintrock Sash of the Confederacy, would attend her graduation" (139). While her grandfather had participated in "the troubles," his current attire and rank are pure Hollywood costume, given to him during the movie premiere twelve years earlier. In reality, Sally's knows her grandfather's name is George and that he only held the rank of major. Like the remaining Confederate soldiers at Miss Emily's wake, Sally's grandfather cares little for "history, because [t]he[y] never expected to meet it again" (135) and no one living would dare contradict their version of events. By playing on the charm of nostalgi

chivalry, Sally even persuades a reporter to document her story with a picture: the proof, the credibility of her grandfather's legacy and her tie to it, is in the paper, the same mode of proof as diplomas, tax bills and marriage licenses.

Thus, while the audience hears them call Sally's name in recognition of her obedience to "the new ways of doing things," Sally marches to her own internal litany: "See him! See him! My kin, all you upstarts! Glorious upright old man standing for the old traditions! Dignity! Honor! Courage! See him!" (135)

Sally receives her scroll and exits the stage confident that she has triumphed in all arenas—the public acknowledges her tie to the Old South; her grandfather was present to see her graduate; the government will give her a teacher's license. Sally Poker Sash, harmless spinster, has fooled them all.

I hear they've got an assertive training class for southern women. Of course that's a contradiction in terms. –Missy (Fried Green Tomatoes)

By capitalizing (consciously or unconsciously) upon the chauvinistic and chivalric attitudes of the older men in their community, Sally Poker Sash and Miss Emily Grierson have managed to use chivalry and chauvinism to their best advantage. The men of their era, so certain of a woman's frailties and limitations—especially of a woman without a man to guide her, have given the spinsters

leverage. Without firing a shot, protesting, threatening litigation or waging social war, these two have managed to do exactly what they wish with impunity.

In an address to the United Nations in the '60s, then Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev declared that the Communists "don't have to invade you! We will destroy you from within without firing a shot! " Khrushchev was a little late with his diatribe. Emily Grierson and Sally Poker Sash and many more Southern women like them, the helpless, hapless spinsters, have been successfully practicing influence from within long before Khrushchev made his prediction.....and the Southern spinsters didn't even have to remove their sensible shoes and pound on the table to do it.

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POETRY

Yvonne Tomek

Delta State University

Wetlands

The olive branch,

in the beak of the

bird

so many years

ago, resides as a

shadow on the

wall,

flickering from the

branches outside of my

window.

One day given

again here, to reconcile

a loss of

Eden,

a few miles South,

in the deep waters before

night

does its slow fall

into the black

tides.

FICTION

Peter Malik

Alcorn State University

THE SUMMIT: A COLD WAR FANTASY

It was the strangest campaign in United States political history. The Democrats nominated a liberal Congressman from California with an African-American running mate from Philadelphia. The Republicans ran an old conservative from Kansas who was formerly the Secretary of Defense. The Libertarian candidate, known only to a few thousand diehards, was a Jewish bachelor from Phoenix, Arizona named Arthur Feldman.

Through a series of bizarre events, Arthur Feldman was elected President of the United States. One week before the election, both members of the Republican ticket committed suicide because they were about to be indicted for selling military secrets to the Soviets. Three days after that, the Democratic Presidential candidate was killed when his chartered airliner struck a light plane near Indianapolis. As a result, Albert Washington, the black Vice Presidential nominee, was elevated to the top of the ticket. On election days, voters had to choose between a Feldman and a Washington.

Arthur Feldman won rather handily, though Washington did win most of the Southern states as well as Massachusetts and Minnesota. Feldman watched the results in his rented apartment and gave his first speech as President-Elect sitting on the couch he had bought on credit from Sears last spring. “Something important has happened here today,” he said. “A very ordinary citizen has won the Presidency. And as I pledged when I announced my candidacy, my first act will be to ask General Secretary Joseph Petrovich for a summit meeting as soon as possible after my inauguration.”

Petrovich was eager to accept. Himself a middle-aged bachelor, he was looking forward to dealing with a fresh personality in the White House. He though this might be his chance to form a new, truly lasting friendship with the United States.

The world’s press brooded on this summit as never before. The unknown American who was virtually handed the Presidency would be going belly to belly with the wily and handsome General Secretary who had been in the forefront of social reform in his own country. Would some new breakthrough occur? How would the world be changed?

Miami was chosen as the summit location, and the city quickly began to bask in the worldwide attention. Almost double the money was spent for this

meeting than was expended for the Pope's visit back in 1987. Streets were cleaned, airplanes diverted, the usual suspects rounded up, and the homeless temporarily sheltered.

By coincidence, the very same meeting place used by the Pope and American officials was also selected for the summit. It was to take place at Vizcaya, a huge Italian Renaissance villa built on Biscayne Bay by an Illinois millionaire in the early 1900s. Filled with room after room of priceless furniture and antiques, the mansion was a perfect place for total privacy. Soon enough, the fine Florida February morning came when the two leaders shook hands for the cameras and then disappeared alone into the upper rooms of the great house.

"So finally, we have a chance to talk," said Petrovich when he was alone with Arthur for the first time.

"Yes, and I'm so glad you speak English as well. I think a translator would just get in the way," said Feldman. "Come, let's drink the coffee they have left us."

The room where Feldman and Petrovich met was dark with medieval tapestries and Oriental rugs. There was a couch and a large table with two glasses and a pitcher of water on it, as well as an old-style telephone. A silver coffee set had been set up at Feldman's request on another small table by the door. He

handed Petrovich a cup of coffee and took one for himself. “Shall we sit on the couch, Joseph? I would feel so much more comfortable,” Arthur said.

“Of course,” Joseph said. “More work always gets done that way.”

The world held its breath for the entire day, but the leaders never emerged. Two spokesmen did instead. The talks were being extended, they said. The President and the General Secretary were making progress and had decided to spend the night right there at Vizcaya.

When they didn’t come out the next day, the world started to get nervous. A spokesman only repeated the statements of the previous afternoon. Even more troubling to the press was the lack of leaks by highly placed sources. For once, this statement was literally true: no one in the world knew what was going on.

Then the announcement came. The leaders would have a major statement at 6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The news was flashed on every major network affiliate, the all-sports network, the all-arts network, the Christian channels, the pornographic channels, and even little independent UHF stations showing old movies and reruns of

The Odd Couple. All of the major television and radio stations on the planet were soon hooked in by satellite. At least one billion human beings stopped their lives that day to watch and listen to the words of just two men.

Promptly at six, the men emerged with their arms around each other's waists like teenagers who had just fallen in love. They lifted their arms high above their heads in a traditional gesture of triumph and then hugged each other in a very untraditional way. A reporter for the *Miami Herald* spoke under his breath what everyone else in the world thought in this single, strange moment: "Oh my God, they're homosexual!"

Arthur and Joseph stood embracing while Arthur read a short statement in an excited, breathless way. "Ladies and gentlemen of the world," he said, "the Cold War and the arms race are over. Joe and I are proud to announce that we have come to an agreement to end the development and deployment of all nuclear weapons on earth. Furthermore, we intend to pursue as quickly as possible a series of economic, scientific and cultural programs designed to make the United States and the Soviet Union the world's closest and best allies. We are both withdrawing our troops from all sovereign nations, and we extend our hands to all of those countries who want peace once and for all. War is over."

Arthur turned to his companion and said, "Your turn, Joe." Petrovich read a similar statement in Russian, and the couple then announced they were going to stay at Vizcaya for a few more days "to continue talks that will give the people of

the world what they have always wanted: peace, prosperity and the simple freedom to be happy."

The world was stunned. The two most powerful men on earth had "seemingly fallen in love" in the words of one commentator and had ended the enmity between the two countries just like that. No one could believe it. Frantic background checks revealed that Arthur Feldman had had his first homosexual encounter at the University of Arizona during his junior year. KGB files on Joseph Petrovich were discreetly leaked, detailing similar episodes involving the General Secretary. Up to now, the indiscretions had remained just as secret as the extramarital escapades routinely enjoyed by other top party officials.

The network coverage of the summit soon outdistanced the amount of time given to the last war in the Middle East. Most Ivy League faculty clubs were deserted; the professors were all out doing news shows. Experts on defense and homosexuality became household names. On the floor of Congress, answers were debated endlessly to a single question: How can we get them out of there?

And in the midst of the gray Russian winter, similar questions were being asked by old conservatives and young liberals. The conservatives wanted to shoot Petrovich, but he was in the safest place on earth, in a bed next to the President of

the United States. The liberals didn't know what to do but felt they had lost control over their favorite reformer. So everyone waited.

While the debates raged, Arthur and Joseph took up house at Vizcaya. They slept together in a canopied Victorian bed bedecked with green satin and took bubble baths together in a marble bathtub that had gold fixtures in the shapes of swans. They walked the lush gardens in the cool, bright mornings and dined at dusk in their tuxedos on the gigantic stone veranda that looked out to the clear blue bay.

They also gave press conferences. "We've read all of this stuff about impeaching me and replacing him," Arthur said one night with Joe at his side. "The fact is until we are impeached or replaced, we're going to stay right here." They both looked solemnly through the television cameras into the eyes of the world. "We speak to all of the peoples of the earth. War is over now it you want it to be. War is over."

It was a bold statement that came close to becoming reality. Every mother who even had a son and every father who loved his family thought deeply about these old words from the 1960s. For a brief moment, the world was ready to believe it.

But so many more words got in the way. If homosexuality is sinful, how could world peace come from it? How do we know the Russian is not putting on a great act? What is this is just a trick by the Third World to disarm us? What would the world be like with no more war?

In the end, public opinion had little to do with the outcome. Senators, archbishops, and generals made the final call. Arthur Feldman was impeached by the Senate for treason. He had steadfastly refused to resign.

The Politburo had an easier route. As soon as the impeachment of Feldman was certain, a new General Secretary was elected, an old gray man with no sexual interest in men or women.

The Libertarian Vice President, a carpenter from Tucson, resigned at the time of the impeachment, and so the Speaker of the House became the President of the United States. The new President acted quickly and wisely to pardon Feldman and restore his pension, to grant Joseph Petrovich political asylum, and to give both men perpetual Secret Service protection. Responding to the small storm of criticism that followed, the new President simply replied, “It’s time to move on to other things.”

Arthur and Joseph remained happy and in love. They left Vizcaya after the impeachment and bought a condominium in Miami Beach. They quickly made a

home for themselves and never made another speech or gave another press conference.

No Feldman Presidential library was ever built, and no streets, stadiums, airports or babies were ever named after him. American high school textbooks now give the whole affair four paragraphs, and no one in the Soviet Union thinks much about it anymore.

To this day, Arthur Feldman and Joseph Petrovich reside happily in their Miami Beach condo. People often see them taking early morning walks along the white sand beaches or quietly playing gin rummy in the park under the palm trees. And always discreetly near are two Secret Service men, still making sure that the old homosexuals, and the past, are not disturbed.

POETRY

C. Leigh McInnis

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[Editor's Note: The font size and the long lines of the poem being incompatible with printing at the adjustment necessary to publish herein, they have been altered as minimally as possible, but in fairness to the poet, you should be apprised that the lines carried over by one word were an accommodation and not the original.]

The word/ was born in the blood/
grew in the dark body, beating…/
…It emerged/from the darkness…/
still it came/from dead fathers
and from wandering races/
from lands that had returned to stone/
weary of their poor tribes/
because when pain took to the roads/
the settlements set out and arrived
and new lands and water reunited
to sow their words anew/

And so, this is the inheritance—

from "The Word"

by Pablo Neruda

Meeting a Ghost at the Coahoma County High School Basketball Game

It was a haint that floated in stages through layered windowpanes

that seemed to sift his shape through Plexiglas time periods

that were little more than vanishing mist of unseen smoke in my eleventh grade history book—

the same book that managed to edit slavery into a two-paragraph minimalist poem

of which *The Mississippi Review* would be proud to give a prize for poetic

annotation.

In a sea of magnolias and midnight bodies wrapped in strawberry plastic-buckskin jackets

with cloudy and creamy double C's etched like silhouettes trying to disappear into the stop sign shame of the fiery red jackets, the man with a leathery face, which seemed to be swirling Autumn colors in his prune wrinkled forehead and marble stiff cheeks, sat statue still under the glow of that Gawd awful monstrosity of a mural created to raise the spirits of long dead warriors who don't mind being awakened from the sleep of forever to help Negroes, who can't defeat the dragon of the basic skills test, sink some free throws or play lockdown defense.

While tonsils and teeth ejaculated gospel eruptions for charcoal hands that slammed a sunset

rubber sphere through a metal hoop dangling cotton-white lacey frills, the shape shifter's eyes

were glued to the wall's monument that was a neon sign fit for downtown Vegas,

announcing to enemy travelers on whose plantational reservation they were treading.

WELCOME TO THE HOME OF THE COAHOMA COUNTY RED PANTHERS

choreographed in a perfectly plotted circle around a

Macy's "Kill an Njun and Take His Land" Day Parade-sized bloody panther that

was as plastically unreal as the mandate of equitable funding of all schools.

This haint's face was washed in the cold of an early December frost mixing with

the faded glory of when Black and Red wolves walked freely on the Earth's green carpet.

He was a crystal clear discarded container of last week's moldy morals

whose body seemed to be melted and molded to the peanut butter coat

that reminded me more of a truck driver than Tonto.

His bronze presence never obstructed the sightline of Ebony Romans cheering thei Funky Cold Jazzmen in winter white sneakers, *Soul Train* short shorts, warrior wristbands, and knee-high socks that caused their thighs to disappear into the blur of their Mr. Magic moves.

concentrate: To draw toward a common center; To gather together in a single main body or power; To converge toward or meet in a common center; To direct one's attention or thoughts.

His brown bear body slumped forward, his eyes burning a hole in the concrete wall, making laser zigzags between COAHOMA and RED PANTHER.

Years before I realized that Logos had walked the Earth and pimp slapped Seth for the Seventh time until he was revealed as The Deceiver, who sucked the flavor of history from phonemes,

leaving us with stale seeds that have been planted in the barren soil of colonial co-optation

where gardens grow colorless plastic flowers that must be painted every six months,

I said: "So, you like our wall?"

And he said: "It's redundant."

Stone cold words that smacked me so hard that the power of the punch was not felt until twenty years later when a man tall as a ten-foot totem dressed in the white man's suit with a feather in his hair pointing to the sky God like it was giving me the finger asked me, "How would you like it if they changed the name of the team to the New York Niggers or the Jacksonville Jigaboos?"

My face will forever be painted with the rouge of Native embarrassment.

And without disturbing the sea of faded Africans lost in hoop dreams, high fives, and fine ladies peacocking for the cocks of the walk, he returned to mist, traveling through the same bold as forever cherry-red double doors and Plexiglas wormholes, leaving me with that mural, which continues to hang in my mind like a crucifix of lost words.

ESSAY

Benjamin F. Fisher

University of Mississippi

Irving's *Tales of a Traveller*—Why the Hubub?

Among Irving's volumes of fiction, *Tales of a Traveller* has probably elicited more divergent responses than any other. Going back to contemporary reviews, one reads little other than hostility. That antagonism may be readily dismissed, though, because the Anglo-American literary world of the early 1820s anticipated a German *Sketch Book* because of Irving's travels in that nation, but although much of the contents in *Tales of a Traveller* could be called "German" (what today we call "Gothic") because of its supernatural or otherwise horrific nature, the thirty-two tales that constitute that book are anything but a collection of tales that featured only German settings or characters. Reviewers reacted with spite about the absence of German substance in the book, or else they inveighed against what they discerned as a coarse, even salacious vein in much of the contents. To the former antagonism I would respond, "Tough"; to the latter, I should think that even in Irving's day the sexual suggestiveness that some

reviewers deplored may well reveal more about their own mindsets than about Irving's own sexuality.

Moving ahead to twentieth-century responses, one is no less assured about Irving's book. To cite long acclaimed "authority," I move to Stanley T. Williams' *The Life of Washington Irving*, in its imposing two volumes (1935). Williams certainly expressed no high commendation for *Tales of a Traveller*, though perhaps his own professional desire to depart Irving scholarship and move on to researches into Emerson and Melville was already causing him to be short-tempered with his longtime focus in Irving material. Williams' strictures on the worthlessness, for twentieth- century audiences, of the Gothic and sentimental features in this book, read strangely today, when we have long come to accept Gothicism as a major factor in much first rate American literature, long ago and at the present, and when we recognize that sentimentality was very much an accepted part of much American creative writing during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Of course, Williams was a product of his own era in his antipathies toward Gothicism, keeping company with other then formidable giants who pioneered academic study of American literature, for example, Arthur Hobson Quinn or Thomas Ollive Mabbott, who were ever ready to minimize Gothic

elements in American writing. Such antipathy was possibly a carry-over from much earlier critics who thought that Gothicism was a short-lived impulse in western world literature, and one that was not missed after its brief existence. More particularly, American literary nationalism, as interpreted by early critics who had been nurtured on Neoclassic standards, as well as many later academics, would give short shrift to what they thought was an outmoded Old World, decadent species of writing, i. e., anything that was Gothic. Quinn's long standard histories of American drama reveal his intent to move quickly toward what he considered a more wholesome kind of art. Mabbott surprised me when I applied to him for advice on my Ph. D. dissertation on Poe's Gothicism, because his sense of what might be Gothic in the Poe canon included few of that author's works. Striking a different note, Irving's most recent biographer, Andrew Burstein, cites Poe's prais for *Tales of a Traveller*, stating as well that several of the narrators in the book "show the silliness of letting the Gothic imagination get the better of oneself. Irving is, in the end, a critic of superstition, a writer who mocks his characters' shrewd perceptions" (181). Irving's comic treatment, in which what initially seem to be supernatural force underlying mysterious circumstances turns out to be wholly realistic, offers perspectives that were absent from Mrs. Radcliffe's explained supernaturalism, which is never humorous.

Taking a cue from Burstein, I propose that *Tales of a Traveller* deserves greater attention to and respect. For starters, it is the first published work in frame narrative by an American author. On that ground alone the book is worth historical attention, but it also contains literary art sophisticated beyond the miscellany nature of *The Sketch Book* (1819), *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), or in the much later *Wolfert's Roost and Other Papers* (1855). As a frame narrative work, *Tales of A Traveller* stands forerunner to many better known frame narrative books, e. g., Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Hemingway's Nick Adams stories, or those of another neglected American writer, Frederick Irving Anderson, who preceded the other three twentieth-century authors just named, in publishing short-story sequence or cycle fiction. Irving kept good company among his contemporaries, too, in light of subsequent experiments in frame narratives by Hawthorne, Poe and Melville—none of which experiments was ever published in single unified form, though an early version of Poe's "Tales of the Folio Club" was, in fact, accepted for publication by Thomas W. White, who was Poe's employer on the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Supposing, however, that he could get a more prestigious publisher, in Philadelphia, Poe canceled his negotiations with White, but, ironically, no publisher saw fit to bring out the projected book.

Tales of a Traveller is made up largely of tales that Irving had on hand, and, as is related in introductory pages, during an illness that confined his frame narrator, Geoffrey Crayon, in an inn in a German city. Crayon states that he can not recall the precise sources for these pieces, that instead they are tales for which accuracy as to the facts can not be verified. Consequently they introduce a theme of doubtfulness or ambiguity that unifies the book. "Part I. Strange Stories by a Nervous Gentleman" plunges us immediately into tales derivative from Gothic tradition, where uncertainties and dis-order provide the stuff and substance in these narratives. The confusion involving identification of "The Stout Gentleman," originally a character in *Bracebridge Hall*, with Sir Walter Scott, or the "Nervous Gentleman" who relates the first nine stories in *Tales of a Taveller*, lays groundwork for the multiple-edged fiction that follows. All of the stories in this section are crafted such that those who hear the tales told—and these are all fictions that remind us, time and again, of the nature of oral storytelling—are left to ponder if what's been related is genuine supernaturalism or not. Washington Irving, the author, presents us with what amounts to mockery of too credulous acceptance that the otherworldly underlies the mysterious circumstances surrounding the characters in whichever tale is the focus. He mockery extends to readers who too readily suppose that some otherworldly agent is controlling the destinies of the characters. In that pair of stories that have become far more

familiar to general readers, "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," we likewise confront events that most characters within the story would credit with supernatural substance, but which to certain others within the story, and moreso for perceptive readers, the supernatural *qua* supernatural seems unlikely.

In all of these stories, Irving's reiteration of themes of truth versus fiction, of appearance versus reality, serves as a reminder that readers must needs be alert, must question whether what initially seems to be supernaturalism at work is genuine. The concluding story in this section, "The Story of the Young Italian," revolves around a painting of a strange face, rendered by a young Italian artist, which is owned by the Baronet at whose residence the party of hunters who have called up these stories are present. The curiosity that the Baronet arouses in the group to behold the actual picture of the haunting face is never satisfied because he actually has them led to view another painting. The tale told by the young Italian is likewise one of deception, of him and Bianca, the girl he loves, by one who had pretended great affection for the young couple, ultimately using the absence of the young Italian to marry Bianca. This is a story in which the close borders of art and life are unfolded amidst a tempestuous emotional aura of blighted love and treachery. The face, of the murdered man ((i. e., the false friend), which haunts the young Italian artist seems closely akin to a gruesome death mask.

Another variety of ambiguity or doubleness informs the next cluster of stories, "Buckthorne and His Friends." Quite naturally, for a literary aspirant, Geoffrey Crayon sojourns in London, there meets Buckthorne, who has also had literary ambitions, though in contrast to Crayon's his are the as aspirations of a poet. Although the Buckthorne group of stories takes us into much more sentimental than Gothic types of tales, such a shift is natural, given Buckthorne's own propensities, and content-wise the Buckthorne stories furnish relief to readers who may be satiated with tales rife with Gothic gloom and sensationalism. Granted, there is a miserly old uncle, from whom Buckthorne expects to inherit vast wealth, and the old man's home is as lonely in situation and as eerie in its bleak appointments as any castle in the Apennines—that favorite haunt in much older Gothic fiction. There is also a mystery surrounding the old man's will though the pervasive sentimentality in these stories diminishes the luridness that had obtained in the violence, bloodshed and death informing the previous set of tales. Because he was a poet, Buckthorne was bypassed in favor of his uncle's uneducated and crude son when the old man bequeathed his wealth. represents, a comment on the state of poetry once the great British Romantic poets were dead. The name of the uncle's estate, Doubting Hall, is in several contexts a deft satiric touch by Irving.

Buckthorne's adventures also open windows onto the literary and stage worlds centered in London as the eighteenth turned into the nineteenth century. Worries about monetary rewards for authorship speak to the condition of many writers in Irving's own time, and the cheats that infiltrated the world of authorship and that of the theater are deftly charted as we move from one tale to another in the Buckthorne lineup.

The third section in *Tales of a Traveller*, "The Italian Banditti," certainly recalls the first section in the book, but these later stories are not fraught with any of the supernaturalism that appears in the earlier pieces. Instead we are treated to realistic accounts of robbers in the Italian mountains, which locale, on the one hand, may remind us of Mrs. Radcliffe's employment of such settings, but which offers more plausible characters in no less high-pitched events. Absent, however, is the quasi-supernaturalism found in Radcliffe's novels, which are, nevertheless, targeted for their improbabilities and their inspiring many readers to seek the supernatural when it does not actually exist.

In "The Adventure of the Little Antiquary" the principal character is a wealthy miser, whose riches are well known to the bandits who operate on lonely mountain roads. Captured, the old antiquary fears for loss of his fortune and life. Instead, even though he quails with anxieties, he is invited to drink wine with the

bandits in a gathering of good cheer, and is ultimately released without being robbed or poniarded. In many respects this tale reminds one of Keats's famous poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes." There, too, fears and doubts about safety are continually called up, only to have nothing dire take place. The lovers dread discovery, which never occurs. A feast is spread, but nobody partakes. Such suspended action repeats in Irving's story, as the old antiquary uses up a large amount of adrenaline worrying about what evil will befall him, only to have pleasant hosting from the robber band into whose hands he has fallen. In more than one of these banditti tales, Irving depicts the character of the robber as encompassing as much good as violent or evil intent. Here we encounter a successful rendering of the Byronic Hero-Villain. Once again we find Irving creating ambiguity that defies rational analyses.

Not all of the tales are so pleasant in outcome. For example, "The Story of the Young Robber," centers on a young man turned bandit because of the social-legal injustices he sustains. As part of his loyalty to the banditti, he is forced to murder a girl he dearly loves, but who is kidnapped by his robber band. According to the code of such a group, any prisoner must die, and, after this girl is raped, the young robber is mandated to stab her, which he does while she sleeps. This story is related by the young robber to a French painter whom the bandits had

captured; as the story concludes, and before any additional moralising can take place, word arrives that the French painter has been ransomed, and so his thoughts of returning to his usual life take precedence over any detailed revulsion being expressed at this murder of an innocent.

As if to conclude this cluster of tales on a less grim note, "The Adventure of the Englishman" relates how the initial dislike between a loudmouthed English traveler who persistently finds fault with everything Italian, and a lovely Venetian lady whose travels are brought temporarily to grief. Bandits had intended to attack her, but the Englishman's assistance leads to her fortunate escape. The comic disparity between the gruff Englishman's outlook and the Venetian's perception that all English are rude, crude and vulgar, effects amusing downplay to the ill intentions and violence or potential violence that occur elsewhere in these Italian Banditti stories.

The fourth and final section of *Tales of a Traveller* is made

up of stories found among the papers of another persona Irving had previously created, Diedrich Knickerbocker. "The Money Diggers," as this section of the book is entitled, opens with "Hell Gate," an actual treacherous area in the waters of Manhattan Sound. Rumor says that Captain Kidd's treasure is secreted there. A rotting ship in these waters lends credence to accounts that Kidd's wealth is hidden

nearby, and each of the following stories foregrounds the theme of searches for that wealth. "Kidd the Pirate," the first tale proper, offers some particulars concerning the actual pirate of that name, then veers into Geoffrey Crayon's overarching narrative of a dull fishing expedition, which led the fisherman into storytelling to relieve their tedium. Most renowned of these fishermen's tales, "The Devil and Tom Walker" revolves around the folk belief that the devil was always present when pirate treasure was hidden. In this case woodsman Tom Walker and his wife's dysfunctional marriage is disrupted even more when Tom tells his wife about his encounter with the devil, who bargains with him to receive vast wealth in return for his soul. Far greedier than her spouse, Walker's wife journeys into the dismal swampland inhabited by the devil, to make her own terms, but she is too much of a termagant even for Satan. So he murders her, bargains instead with Tom, who turns usurer and consequently amasses great riches. Eventually, hoping to cheat the devil, Tom resorts to church-going, prayer, Bible reading—all the while, however, extorting money from those who owe him money. One day, though, he forgets to take his Bible with him after making an oath to a supplicant, that "The devil take me, if I have made a farthing" from this man. Immediately Tom is summoned, and there, astride a great black horse, is the begrimed devil himself. Without his Bible to rescue him, Tom is whisked off to hell. That night the vast tract of wild land where the devil reputedly lives, burns to the ground, as

does Tom's store of documents. Thus the victims of Tom's extortions are freed from their debts.

If this chronicle of deceit and its rewards is unpleasant, the concluding pendant of stories, "Wolfert Webber, or The Golden Dream" and "The Adventure of the Black Fisherman" chronicle Wolfert's lesser woes connected with agricultural life contrasted with his dreams about discovering vast wealth." His searches after Kidd's treasure proving vain, Wolfert ultimately DOES gain great wealth--from the money paid to him for laying streets through what had been his cabbage patch—though such riches are attained only after he has been physically and emotionally buffeted in his madcap quest for Kidd's horde. Given the dream motif in these tales, we need not wonder about the strange noises and ghostly figures who, Wolfert imagines, beset his every step of the way toward the site of the treasure. An added comic touch is achieved when Wolfert's rescuer proves to be young Dirk Waldron, suitor for Wolfert's daughter , but one of whom Wolfert had long disapproved in hopes that she would marry a far wealthier husband. All turns out well in the end, and the large family of children that the Waldron's produce ensures that Wolfert's lineage will continue to live near what had been his own farm, comfortable in the accumulated dividends from what was paid to him for the sale of his land to the town. *Tales of a Traveller* comes to an end with stories that play off superstitious fears against what we readers detect as realistic,

understandable causes for the fortunes, good or ill, of many of the characters in these compelling stories.

Irving offers not only a sensible look at the supernatural elements popular in so much literature of his era, but he yokes that gaze with larger concepts of appearance versus reality, at times given point by the humor in a given story. The move from one section to another in these stories is also plausibly handled. The contemporaneous charges of coarseness hurled at *Tales of a Traveller*, and parroted with little change by many subsequent critics, seem to have no strong foundation in fact, nor in particular does there seem to be any salaciousness, which some early readers claimed as the cause of their antipathy, evident in Irving's pages. *Au contraire*, here is a well made book, in which the parts reinforce the whole. Irving obviously knew how to tell a story well, and he comprehended human nature with acumen.

In this creation of the first American short-story sequence Irving also kept in mind the eyes and ears of his readers, during a time when reading aloud, and listening attentively to such oral delivery, was a much more prevalent and routine pastime than it has become in our era of viewing computer screens. Many of the scenic effects in *Tales of a Traveller* show Irving's awareness of his contemporaries who numbered among painters of the Hudson River School,

and his allusions to the paintings of Salvator Rosa are apt in relation to his use of bleak, seemingly savagery scenery to enhance taut emotion. Many of his visual effects might likewise be classed as forerunners of the British Pre-Raphaelites' paintings; both have kindred sharp visual imagery, striking color effects and accompanying symbolic import. As to Irving's appeals to our ears, consider but one example, the opening of "The Inn at Terracinas." There the repeated "Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!" of the mounted courier's whip tenders us not just onomatopoetic sound effects, it also provides a neat commencement to what proves to be emotionally and physically well nigh explosive moments in the stories that follow.[3] Perhaps, unlike his hapless poet in verse, Washington Irving emerges as a poet in prose. Thus he takes rank with the technique of Charles Lamb or Emerson, whose essays—initially seeming far from poetry—indeed furnish examples of what in their rhythmic and sound patterns constitutes poetry.

In all these ways, then, it seems to me that *Tales of a Traveller* merits more, and more considered, attention than it has long been accorded. As Edward Wagenknecht stated, in this work Irving was developing new methods—of looking at the Gothic in literature, at looking at Italian inspirations that would continue to intrigue American writers, and at looking at the fine line distinguishing fiction from truth. Wagenknecht acknowledges the work of Pete

Kyle McCarter, who differentiated Irving's methods in short fiction from those of Poe (177-184). Wagenknecht also thought it was shameful that such potential was blighted by reviewers who were sore because Irving didn't give them the German book they had anticipated. The constant implications about the nature of storytelling likewise point the way toward many current literary preoccupations.[2] Geoffrey Crayon's admission that his is a mind cluttered with alternatives makes a felicitous foil to the "adventures" in the stories he assembles. The concept of alternatives might be an (unintentional) anticipation of postmodernism, just as Hawthorne's "Alice Doane's Appeal," in its fragmented structure and characterization may be.

Notes

*I dedicate this paper, first, to the memories of Calvin D. Yost, Jr., Emeritus Norman E. McClure Professor of English, Ursinus College; and Clarence Gohdes, Emeritus James B. Duke Professor of English, Duke University. These teachers inspired me to keep alive my interests in Irving's writings. Second, in more recent years, Tracy D. Hoffman, Baylor University, and herself a foremost Irving scholar, has become my guardian angel in Irving studies, reinvigorating

my pursuits of this author's writings and providing me opportunities to articulate my ideas.

1 Some ideas presented here derive from and amplify those in my "Washington Irving," *Supernatural Fiction Writers*, ed. Everett F. Bleiler. 2 vols. NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985. Fred Lewis Pattee long ago remarked the hostility toward *Tales of a Traveller* because "England expected a German book."—*The Development of the American Short Story*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923: 14.

2 See also William L. Hedges, *Washington Irving: An American Study, 1802-1832*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965: 194-196, 201-204.

3 Hedges (221) reads this opening as a "suggestion of male sexual prowess" and of the bandits' sexual intent toward women, though I question the credibility of that idea in connection with the opening line of the story.

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POETRY

C. Leigh McInnis

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[Editor's Note: The poet you are about to experience builds a cadence through long lines that I am unwilling to tamper with, even though it means a font size otherwise incompatible with the rest of the journal. In all cases, I attempt to keep the lines on the page as a poet intends; in thi case, especially so. So, with my apologies for the small print, read it as it should be.]

"*...science and art tend to coalesce in aesthetics, plasticit*
and form. The greatest scientists are artists as well.
Albert Einstei

"...science without religion is lam
religion without science is blind
Albert Einste

"We have fine students, fine scholars,

fine teachers, and a fine staff."

Asoka Srinivasan, Director

Tougaloo College Jackson Heart Study

"Of Evolution, Of Science, Of Teaching (for the Tougaloo College Jackson Heart Study Summer SLAM Program)"

We are Eagles flying above malicious mountains using our
mud-colored magnolia minds to manifest a diamond destiny different
than the one designed for us by Jim Crow's cold ashy hands.

We are the freshly combined cornbread and gravel road elements of Big Mama's
Periodic Table flowing freely like a jazz riff formed from Einstein's fantastical fusion,
melting art and science into a new metal of Obsidian Philosophy that is welded
into a better boat, allowing us to reach the shores of Plato's Wonderful World of Disney
while we understand that Aristotle's *Poetics* is the lighthouse
to lead men from the caves by making meaning of the shadows
that elude us when we allow math and music to be separated at birth.

We are Alchemists searching for the gold of truth in the rocks

of facts where fossils are narratives waiting to be heard
and universal health care is a prize-winning novel waiting to be written.

We are Mary Shelly's concrete concerns of too many Dr. Frankensteins
guided by the fool's gold of mirrors, cameras, and capitalism
rather than the North Star of Scientific Ethics.

We are Octavia Butler's Afro-funkadelic remixing of Einstein's
controversial psalm that dared to dream of science and religion
two-stepping on the downbeat while getting up on the one.

We are Gould's Horseshoe Crabs "tumbling into the empty right region
of complexity's space" naturally selecting to remove our shells
and ride the existential waves of life's carnivorous history.
Like the hands before us, we will quilt our future by selecting the fabric of our time.

We refuse to be pigs that plow the fields until the Earth's womb is barren;
rather we choose to be sheep and recycle the grass like good stewards.
Reading the Hippocratic Oath should replace reality tv as required recreation
for in its pre-HMO hieroglyphic, it understood the juju that was the golden
glue for body and soul and the elixir for nights that disrobed into forevers.

We are the poets whose microscopic eyes can see the beauty in bacteria because
we have shed the cataracts of ego that limit the horizon of our understanding, which
allows us to see the Cambrian explosion as just the foreshadowing of Abraham's

people surviving Egypt and Germany like Africans surviving the middle passage.
Thus, like them, we select the nature of greatness while never losing our grace.

We are Bronowski's treasure hunters searching for hidden meaning in the likenesses
of opposite objects, such as moons and apples, to give sight and motion to politicians
paralyzed by polls and too myopic to plant financial seeds for crops of onyx scientists.
Yes, Bronowski, we know that John Coltrane was a scientist plotting scales of "Giant
Steps," in the same manner that Kepler composed a symphony of planetary motion, for one
small step for man is an electric slide for mankind. Thus, the geometric understanding
of gravity's impact on bodies in motion was as important to James Brown as it was to Newton.

We are Tyson's "Defense" of sable minds and laboratory warriors that fail to cower
to the unknown mysteries of math just because they are cloaked by Time and Fear.
We are the galaxies produced by the Big Bang of the Civil Rights Movement
which was ignited by ancestral stars of Carver, Morgan, Rillieux, and Just
whose lightening legacies still brightly blaze coordinates of evolutionary excellence.

We are an expanding universe of practical physicians pulsating
platinum light bulbs that lead midnight and caramel bodies from
the quicksand hell of diabetes and the python grip of heart disease.

We are the flowers of Egyptian seeds that painted blueprints
of precisely plotted pyramids and analytical autopsies.
We are not the profiting pirates of AIG's poisoned-intellectualism;
we are Solomon's children who know that Knowledge planted in

Unrighteous soil only produces the fruits of chaos and destruction.

We are chocolate and sandy-gold faces with the shine of optimism

and eyes big and bright as a locomotive headlight

with bottomless brains waiting to be filled and ignited.

We are skyrocketing scholars with backpacks

fueled with hopes and dreams for a better tomorrow.

We are surgeons with scalpels that slice through ignorance and bureaucracy.

We are the knights sent to slay the dragon of diseases and with the

proper tools (swords, shields, and scholarships) we will make this land

a more perfect union of left and right hemispheres where

Art is the engine of Science that is driven by Morality.

ESSAY

Corey Latta

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"The Poetics of a Dark Christology: Grief, Theology, and Scientific Discourse in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*."

Tennyson's *In Memoriam* exists on the boundaries of theological, scientific, and personal expression. Often seen by scholars to be derivative from and dependent on, but not fully endorsing, theological and scientific poetics, Tennyson's project is one of homogeneity between the discourses of the divine and the natural. Peltason, for example, says, "The parts of *In Memoriam*, both in their evocations of the moment and in their readings of one another, teach that history is Christian and redemptive, that it is evolutionary and progressive, that it is vicious, that it is meaningless and chaotic, that it is unreal, a travesty of the uniquely living moment" (19). The "parts" to which Peltason refers speak to the composite nature of *In Memoriam*. Piecemealing his epic together through volatile stages of grief, Tennyson composed a sorrowful homage to his late friend Arthur Hallam over a period of seventeen years. Indeed, Tennyson constructs the theme of grief

throughout his epic, an emotional articulation pieced together out of scientific and theological language but torn apart by each.

Between these competing discourses, I argue that the poet privileges the language of faith to express grief, only then to subject it to the discourse of science thereby reflecting an inherent tension in his personal struggle with grief at the loss of Hallam. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* is first and foremost a theological—I will go further to say *Christological*—work that must ironically draw from scientific discourse to complete the poet's articulation of grief. Indeed, while science aids Tennyson in his articulation of emotion, it consistently undermines faith in the poem while simultaneously constraining the speaker's personal expression of grief Scholars—such as Graham Hough, Eleanor Mattes, and Michael Tomko, with whom I will converse—have long associated Tennyson's language and imagery with natural theology, making connections between the poet and the works of natural theologian William Paley. However, a point of significance that scholars have not given adequate attention to is how Hallam preeminently plays into Tennyson's use of theology. To try to fill that hole in Tennyson scholarship, I want to borrow the theological category of what is not found in the natural theology from which Tennyson scholars so often draw: Christology.

Tennyson seeks to exalt Hallam beyond his postmortem state by comparing him to the one figure traditionally associated with transcendence over death.

Christ is for Tennyson the incarnation of final victory over death that the poet so longs Hallam to be. Where the deceased Hallam remains lost to a naturalist world, Tennyson attempts to recreate a theologically defined Hallam that can overcome death and dark grief through poetic language. My designation of Tennyson's Christology as "dark" stems from its locus in the poem's bleak expressions of naturalist science. Though Tennyson would have Hallam venerated through transcendent Christian language, his grief punctures his attempts at deification through the Victorian scientific discourse of his day. However, the two discourses of theology and naturalist science function symbiotically in Tennyson's poetic lament. In the end, the darkness of Tennyson's theological language is its inability to fully transcend the realities of Hallam's death and the poet's grief over it.

This poetics of Christology is consistently undermined by appeals to natural science, a discourse that prevents Tennyson from poetically deifying Hallam. Tennyson cannot ultimately and permanently position Hallam where he would like because of the limitations induced by his grief and manifested in naturalist scientific language; the poet cannot maintain a Christology that holds his friend in a place of unblemished commemoration; the brutal reality of scientific discourse disrupts the theological language of Tennyson's effort to theologize Hallam l scientific discourse. Essentially the poem's competing discourses reveal a struggle within Tennyson to idealize and theologize his friend, but any act of

commemoration is inevitably subverted by the pains of grief in a natural world that allows for little comforting theology. Because of the sheer size of *In Memoriam* and because of the lack of scholarly attention given to some sections of the poem, I will focus mainly on sections XXVIII, XXXI, XXXIV, and XXXVI to represent the Christological and scientific tension that permeates the entire work. Christological diction is the door through which the reader must enter *In Memoriam*. The poem begins with the blunt declarative, "Strong Son of God," not accidently establishing the tone of thematic center of the entire epic. The phrase "Strong Son of God" is, of course, completely Christological, but unlike scholars such as Eugene August who see the poem's "Christ" as a one-dimensional reference to Jesus (223-225), I think that many occurrences of "Christ" in the poem should call the reader's attention to Hallam.[1]

Tennyson begins his lamenting ode to his late friend with an evocative messianic designation and presents the image that will resound through the poem's grieving for Hallam. Even from the very first phrase, the language of the poem (Christological) and the subject of the poem (the deceased Hallam) are interconnected. Tennyson couches this Christological opening in epistemological language, revealing to the readers how the poem should be read, "By faith, and faith alone, embrace, / Believing where we cannot prove" (5). As readers have not physically seen Christ, they have also not seen Hallam, but are called upon to

believe in the poet's project. This believing without seeing is Tennyson's attempt to create a condition of belief concomitant with his own. But not only objectless belief: implicitly, readers are asked to believe *in* Hallam, the "christ" of the poem.

However, the climate of faith immediately dissipates as the prologue establishes another theme of epistemological tension: Our little systems have their day; / They have their day and cease to be." Tennyson takes a bit a stab at the scientific discourse on which he will so thoroughly rely throughout the poem. He proposes a conclusive hierarchy of authority in the poem, "They [little systems] are but broken lights of thee, / And thou, Lord, are more than they." While the poet posits an inferiority of science under God, the prologue complicates any such hierarchy and, in doing so, creates a space in which to express the conflicting nature of his grief for Hallam: "We have but faith: we cannot know; / For knowledge is of things we see; / And yet we trust it comes from thee, / A beam in darkness: let it grow" (5). Here Tennyson affirms faith as the most suitable way to know, or know in grieving, his deceased friend. "Knowledge"—and here the poet means scientific knowledge—is perceptible, but just as Hallam is *with* God, knowledge –the poet asserts—comes *from* God, and the poet must surrender to both facts: "Forgive my grief for one removed,/ Thy creature, whom I found so fair./ I trust he lives in thee, and there/ I find him…" (lines 37-39). Unlike some scholars who have asserted that faith is merely a poetic trope or straw device set up

to be lamented against, as Peltason implies, "...it [In Memoriam] is surely the great agnostic poem, and God, as well as Hallam, is the absent friend..." (16), I see faith as a true desire in the poem, though one greatly troubled. Oscillating between science and faith, Tennyson locates Hallam in the divine center of the poem, situating himself, his grief, and the poem in tense fusion worked out most explicitly in a darkened Christology.

The Christological tone early in the poem finds even more heightened expression in the first Christmas section, Section XXVIII. As Tennyson marks the first Christmas spend in grief of Hallam, he writes: "The time draws near the birth of Christ:/ the moon is hid; the night is still; / The Christmas bells from hill to hill/ Answer each other in the mist" (24). In this section of the poem, Tennyson, as in the prologue, begins with a clear reference to the Annunciation. The birth of Christ is a traditional occasion for celebration, a holiday that indicates the birth of the world's savoir. Tennyson, however, creates a different world in the poem, one in which the denotation of the occasion is swallowed up the natural world. While Christ is being introduced to the world, the language of the natural world suggests concealment, "the mood is hid...The Christmas bells from hill to hill/ Answer each other in the mist." The theme of Christian hope being literally concealed by natural language and scientific discourse is constant through the poem and will be revisited in this article. Though these are "Christmas" bells—bells of

annunciation, pronouncement, salvific chimes alarming the world about Christ's birth—they sound out in mist, covered by natural phenomena. Tennyson is incapable of projecting a transcendent *Christ*ian discourse without contrasting naturalistic language, and therefore is unable to articulate Hallam—the poem's Christ—clearly.

Despite inability to deify Hallam completely because of the "mist" of natural language, the poet locates himself in the scene of the poem by saying that something is "shut between me and the sound" of the "four voices" of Christmas carols and the ringing bells. Interestingly, Tennyson immediately conflates these four voices with the four winds, saying that they increase and decrease in volume and say, "Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace." The tone seems relatively hopeful, except that Tennyson just previously confessed himself cut-off by something shut between him and the sound. The Christmas section turns dark quickly as the poet laments his life, wishing for death before he hears the misty bells again. This grief will translate into the following section (XXIX), when Tennyson will discount the celebrating of Christmas due to his grief. Here, as with the majority of the poem's sections, the reader is made aware that there is an emotional self-consciousness present in the poem—a deliberate attempt by the poet to forefront emotion through theological and natural language, blurring the lines of demarcation between each. Grief is kept at the surface of even the most

theological, potentially optimistic, language of the poem. Tennyson writes with such emotion that all employed discourses—scientific, natural, theological, and philosophical—operate beneath the canopy of the poet's grieved heart with language like the "threshold of the night." Conversely, theological and naturalistic discourses so permeate the poem that they inevitably shape, color, define the speaker's emotions. Indeed, throughout *In Memoriam*, there is no definition of love outside of evolutionary expressed love, no grief outside of theologically described grief, and no emotion that is not articulated through a tense synthesis of language of nature and faith.

Only two sections later, in section XXXI, Tennyson begins what a resurrection trope. Tennyson revisits the biblical account of the resurrection of Lazarus. In the biblical text, Lazarus is the brother of Mary and Martha, both friends of Jesus. Lazarus dies and is resurrected by Christ four days later.[2] In section XXXI, Tennyson exclaims, "Behold a man raised by Christ! (26). The poet's tone and the use of the Lazarus narrative reveals the poet's intense interest in of a return from death. This section of the poem begins a thematic thread theological / natural language that dialectically oppose one another, yet together continually produce a grief without resolution. In the last stanza of section XXXI, the poet says, "The rest remaineth unreveal'd"— a telling confession of the poet's disturbed state of unrest caused by unresolved grief.

It is the poet's unresolved grief that propels the poem forward, creating a link between each section. Section XXXIV of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* confines, communes, and conflates grief in the mixed discourse of science and faith, perhaps as explicitly as any other section of the epic, yet scholars have not fully interrogated it. The poet's struggle to find a voice of grief in the narrow rhetorical space between scientific and theological discourse is the thematic center of this portion of the poem—indeed, all the sections I am at looking at string together to form a larger frame of theology, natural language, and grief. This poetic of dialectic between theology and science in Tennyson coalesces in tense unity in the poet's expression of grief—a grief that especially permeates section XXXIV: "My own dim life should teach me this, / that life shall live for evermore, / Else earth is darkness at the core, / And dust and ashes that is;" (28). Tennyson affirms—or perhaps only goes as far as hopes—the existence of an afterlife. If there be no afterlife, then the "earth is darkness at the core"; by naturalizing the darkness of grief in geological language and positing science as a language of emotional mediation. In geological language, the earth's core is composed of fire, but for the poet whose grief is constantly disturbed by scientific discourse, natural language is misinformed and misleading. Though it is where the poet buries his grief, scientific discourse is not how grief is *best* expressed in a poem that so desperately wants to elevate its object of grief. Tennyson can delve into primal, earthy

language—literally a grounding of grief into the natural: "This round of green, this orb of flame, / Fantastic beauty; such as lurks/ In some wild Poet, when he works/ Without a conscience or an aim." Here the poet suggests that without an eternity, all is dust and ash, all is unreal fantasy and no greater than any aimless poetic endeavor. Language of potential unreality of the natural—the fantastic round of green/ orb of flame—both expresses and subverts grief in the section.

The language of the poet's grief is overwhelmingly presented in natural images thus far in section XXXIV (earth, darkness, core, round of green, orb of flame), but the discourse heightens its personal and frustrated epistemology: "Wha then were God to such as I? / There hardly worth my while to choose/ of things al mortal, or to use/ A little patience ere I die;" Interrogating grief means for Tennyson interrogating the *usefulness* of God and theological language to express grief. The desire to theologize emotions, while certainly strong in section XXXIV and in the poem as a whole, is met with utter ineptness as the poet cannot use such a discourse. Indeed, he exclaims that it is better to "sink to peace, / Like birds the charming serpent draws"—a violent image of death in the natural world. Using th theological to express grief is as useful to the poet as practicing patience before death—the former is swallowed up by the latter.

The section concludes nihilistically with a continuation of the image of natural death in the natural world: "To drop head-foremost in the jaws/ Of vacant

at Tennyson's manipulation of words and their meanings. Tennyson's Christological diction, especially invoking the "Word" allusion, suggests that Hallam is beyond the grip of the natural world and the poet's ability to extract purely theological thought is ever disturbed by naturalistic language. Once again the poem's naturalistic discourse grounds its theology, ever creating a faith full of the diction of doubt.

Eugene August's work on faith in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* rightly notes that Tennyson's doubt so prevalent in the poem "has everything to do with science" (219).

Likewise, Hough attributes Tennyson's frustration with science—and I would say the language of science—to its disregard for the individual soul, "Tennyson hates it because it implies a carelessness about the individual. For the purpose of In Memoriam is above all to assert the transcendent importance of the individual soul" (248).

Tennyson is, from a state of personal pain and grief, seeking the right language through which to venerate his lost friend. Through language that exalts Hallam and captures his immeasurable worth to Tennyson, the poet is creating a Christology. Ultimately, however, grief in a world defined by scientific discourse—something Tennyson both acknowledged, endorsed, and displayed anxiety over—chokes out the poet's own efforts, creating a scientifically

subversive struggle against the theological language of grief. Ultimately, Hallam is the Christ of the poem, but one covered in darkness. Tennyson's use of scientific/ natural language veils his "Christ" and prevents him from deifying him, leaving Hallam a fallen Christ and his grief for Hallam a bleak Christology.

Notes

1. For more on views of Tennyson's "Son of God" prologue, see August's survey of interpretations: 223-226
2. See *John* 11-12.

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POETRY

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Dancers on the River

And there shall be a tabernacle for a
shadow in the daytime from the heat,
and for a place of refuge

(Isaiah 6:4)

In summer heat
Weight takes a claim upon the
Spirit

But all life
Ventures toward the
Greater charm.

Not light, nor wind,
Ever remembering will
Station a dew-tipped feathered
Thing.

The tilt of day

Into the night will

Bring anew the grey fog

Ships of dawn

And the flapping

Winged songs from overhead,

And down below, their

Reflections gleam --

Those hundred dancers on the river.

ESSAY

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Critical Thinking as the Missing Link: An Analysis of Richard Wright's *Lawd Today!*

While naturalism, determinism, and existentialism are often central focus of analyses on the works of Richard Wright, it is clear that in each work Wright presents us with a character, whether it is the protagonist of *Black Boy*, Bigger Thomas, or even Cross Damon, who holds, to some degree, his fate in his own hands. In this pattern, we see that Wright is concerned with the ability of African people to take control of their lives and the manner in which he sees them failing to do so. In fact, it seems that he lays the foundation for this concern in his first novel, *Lawd Today!*, through which Wright asserts that white racism is bad for African Americans, but poor choices and behavior by African Americans are worse. Thus, Wright provides us with a book filled with African Americans who lack the proper critical skills to make effective choices; therefore, they perpetuate their negative situations with bad decisions and behavior. Additionally, we learn that one's self-esteem is directly related to his critical thinking ability as they exist in a vicious, negative cycle that is often perpetuated by African Americans,

themselves. Throughout the novel Wright shows us that poor self-esteem cause people not to engage in critical thinking because they do not think that they ar capable of thinking critically. At the same time, not developing oneself as critical thinker not only keeps one from creating a plan to change one's negativ circumstances, but it also causes many African Americans to accept thei inferiority because they never develop the faculty or determination to research an study history or many of life's other fields or disciplines necessary to gain first class citizenship. Ultimately, one who is unable to understand how his dail choices and behavior directly affect his ability to navigate his society's social educational, and economic institutions is doomed to remain a second-class citizen.

Lawd Today! exposes the dysfunctional life of Jake Johnson and his eve less conscious friends, Al, Bob, and Slim. From the opening of the novel, Wrigh makes his thesis of unfulfilled promise for African American citizenship clea The novel opens with a dream sequence where Jake is trying to climb a set of stair that he is never able to finish:

> No matter how hard he squinted his eyes and craned his neck, h could not see the top of the steps. But somebody was calling and h had to go up. It was hard work, climbing steps like these. He pante and the calves of his legs ached…he stretched his legs and covere

> three and four steps at a time. Then, suddenly, the steps seemed funny, like a great big round barrel rolling or a long log spinning in water and he was on top treading for all he was worth and that voice was still calling....He was flying up the steps now, mounting whole blocks of steps, miles and miles of steps, but even at that the end was not in sight...He stopped, sighed, wiped sweat from his forehead, and looked to see how many steps he had covered. He was right where he had started!...The steps stretched endlessly up (5).

Of course the voice calling Jake is that of freedom, but Jake is never able to answer or achieve freedom because he is never able to finish the climb. What is crucial to Wright's thesis or proposed solution is that he clearly shows that the achievement of freedom and first-class citizenship for African Americans is not easy; it is "hard work, climbing steps like these." There will be pain and hardship for the race: "He panted and the calves of his legs ached." And at the moment of writing *Lawd Today!*, it is clear that Wright's assessment is that African Americans are not close to freedom. "The steps stretched endlessly up." And for Wright, the reason that the race is not close to finishing that climb is because the race, as a whole, has not developed the necessary discipline and critical thinking faculties.

The story takes place on "FEBRUARY TWELFTH, ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY." We know this because throughout the story Wright weaves the day-long celebration on radio station WGN, but very few of the characters are conscious of the holiday or of what it means or if it should mean anything. While visiting the barber shop, Doc, the barber, asks Jake about the radio program, which is interesting because since it is Doc's shop and Doc's radio he should know what is playing on *his* radio in *his* shop.

> "What's that?" asked Doc.
>
> "What?"
>
> "That on the radio. A speech or something?"
>
> "Aw, naw. Just something about the Civil War," said Jake, yawning.
>
> "Civil War?"
>
> "Yeah. This is old Abe Lincoln's Birthday, you know."
>
> "Oh" (65).

This symbolizes Wright's notion that far too many African Americans are no conscious of their negative state because their minds are constantly preoccupie

with the moment of survival, the triviality of fleshly pleasure, and the awe of Godly things that resolves them of having to think critically. This is evident in the fact that the discussion about Lincoln is not about the sacrifice of life for freedom or even a consideration of whether or not African Americans are taking advantage of the opportunities that they have. Neither do they discuss whether or not African Americans are any better after Lincoln's work. Doc and Jake merely use the moment to discuss the awe of God, faith, and fate, which seems to infer that neither Jake nor any of his friends believe that African Americans have the critical capacity to change their state.

> "[Lincoln] was what I call a man of Gawd," said Doc in a deep, bass voice.
>
> "He couldn't've done what he done if he didn't have Gawd with 'im," said Jake.
>
> "Yeah, because you can't do nothing without 'im" (65).

After these comments, the discussion quickly diverges into stories of supernatural feats by men in war that are aided by God.

"You know, I heard about a soljer that went through the war wearing

Bible right next to his heart. He went all through the war and come ou

without a scratch."

"See what faith can do!"

"Folks in the old days use to work miracles."

"Jesus walked on water, you know."

"It's all in how much faith you got."

"Yeah, faith's the main thing."

"Faith can move mountains" (66).

We know from Wright's commentary on false or hypocritical faith in *Black Bo* that these lines are not meant to celebrate faith. In fact, later in the story Wrigh returns to this issue of religion being used as a justification for not having to thin when the men find a mis-mailed letter, which uses grand and elaborate storytellin to scare people to embrace Christianity. Even when the men attempt to commen on the effective writing skills of the author, this discussion diverges into the real of the awe and mystery of God.

"Some folks say that [flyer] shows that the end of time ain't far off."

"Yeah, Gawd might get tired of folks wanting to know too much and end everything."

"But Gawd sure must've been with the guy to make 'im write a thing like that."

"He must've showed him a vision."

"Man, Gawd's work is a mystery!"...

"You just can't figger out Gawd's plans..."

"...and there ain't no use in trying."...

"It makes your head swim!"

"Scares you just to think about it" (164-165).

Not that Wright is denouncing faith or asserting faith as useless, but the behavior of the men throughout the novel definitely echoes the sentiment that faith without works is dead, and Jake and his motley crew never have any works that allow their faith to "move mountains." And since "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," it would seem that in order to have faith one must be a studier of the word, and Jake and his friends lack the discipline and reading habits to study

anything. Thus, this conversation is merely lip service. Wright shows us African Americans who live like rats in a maze completely unaware that there is a bigger picture, or they are not disciplined enough to take action to understand the bigger picture so they can change their condition.

To clarify his thesis that includes the inability to change one's life or make effective decisions due to laziness and a lack of discipline, Wright shows us Jake choosing not to study for an upcoming test that could provide a promotion because he is more focused on wasting time with the trivial aspects of life. After eating breakfast, Jake has the opportunity to study but chooses to sleep.

> He yawned and scratched his thigh, thinking *I ought to go in and study my scheme some now. Right now would be a good time to put in some hard work.* But he did not move. His body relaxed; he could feel his toes tingling pleasantly. He gazed drowsily at the keen creases in his trousers, thinking *I don't feel like studying now. Maybe I'll wait till morning. That'll be better…* (36).

After a few minutes of sleep, Jake decides to go for a walk to find some pleasure rather than study for his test.

> ...it was nine o'clock. He had a full three hours before worktime. He wanted to go somewhere, but he could not think of a suitable place. He wanted something, and that something hungered in him, deeply. He went into a drugstore, bought a package of cigarettes, and walked west on 47th street to his favorite poolroom...He wondered if his pal, Bob, were up...He was going to Bob's, but, really, he did not want to go to Bob's. He wanted to go somewhere else; he thought of a certain apartment and a certain woman (68-69).

This passage articulates the running theme of the novel that Jake and his friends have a desire for a better life, but by not developing the proper critical skills and discipline they are unable to change their circumstance. This is no different than a high school student who desires to attend law or medical school but never develops the discipline to become an effective reader, thus his desire becomes unfulfilled. Jake is the epitome of Langston Hughes' poem, "Harlem," as he is an example of every reaction that Hughes provides to a deferred dream. So, he and his friends spend their time trying to fill metaphysical needs with physical solutions. Thus, smoking, drinking, sex, and card playing all become quick and temporary fixes that never fill or satisfy their desire for a better life and often lead to a destructive end, which is why the hunger in *Black Boy* is the same hunger that is never satisfied in Jake as it continues to "hunger in him, deeply." The child in *Black Boy* becomes a

man due to his critical development, but Jake remains a boy as evident by this continuously poor decisions. Where the child in *Black Boy* finds a way to gain access to knowledge by reading, which enhances his critical skills, Jake finds reasons not to engage in reading and critical development, causing him to remain an intellectual child.

> "He had long planned to visit one of these places [a library], but it had always happened that he could never get around to it...*Naw, naw, not today*...He shook his head. *Too much reading's bad*...he remembered a schoolmate of his who had become queer from trying to memorize the Bible. *Yeah, too much reading's bad. It addles your brains, and if you addle your brain you'll sure have bookworms in the brain*. His poor old grandmother had told him that when he was a child, and he had never forgotten it... (69).

The last line of this passage shows Wright not just indicting Jake but an entire culture that passes down or perpetuates ignorance as something positive, which is why the book shows everybody around Jake as lacking the critical skills to improve their circumstance. The point about Jake's grandmother is Wright's ple

to parents to understand the importance of developing one's child into a reader so that he will have the ability to improve and control is condition and destiny as well as the condition and destiny of his community. An excellent example of this is Haki Madhubuti who, in his book *Yellow Black*, explains how his mother, even as a drug-addicted prostitute, understood the importance of reading and forced Madhubuti to go to the library and read *Black Boy*. This one experience with reading propels him from a life on the streets into the scholar and businessman he is today. Madhubuti asserts: "My own transformation came about as a direct result of being introduced to African (Black) ideas that did not insult my own personhood, but guided me, invigorated me, and lifted me beyond the white supremacist theories that confined my people to the toilets of other people's promises and progress" (Madhubuti 239). In contrast, Jake is never able to lift himself from the "toilets of other people's promises and progress."

By not developing the necessary critical skills, Jake, like so many other African Americans, is never able to develop a plan. Though he desires to change his life, he is unable to come to grips with the notion that there is a process to life and that things do not just happen. When Jake and his friends arrive at work for the noon shift change, they notice the difference between the whites and blacks who are leaving work. While the African Americans stay on the job site and play

cards or plan to attend various social events, the white workers some to be headed to school or some type of training.

> The white clerks got their hats and coats and hurried up the stairs. Many of them carried books under their arms; most of them were young students who regarded their jobs in the Post Office as something temporary to tide them through the University. Jake scowled as he watched their tense, eager faces. *Them white boys always in a hurry to get somewhere. And soon's they get out of school they's going to be bigshots. But a nigger just stays a nigger.* He turned and looked toward the tables; many of the Negro clerks had remained to play bridge (117)

Jake does not seem to realize that what keeps a nigger a nigger is a combination of white racism and poor decisions by African Americans because they have no plan other than to spend their time playing cards and gratifying their flesh. In another example of Jake's misunderstanding of planning and process, while reading the paper, Jake and his friends marvel at the amazing feats or talents that some people have.

"And here's a picture of a guy what can play the violin with his toes," said Slim.

"With his *toes*?"

"I seen a guy play a guitar standing on his *head*."

"Some folks can do almost anything."

"It's a natural born gift" (193).

Once again, Jake and his friends miss the point that these feats are not natural gifts but are accomplished through hours of hard work and dedication, something that is absent from their lives, which makes it so difficult for them to comprehend the concept. The college student who does not attend class or the employee who is consistently absent from work never reaps the benefits of fruitful labor. Accordingly, the lack of a plan causes hopeless. After discussing the goings of the white clerks, Jake and friends conclude that

"…ain't no use of a black man rushing."

"Naw, 'cause we ain't going nowhere."…

"We just as well take it easy and have some fun, 'cause the white folks got us hogtied" (118).

They never seem to realize that it is them who have the most control over this self-fulfilling prophecy of never being able to change their circumstance. After an argument with the white postal inspector, Jake becomes depressed at the notion that he is unable to change his circumstance.

> [Jake] bent his head lower and threw his mail faster. *You sonofabitch! It ain't always going to be this way!* His mind went abruptly blank. He could not keep on with that thought, because he did not know where that thought led. He did not know of any other way things could be, if not *this* way. Yet he longed for them *not* to be this way. He felt that something vast and implacable was crushing him; and he felt angry with himself because he had to stand it. He had an impulse to whirl and sweep his arm in a wide swift arc and brush away everything. But there was nothing he could solve by doing that; he would only get into more trouble. And the feeling that he could do nothing doubled back upon him, fanning the ashes of other dead feelings of not being able to do anything, and he was consumed in a

fever of bitterness (142-143).

Along with not believing that they can change their circumstance, Jake and his friends compound their negative situations by making consistently bad decisions. I have discussed Jake not studying for his promotion test, but there are countless other bad decisions that he and the others make throughout the novel. Jake's physical and verbal abuse of his wife, on its face, is an immoral and evil act, but it also reeks of stupidity given the fact that during the 1930s and 40s government employees, especially African American employees, have both their professional and personal behavior scrutinized as a part of their job evaluation. And given the fact that Jake's wife, Lil, has already reported him twice for abuse, it seems utterly inconceivable that he would continue this behavior, knowing how easily African American employees are dismissed from jobs, especially jobs that whites consider to be reserved for whites.

"And suppose I don't support you."

"Then I'll go down to that Post Office and tell 'em!"

"The day you go down to that Post Office and snitch on me again, that's the day you going to be sorry!"

"And the day you stop paying these bills that's the day you going to be sorry!"

> "I don't want you, hear me!'
>
> "And I don't want you, neither! All I want from you is support, and I'm going to get it or get your job!'

Yet even with Lil's threat, Jake is unable to control his underdeveloped, juvenile urges and strikes Lil.

> "A hot sense of elation bubbled in him. He felt the muscles of his back stiffening. Just a few more words for her, just a few more, and by god, he would slap her into the middle of next Christmas. His righ hand itched. His voice dropped to a low growl....Lil knew she was risking danger [by continuing to agitate Jake], but she could no resist...Jake's open palm caught her square on the cheek, soundin like a pistol shot. She spun around from the force of the blow, fallin weakly against the wall, screaming...He had slapped Lil so hard his fingers felt cold (17, 19).

Early in the novel, Wright presents us with a man who is more Achilles tha Odysseus, a man driven by his physical desire and reaction rather than his critica faculties. This is highlighted by the way that Wright describes Jake's physica response to Lil's words: his muscles stiffen, his voice drops to a low growl, an

his hand itches to slap her. Jake is completely driven by his physical being and only thinks about his foolish or negative actions after he has committed them, which is Wright's condemnation of his lack of critical faculty. It is only when he is going to work that he takes the time to stop by Doc's barber shop to ask Doc to intervene because he knows that Lil is going to report him, again.

"What's happened?"

"Aw, I had to slap her a few times this morning>'

"That's bad. She might report you."

"Yeah, that's what I'm scared of."

"You know the government's pretty had on you now for things like that."

"That's what I want to talk with you about...You know I've been up before the Board twice...You still got some pull with the Post master, ain't you?...I want you to put in a good word for me, Doc...What do you think it'll cost?"

"It'll cost you a hundred dollars, Jake."

"Jeeesus, Doc!"

"Aw, I know it's tough, Jake. But that's the way the land lays these days."

Not only has Jake put his job in jeopardy, but solving the problem that he has created will force him to spend money that he does not have, putting him more in debt. *"If Lil goes and haves that operation it'll put me almost a thousand dollars in debt to that doctor. And that ain't counting all the other bills I own, neither. And if I don't pay 'em they'll kick me off my job*…A wave of self-pity swept through him…He owed so many debts he did not know which debt to pay first" (19). However, even though Jake has a way of getting the money, rather than using the money to put his financial life into order, he blows the money on more foolishness.

"But even if he borrowed he would not pay the doctor today. *I'll be Gawddamned if I pay that quack today! Naw, naw, not today!* He had already promised Al and Bob and Slim he would stand the treats tonight. He could not get out of that so easily. It was his turn, and what kind of sport would he be if he held them up? *They'll call me cheap. Aw, to hell with that quack! He'll just have to wait, that's all!*

> *Ain't no sense in a man working himself to death just to pay a quack doctor bill. And if Lil gets smart and tires any of them sly tricks of hers*... (20).

These poor decisions are a result of poor priorities, such as Jake's open admiration of gangers. "Jeeesus, it takes nerve to be a gangster! But they have a plenty of fun. Always got a flock of gals hanging on their arms. Dress well in sporty clothes. Drive them long, sleek automobiles. And got money to throw away…They don't live long, but I bet they sure have a hell of a sweet time while they do live. Better time than a lot of us who work hard every day for a measly living" (31). Having written *Lawd Today!* in the 1930s, Wright refutes the notion that ghetto fabulous materialism is a thing unique to the Hip Hop generation. And as both Carter G. Woodson and Frances Cress Welsing show in their works, *The Miseducation of the Negro* and *The Isis Papers*, the major hurdle or detriment for the African American community is an embracing and internalizing of the materialistic morals and principles of the same people who enslaved them. Sixty years before Eric B. and Rakim's *Paid in Full*, The Notorious B.I.G.'s *Ready to Die*, or 50 Cent's *Get Rich or Die Trying*, Wright shows us what happens when a people reject the spiritual core of their native beliefs to embrace the notion that things are the defining aspect of a person's personality and worth. And this is seen again with Jake playing the numbers despite the fact that he has a mounting debt

and that he knows that it is a scam. He only intended to bet fifty cents or "two bits," but is seduced by one of the workers to bet more. With no discipline (self-control) due to lacking critical faculties, Jake spends almost all the money he has betting the numbers. "*Ain't that a bitch?* His lips hung loose and he stared vacantly at the floor. *Gawddamn these sonofabitching numbers!* He crushed the paper into a tight wad and threw it into a corner. *If I hadn't played them numbers I would've had two dollars anyhow, now I'm almost dead broke…I'll never be fool enough to play them things again*" (50). Yet, before Jake is five minutes away from the betting salon, his lack of critical faculties allows him to embrace the notion of betting again. "He crossed the street and turned north. *Yeah, maybe if I'd played all the numbers I could get on my dream, I would've won something.* Yes, he would try that nest time. He would break that policy wheel yet. Just wait. He would win five hundred thousand…He'd win so much that the owner would be pleading with him to borrow some of it back so he could pay his customers" (50). This lack of critical faculty causes nothing but empty dreams to exist in Jake's mind. These empty dreams continue to haunt the African American community, causing it to embrace empty pie in the sky theology or the limited dreams of professional sports and entertainment that leave the community littered with young men with broken bodies, spirits, and underdeveloped minds, loitering the corners and inebriated with the pipe dreams of their past. Today, men like Jake vote for

men like Jake, men who have memorized King's Dream Speech but have not internalized Kings principles nor his work ethic, leaving the municipalities populated with unfulfilled promises and faulty economic development policies because the community has yet to realize that it must train and elect critical thinkers rather than exciting speakers who appeal to the emotions and not to the critical faculties.

Ultimately for Wright, poor choices are either a byproduct of self hatred, or self hatred is the cause of one not believing that they can become a critical thinker. Wright so compactly weaves these concepts together that it is difficult to tell which comes first the self-hate or the lack of critical thinking, but in either case they seem to go hand-in-hand. For instance, when discussing the accomplishments of white Americans, Jake and his friends assert that God reserves intelligence and critical thinking for special people, and they are usually white.

> "But Gawd lets some folks in on a lot of secrets. Like old Edison…"
>
> "He was a wizard!"
>
> "They called him a genius."…
>
> "White folks always inventing something."
>
> "They's smart."

"The white folks do everything so easy."...

"Sometimes when I think about it I almost hate myself."

"Yeah, sometimes I wish I was anything but a nigger."

Clearly, Jake and his friends have related or credited the genius of white people to a miraculous act by God, which echoes Wright's notion that African Americans must understand the relationship of critical/intellectual accomplishment and a positive self-esteem. For if they do not, then they will continue to linger in hopelessness due to a lack of belief that they can change their circumstance. Yet, this self hatred is so ingrained in the African American that he is sick and does not know that he is sick. Wright provides us with a mountain of material for the readers to recognize the self hatred as well as the characters' inability to fully recognize that they hate themselves. The opening scene where Jake takes almost an hour to comb his hair because he is trying to remove the coarseness of his hair to be, as Langston Hughes asserts in his essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," "as little Negro and as much American as possible" (Gates and McKay 1267). Jake's daily struggle with his hair is a symbol of the daily struggle of African Americans to whiten themselves to be accepted by the mainstream culture. "Going to the mirror, he surveyed the unruly strands with the apprehensive air of a veteran fieldmarshall inspecting the fortifications and wire entanglements of alien

army....Then, seizing his comb like a colt 45, he tried to force an opening through enemy lines....He was breathing hard...The enemy was conquered!...His head was a solid mass of black sickness" (23, 24). Wright dedicates four pages to Jake's struggle to comb his hair as a way to force the reader to understand the depths to which self hatred has damaged African Americans. Jake cannot conceive of leaving his house with his hair in its natural state because he, as so many other African Americans, has embraced and internalized his self hatred, which keeps him from being able to construct meaningful relationships with women or other African Americans who do not see the world from his view, such as the African American supervisor at his job, or the West Indian mail carrier who does not waste time with Jake and his friends being unproductive, or even the group patterned after Marcus Garvey's U.N.I.A., the Allied Imperial African War Councils unto the Fourth and Last Generations. Around this same time as the writing of *Lawd Today!*, Margaret Walker's "For My People" echoes this same sentiment that hair is one of the supreme symbols of African American self hatred. In the midst of the elaborate listing of the success and failures of African Americans, Walker simply lists "hair," and continues with the listing of other events, places, and behaviors that identify the struggles of African Americans. Walker seemed to know that hair is such a symbol of the African American struggle to develop a positive sense of self that just the word, "hair," evokes enough of this struggle that nothing more needs

to be said. And sixty years later, Don Imus' "nappy headed 'hoes" comment struck deep into the wounds of African Americans who are still trying to be "as little Negro and as much American as possible," but are still forced to look into the mirror everyday and know their Africanness cannot be completely erased. And unless this generation heeds Wright's words, it will continue to exist in the negative, unproductive conundrum of Jake Jackson. Ultimately, for Jake and his friends, their self hatred becomes to much to overcome, causing them to drown in their hopelessness.

> "A lot of times I been wanting to do things I just wouldn't do."
>
> "And I bet a lot of folks feel the same way."
>
> Now…Wait a minute…Now, you see, if all the folks felt like that why in hell don't they do something?"
>
> "Do what?"
>
> "What we's talking about…"…
>
> "Aw, man, ain't no sense in talking about things like this."
>
> "Yeah, the more you talk about 'em the more you feel 'em" (182-183).

Along with connecting a lack of reading and critical thinking to self hate and poor decisions, Wright also shows how a lack of critical thinking can lead to a life of unfulfilled nothingness, which is symbolized by the lack of satisfaction that Jakes receives from his job, causing him perpetual anxiety. "As he mounted the steps he wondered if he would have to go on this way year after year 'til he died. Was this *all*? Deep in him was a dumb yearning for something else; somewhere or other was something or other for him. But where? How? All he could see right now was an endless stretch of black postal days; and all he could feel was the agony of standing on his feet till they ached and sweated, of breathing dust till he spat black , of jerking his body…" (115-116). This laborious, unfulfilling work eventually takes its toll on the body. "In the faces and attitudes of the clerks the strain of the workday had begun to tell. Limbs moved with increasing listlessness. Slight puffs appeared beneath eyes that looked out with beaten, hangdog expressions. Crowns of heads were covered with thin layers of dark grey dust. Lips grew stiff and dry from thirst. The spittoons became filled with black mucus" (149). And Wright parallels the pain of an overly used body with the pain of an unfulfilled spirit. "Now and then they looked at the clock and sighed from a numbing weariness of spirit. Sometimes images would flit aimlessly into their minds and then aimlessly out again, like stray cats slinking across deserted streets at midnight" (149-150). In the men's conversation, Wright explains how

satisfying work has a much different effect on the body and soul than unsatisfying work.

> "Seem like these last four hours ain't never going to end."
>
> "Ain't it funny how when you was kid you could play all day and never get tired?"
>
> "Yeah, and now just two hours is enough to poop you out!"
>
> "I wouldn't get so damn tired if I knowed where some of this mail was going."
>
> "Some people asking for money to get home, maybe."
>
> "And somebody telling somebody that somebody else is dead, maybe."
>
> "Yeah, maybe a lot of great things in these letters."
>
> "It's hard to just move your hands all day and not see what you doing."
>
> "Like a squirrel turning in a cage."
>
> "This kind of work'll drive a guy nuts" (150).

The desire to know what is being said in the letters is the desire by the men for their work and their lives to have some meaning, to matter. Maybe if they knew they were helping people, then they could feel good about their work, which, in turn, would cause them to feel good/satisfied about their lives. The irony is that their work is important and of use to society, but their lack of critical faculties keep them from realizing its importance. So, with no hope for a better life, Jake's days pass in the emptiness of a meaningless, unrewarding routine. "[Jake, Al, Bob, and Slim] flicked levers; the machines clattered slowly to silence. The bottoms of their feet tingled when the floor was still. In single file they dragged across the steel again and took places at little individual tables which were piled high with uncancelled mail…" (149). Wright presents the men as mindless pawns acted upon almost existentially, reduced to mere numbers, inanimate objects working at the whim of white masters. After providing their names at duty call, they are reduced to their identification numbers.

> "LINE UP FOR DETAIL!"
>
> As they fell into line and moved toward the Detail Station, they could hear the detail clerk barking out numbers.
>
> "Jake Jackson," called Jake when he was opposite the desk.

> "Ten on table nine!"
>
> "Robert Madison," called Bob.
>
> "Eleven on table nine."
>
> "Albert Johnson," called Al.
>
> "Twelve on table nine."
>
> "Nathan Williams," called Slim.
>
> "Thirteen on table nine!"

And after being reduced to numbers, they are reduced to chattel or trained animals at the bidding of whites. Even events such as inspections or guided tours through the mailroom place Jake and his friends in the position of nameless, faceless, inanimate objects.

> To his left Jake saw a party of six young white girls coming down the aisle. They were being led by Swanson [the mailroom inspector] who stopped now and then to explain the mechanism of the mail to them…Jake pushed letter after letter into the pigeonholes, feeling the eyes of the white inspector on him from the end of the aisle, and feeling the eyes of the white women on him from behind. There swept through him a sense of outrage, deep, hot, wild. He was

> conscious of the sticky sweatstains in the armpits of his shirt, and he felt the edges of his wet BVDs cutting into his loins…The voice was moving on. He heard murmurs of laughter…*They's looking at us like we was monkeys in a zoo* (143).

Yet, this naturalism or existentialism which runs like a flooding river through the story is trumped by the bad decisions of the men, especially the use of sex and alcohol to sooth or escape their problems. These solutions only worsen their circumstance because it puts them deeper in debt, causes health problems, and erodes any real romantic relationships they are able to build. Throughout the novel, sex is either a drug used to ease or escape the pain of their hellish lives. In an early chapter, Jake chooses to sleep and fantasize about a woman rather than study for his test. "Out of the mist loomed the face of a woman, of *the* woman" (36). The reality of Bob's STD never deters the men from their sexual escapades. In fact the paying of alimony is seen as a worse condition that becoming infected with a STD. And even the newspaper story of a woman who has killed multiple husbands does not deter them from fantasizing about her because they all have embraced the notion that manhood his hung on the penis; therefore, the only real problem about this female serial killer is that she has not found the right man to tame her sexually.

"'Boy, if she tried to smother me I'd show her some smothering!'

'Maybe that was what was wrong with her men. They couldn't smother right'

They laughed'"… (135).

In fact the single element or aspect that identifies one as a man for Jake and his friends is sexual ability. Even when Al is attempting to convince Jake to join the National Guard to earn some extra money, sexual conquest, not honor or courage, becomes the marker for manhood.

"'The army'll make a man out of you,' said Al.

'Hell, I'm a man already,' said Jake.

'That's just what you think! A soljer knows how to whip a woman's jelly.'

'You talk like I don't know how to whip a woman's jelly!...I can whip it till the butter comes, said Jake.

> They laughed again'" (153).

Even after a conversation about world politics, the men find themselves feeling helpless again, and turn to sexual salvation to relieve themselves of their helplessness. "Well, I reckon the best thing for a guy to do is get together with a woman" (184). And when one of the men shows the others some pornographic pictures that he just purchased, they react like children fighting over candy.

The men never seem to realize how this use of sex to sooth their bruised egos and restore their manhood is the reason why they are never able to develop positive relationships with any women, romantic or platonic. Jake's marriage is a train wreck, Al is divorced, and Bob has been infected with STDs on multiple occasions. And even more, the men cannot develop or nurture positive platonic or professional relationships with the women in their lives due to their need to conquer the opposite sex as a way to reclaim what has been taken from them by white supremacy. This is shown in their resentment for their black female co-workers.

> A group of about fifteen Negro women were checking in at the Detail Station. Most of them were beyond thirty, having come into the Post

Office during the days of the World War when the postal service was undermanned.

> 'Them pale faces sure look at them women like they was bitches,' said Jake.
>
> 'They got it coming to 'em,' said Bob.
>
> 'Yeah, let a nigger woman make fifty dollars a week and she begins to think she's too good for her own race,' said Jake (139).

Jake and his crew are reacting to the anger that the white men feel about having women, especially African American women, employed at the post office. Their own self hate and inept critical skills cause them to project their own feelings of inadequacy toward the women as a way to sooth their own fears and insecurities about their manhood. And when sex is not available to sooth them, then they turn to alcohol. As one of the men assert, they drink "to keep from worrying" (74). Even after finally leaving work, securing a loan, and heading to a party, the men still feel empty. It is only when they began to drink that they were able to fill their emptiness. "They were almost satisfied now, but now quite. Each felt that something was lacking, and that lack hungered over and above ordinary hunger, they could feel it in their stomachs, in their legs, even in the tips of their fingers"

(192). It is not until Jake offers the alcohol that the men become satisfied: "Say, how about some likker?...Now you talking."

Throughout the novel, Wright provides us more than just the men's unwise behavior. He also provides the reader with clear examples of the negative results, such as Jake's debt, his unhappiness with his marriage and his work, and Bob's STD. Even during two of their happiest moments, Wright shows the men's joy as fleeting. During a card game where the men are drinking, losing themselves in the joy of the moment, Slim's cough ends the goodtime. "Suddenly Slim's laugh turned into a violent cough. He stood up, bent over with hands touching the floor, and his long thin body heaved and rocked. Jake, Al, and Bob stood about him, silent, anxious" (88) And after the men secure a loan to visit a local club/whore house, just at the moment of fulfilled ecstasy, their goodtime is ended once Jake realizes that he has been robbed. A fight ensues, and Jake and his crew are beat near to death and deposited in an alley. So, they lose their money with no sexual pleasure to show for it, and they have not reduced any of their debts. The warning signs are there, but Jake and his friends are not critical thinkers. None of their bad luck or negative results cause them to change their lives. Even after Jake arrives home drunk, attacks Lil, who defends herself and renders Jake unconscious, there is no evidence that even that most violent event will change Jake or his circumstance. After the fight that leaves their home in shambles and both of them

almost dead, Wright concludes with a description of the weather. "Outside an icy wind swept around the corner of the building, whining and moaning like an idiot in a deep black pit." Of course, Jake is the idiotic whining wind, but unlike the seasons, it does not seem that Jake will change. Since there is no change in Jake, there is no real climax because there is no realization that things must change. And this is what Wright sees for African Americans, a hellish life that will continue this way until they are able to develop themselves critically. And to clarify this point Wright utilizes a quote from Waldo Frank's *Our America*, "...Now, when you study these long, rigid rows of desiccated men and women, you fell that you are in the presence of some form of life that has hardened but not grown, and over which the world has passed..." (113). For Wright, it seems that African Americans have not intellectually matured, have not grown as the child in *Black Boy*. African Americans have not put away childish things; they are still children, more concerned with physical pleasure than planning and critical thinking. And until this behavior changes, it will remain a community of Jakes, shooting themselves in the foot and denying the gun in the hand.

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ESSAY

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Locating the Self: Place and Identity in Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*

I first read Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* as an upcoming senior in high school. In the years that followed, after reading many other works by black writers, whenever I considered *Jubilee*, the protagonist Vyry's phrase, "I've been from pillar to post" always came to mind. It is what defined the text for me. And why shouldn't it? Walker's fictionalized account of her great-grandmother's life story is the story of one woman's search for place, for belonging, for home in a hostile world. More than that, it is also an allegory for the African American's journey toward home in an America that was not fully committed to his/her inclusion within its boundaries.

Vyry's declaration, "I've been from pillar to post" not only defines the text, but in many ways defines Vyry herself. Like African Americans, whose very moniker is derived from place, Vyry's identity is connected to place. Who she is i not only associated with where she is at a given time, but it is also influenced by it

In giving such primacy to the role of place in the establishment of Vyry's identity, Walker is participating in a tradition used by southern writers. So much of who southerners are revolves around where they are. Willie Morris, the writer of *My Dog Skip* ,for instance, has often been acknowledged as saying "My town is the place which shaped me into the creature I am now" (Brown).

Another southern writer, Margaret Mitchell, also reveals for us the significance of place in the establishment of identity. Like Vyry, her protagonist, Scarlett, is a product of the individual locations which she inhabits as well as the South in general. Growing up, Scarlett is the stereotypical belle, understanding her place in the world based on her privileged life in a house built by slave labor. After the Civil War, Scarlett's change in behavior is prompted by the change in circumstances in the city of Atlanta.

Although telling their stories from perspectives on the opposite ends of the spectrum, both Mitchell and Walker recognize the primacy the role of place has in the lives of their characters. They also share other similarities: both detail the lives of strong female characters before, during, and after the Civil War. They both give astonishingly accurate details of life for the southern American people during this period in history. Finally, they both create compelling characters with intriguing storylines. It is, however, this emphasis on place that most strongly connects them. Both writers use place, as embodied by the home, to define how the women are

perceived in the community and by themselves. Place also functions as a catalyst for change and a space for protest.

This connection between place and identity is well-documented. In *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden discusses in great detail the work that architects, historians, and psychologists have done to explain the influence place has had on society's understanding of itself and the individual's sense of identity. In fact, Hayden engages environmental psychologists, Setha Low and Irvin Altman who claim that "place attachment" is a similar psychological process to the experience of infants in parental attachment (16). So much of who we are and how we perceive ourselves is bound up in our connection to our first teachers, our parents; the process is similar in our connection to locations. Hayden herself argues that "people make attachments to places that are critical to their well-being or distress" (16). These attachments are a part of the process of creating the individual's sense of identity. In Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, for instance, Scarlett O'Hara's attachment to her home place, Tara, not only shapes her character but is it also the motivating factor that drives her actions throughout much of the novel. She does what she does because she loves Tara.

In addition to shaping the individual's basic sense of self, place also functions as a site of power struggle and political protest. According to Hayden, we only need to consider some commonly used phrases to understand this dynami

to be true. "Knowing one's place" and "a woman's place" indicate for even 21st century citizens that space and place are political forces used to determine a person's access to power, society, and/or resources. As these phrases further illustrate, in the 19th century, place was used to distinguish a person's right to own land or to be a part of a particular social or economic group (Hayden 16). Limiting access to space was used to restrict the political and economic rights of various groups of people (Hayden 22). Margaret Walker illustrates this power struggle in *Jubilee* through Vyry's encounter with the Ku Klux Klan. She is emblematic of a large population of black people who were burned out of their homes and businesses by white terrorists because they were overstepping the boundaries of social and political space designated for African Americans at that time.

Because place, or access to it, was used as a means to subjugate, African Americans found themselves using it to resist. In "Shatterings: Violent Disruptions of Homeplace in *Jubilee* and *The Street*, Amanda J. Davis claims that discussions of home should contain a different ideology for blacks than for whites. Because the homeplace suffered violent disruptions, black people were often unable to think of the home as a traditional place of safety (29). Considering it as such is itself a raced and classed construction (Davis 36). She goes on to cite bell hooks who argues that in response to this disruption, "black women have long resisted by making homes where there was affirmation despite hardship and

deprivation, and where dignity could be restored where it had been denied" (Davis 26). Therefore, home became a "site of resistance and liberation struggle" (hooks qtd. in Davis 26).

Although I agree with both hooks and Davis, I also contend that women, black and white, used the home as a site of resistance. While black women sought ways to find humanity and refuge in the home, white women often used the site of the home as a means for finding dignity and safety beyond its boundaries. This struggle became a part of their person and characterized their roles in society.

Both Scarlett and Vyry are shaped by their residence in the Big House, but because they occupy two different stations in life, they are affected differently. Both women strive to satisfy the expectations that attend them. Like the home in which she is raised, Tara, Scarlett O'Hara is built with hard work and ingenuity as well as race and class privilege. As a mistress in her home, Scarlett is expected to be a part of the leisure class. Whereas she rarely works hard while living under he parents' guidance—she will demonstrate this quality later in her life—she certainl acts as if her will is imperative. As a white woman of means, she is also expected to adhere to certain gender traits. "Before marriage, young girls must be, above al other things, sweet, gentle, beautiful and ornamental . . . ." (Mitchell 60). Unfortunately for Scarlett, behaving according to these traits is not always easy. I fact, she "looked sweet, charming and giddy, but she was in reality, self-willed,

vain and obstinate" (Mitchell 62). Even while Scarlett steps beyond the boundaries imposed by her gender, however, it is clear that she is allowed to do so because of the privilege she assumes as a member of the white, wealthy class.

One example of this type of freedom occurs at the barbecue when Scarlett admits her love to Ashley Wilkes. When he informs her that he does not feel the same, Scarlett throws and breaks a china bowl in her anger. Because she essentially owns the bowl and because she is able to own the space she is in to express her anger, Scarlett is able to intentionally throw and break the dish. This is not so for Vyry Brown. When she accidentally breaks a china dish in the Big House, she is made to hang by her arms in a dark closet for days. Because she is a slave forced to live in someone else's space, she is not only prohibited from owning her own space, but she is also not allowed to have the luxury of her own emotions or even accidents.

The example of the china dish demonstrates the differences in expectations that help shape the two girls' character. As a slave, for instance, Vyry's role is one of subservience and docility. She cannot expect anyone to obey her will and must, in fact, learn to suppress her own will in favor of those of others. At the age of seven, Vyry learns these lessons when she goes to live in the Big House permanently. Her guardian, Mammy Sukey, teaches her how she must behave—how she must be—as an enslaved resident of the house. "Mind your manners

good, and be real nice and polite. You a big gal now, but you ain't gone be no field hand and no yard nigger. You is gone wait on Quality and you got to act like Quality," (Walker 19). Vyry's residence in the house, as opposed to in the slave quarters with those who work outside, dictates that she assumes certain qualities within her personality.

Her role as the enslaved in the plantation home is also influenced by her position as the illegitimate daughter of the master. His wife, angered by Vyry's very existence, exacts certain conduct from Vyry because she is in the house, in the mistress's sight and thoughts on a regular basis. This hostility creates in Vyry not only the caution that is attendant in house slaves, but also a feeling of unwelcome and imperviousness. "But Vyry bent her back to Big Missy's hatred and struggled hard to please her" (Walker 31).

During the Civil War, an event that greatly affects the characters in each novel, the two women experience a transience that dislocates them from any sense of home. This transience lays the groundwork for transformation and protest in Scarlett and Vyry without actually requiring it of them. For her part, Scarlett's temporary residence at Aunt Pitty Pat's in Atlanta dislocates her from Tara and inspires a sense of nostalgia in her for the past and her past home. She indicates her longing for the way she used to be while caring for Melanie during the war: "Why, she had never had to do a thing for herself in all her life. There had always

been someone to do things for her, to look after her, shelter and protect her and spoil her. . . There had always been friends, neighbors, the competent hands of willing slaves. And now in this hour of greatest need, there was no one. It was incredible that she could be so completely alone, and frightened, and far from home. Home! If she were only home. . . ." (Mitchell 358).

In her article on the role of nostalgia in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, Sara Scanlan points to the transient lifestyle of Wharton's protagonist Lily. She explains that this transitory lifestyle, moving from home to home, and Lily's sense of displacement results in her use of nostalgia to create a functional sense of self. This use of nostalgia is not unlike Scarlett's employment of it. Scanlan argues that nostalgia is "a complex feeling for the past that recruits memory, environment and experience for decision-making." She further expounds that nostalgia represents the confrontation and negotiation between one's past self and present self which helps during moments of psychosocial and socioeconomic shock (209). Scarlett has been impoverished, separated from her community, her family and the pampered, privileged woman she envisioned herself to be. She has to come to terms with these changes and nostalgia makes this possible. It allows her to reconcile her image of the past with the new woman that war and homelessness is forcing her to become.

Vyry must also confront the molding force of war and homelessness. Although her role only changes slightly during the actual war, immediately following it, her transience—inspired by her search for a home—shapes her into a new creature. Newly freed, she must grapple with what it means to be free and consequently, dislocated. Walker entitles the section after the war, "Forty Years in the Wilderness," alluding to the wandering and rootlessness of the children of Israel after they escaped slavery in Egypt. Vyry also experiences this wandering and rootlessness. With her husband and children, she finds and is forced to leave four homes before finally being allowed to settle in the fifth place. In each instance, nature's violence or humanity's racism bars Vyry from experiencing stability. In regards to this instability, Davis claims "*Jubilee* demonstrates that the violence surrounding African Americans' mobility and capacity to establish a homeplace of refuge and resistance merely changes forms after slavery, but certainly did not disappear" (35). While freedom seemed to promise an opportunity for Vyry to seek her own place in the world and thus her own identity, the realities of racism and classism impede such an opportunity.

Obstructive racism is especially illustrated when Vyry finds her fourth home. It is a house with four rooms, a wide front hall, real lumber and glass windows. "Now at last they would have a real home and a farm of their own" (Walker 369). Davis argues that in this home, Vyry attempts to ape white norms

about the home. "This desire to replicate what whites have is evidenced through Vyry as well as when she brings all those things 'considered necessary to give them a comfortable start in life,' including domestic items like iron pots and kettles, quilts, candle molds, dishes, and yes, even feathers for beds and pillows that she no doubt saw in the Duttons' house" (42). In her search for identity, Vyry tries to put on the ways of white America, as evidenced by her imitation of the white homes she has seen. But the KKK makes it clear to her that her identity cannot contain the stability and safety that is inherent in white homes. In addition to invading her home and threatening the purity of her young daughter, they burn down their house and destroy Vyry's inner peace and security, so much so that she cannot even build a fifth house and opts to live outside. According to Davis, "Vyry will not concede to building, feeling that it is safer for the family to sleep outdoors (itself a biting commentary on the failure of a physical home alone to offer suitable protection). . . ." (33). The KKK, emblematic of racism, illustrates Delores Hayden's argument that power struggles can be read in the construction and even demolition of buildings, especially dwellings (31). The terrorist actions against Vyry's home influence the creation of her identity as insecure and disconnected. However, the building of her new home within a white community by her white neighbors reconstructs for Vyry a sense of connection and stability.

Both Vyry and Scarlett eventually discover themselves enough to be able to resist racism, classism and sexism. Scarlett, for instance, is encouraged by her relationship with Tara to go beyond the doors of the home and beyond the boundaries of women's space into the workforce. She first works in the fields to prevent her family from starving. She then works in her husband's general store and sawmills to pay the taxes on her home and to fulfill her promise to never be hungry again. Necessity drives Scarlett into the public world of work, but Scarlett becomes herself in the workforce. She has a single-mindedness that serves her well in business and allows her to be financially successful if socially disgraced. Because she is stepping beyond the limits of her place, her community finds her shameful. However, Scarlett is secure in her own sense of self not to care about them and thus becomes a symbol of independence for 1930's readers as well as new millennium readers.

Vyry, in the tradition of many black women before and after her, establishes a home to establish a sense of belonging not just to a particular community but to the nation. While blacks experienced hostility and unwelcome after they were freed from enslavement, it became important for them to maintain a place within the national body. Establishing a stable home was an act of resistance claiming that they were stable and therefore worthy of inclusion and that that they were just

not going to leave. When Vyry builds her home and her husband cultivates his farm, they are also making this protest claim.

Scarlett and Vyry seem to be worlds apart in their race, class and sensibilities, but the prominence of place in the creation of their identities prove that their place for readers is closer to one another than one might think.

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FICTION

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Tangled Web

I have never liked messy people. A messy person is someone who lives to be in the center of chaos, who gets extreme pleasure from seeing others entangled in chaos, and does not feel worth anything unless they are disparaging others. Joey "Jelly Belly" Rosette was the king of mess in my high school French class. Physically, he was a walking amoeba. His back sloped from his neck to his legs in such a manner that it appeared that he did not have a butt. From the side, his back looked like a capital letter C. Yet his stomach filled in the spaced left by the C. When he would sit, his stomach would continue to giggle well into the first few minutes of class, and it did not help that he found extreme pleasure in the giggling, using his hands to push it from side to side as if rolling three water balloons in a plastic garbage bag.

But for all of his physical uniqueness, it was his mouth that was most noticeable. Jelly Belly's mouth was a machine gun of snide remarks, insensitive quips, and spine breaking insults. For someone with no physical prowess at all, he had no fear of the checks that his mouth would constantly write that there was no

way that his body could cash. He mostly chose girls for his verbal assaults but no one was really safe from being hit by a stray insulting bullet. My high school ran the spectrum of the black community from the richest to the poorest. Jelly Belly was on the rich end, which he reminded us constantly. I was always amazed at how many kids tolerated this dude simply because he had money. He was legendary for inviting poor kids to his pool parties and then showing slides of them while cracking on their clothes and homes. One day, during a rain storm, this girl named Shante was walking down the hall, soaking wet from head to toe. Her perm had been washed into a slick skull cap, and her clothes were clinging to her, the seams threatening to erode at any moment. As she passed through the main hallway, where most of the students were gathered, Jelly Belly yelled,

"Girl, look at yo' shoes. Yo' toes look like rusty run-away slaves tryin' to flee the plantation of them run-over and holey shoes. Sound like they sayin' 'We gon' be free soon.'" Then with a plastic bag and twist ties appearing from thin air he continued, "Girl, here, take this new pair of shoes, and tell yo' mama not to worry about lay-away; I'll be over later to collect my payment."

The explosion of laughter from the student body rocked the halls as if the ground itself was laughing. Shante's drenched body was unable to hide the tears flowing like a raging river down the sides of her cheeks. All eyes were glued to

her shoes and the gaping holes through which we could see her feet that were trying desperately like frightened children to disappear deep into the shoes.

I never forgot that day, that moment. I wanted to punch his fat sponge face for Shante. I was hot with anger, like flames of hate were licking the sides of my neck and face. My eyes, just for a moment, met Shante's eyes, and I felt baptized in her pain, a pain made deeper by her acceptance of her fate, of her poverty, as if she understood that life would always be this way, that poverty would always be her shadow and scent. At that moment, I knew that I was going to get him if it was the last thing that I did. I carried that anger around with me, buried in the pocket of my heart like a wallet-size photo. I never needed to look at it; Shante's face was etched in my mind like hundred year old initials carved in cement. The thoughts of that day would often consume me, and I would find myself staring off into the nothingness of my hate. Once I was interrupted by my grandmother.

"Baby, can't nothing be that bad that you frowned all up like the muscles in

your face trying to have a meeting in the center."

"Grandma, why some people so evil?"

"That's the way of the world, baby. Some people just give in to this world and become evil. Most of 'em are just hurting and think that passing that hurt

along will ease their pain."

"Yeah, I'd like to do some passing along myself."

"Naw, baby, don't talk like that. Misery may love company, but surrounding yourself with misery don't ever cause joy. Two miserable people are just two miserable people. You can't fill the hole in your heart with hate. Hate can occupy the space, but it don't soothe or fill it. It just causes mo' scratches and scabs."

"Some people need to be punished and taught a lesson."

"Vengeance is mine saith the Lord, and most people who set out to teach people a lesson usually end up being the ones who learn the lesson." I knew that my grandmother was speaking the truth, but I had formed an intimate relationship with this hate. We were now on a first-name basis. We had become running buddies. I had learned to sleep with hate instead of a teddy bear or a night light. Seeing me drifting off into the darkness of my thoughts, she continued, "Baby, man ain't built for vengeance 'cause he can barely handle justice. Always remember that forgiveness is a gift that you give yourself. Now, come on in here and get some of these pinto beans and cornbread." It was difficult to be angry with a belly filled with pinto beans and cornbread, but the next day when I saw his face, the flames began to smolder all over again.

Jelly Belly was an honor roll student despite the fact that he rarely did his own homework. Again, I was amazed that so many kids would give this dude their homework for five and ten dollars, after he would spend most of the day talking about them like they were ticks on the backsides of dogs. It seems that we learn our prices early in life. But I was determined not to have a price. I did not need a price; I had a brain, and in French class, I was a star. I always had my homework, always made the highest grade. I truly liked being a star because of Lala Jones. She had big ole Bambi eyes, lips that were full as ripe melons, and a body like I-220, just filled with curves. I was the top dog, and I took every chance that I could to make it a happenstance that I mentioned, merely in passing, that my grade was the highest, and if she needed some help, I would be more than glad to lend my assistance in whatever way she saw fit. And she would bat those deep brown walnut eyes, smile her Sunday evening smile, and say "Thank you, but no thank you." It was amazing how she could communicate with just those few words and the batting of her eyelids that she knew that I was offering more than help with French and that she was not interested in either. But, that did not keep me from trying. Lala was so beautiful that I almost forgot that Jelly Belly was still in the room, until his voice with its nasal whine would grate my ears like iron fingernails being pulled across the chalkboard. Yet, for all his money, there was no one that Jelly Belly could ask for help in French class because he, much to my chagrin,

actually had the second highest grade. In truth, the only reason that his grade was second to mine was because many times he would not finish his homework, and I would never allow him to see mine. Many days, he would reach his stubby fingers into his swollen pockets and allow a fat wad of bills to unfurl themselves like roses opening to a new day, the eyes of most of the students turning to Christmas lights.

"Come on, man, you know you need this money." He would say to me like a pimp on the stroll.

I had heard this so much that I was no longer required to respond. My stone faced look, my narrowing eyes, and straight line for a mouth all said the words that I knew that I could not say if I did not want to be sent to the office. But finally, opportunity presented itself like Publisher's Clearinghouse appearing at my door with a million dollar check. Our final homework assignment before the final exam was worth twenty-five percent of our grade. I had been working on the assignment a few days before and was surprised how easy it was. Within a quick reading of the instructions, I knew all the answers before I finished the instructions. And with the assignment consisting of only true and false answers, I finished the assignment in less than twenty minutes. Twenty minutes to earn twenty-five percent, not bad for a star like me. That morning before the exam, a few of us were in the school library finishing homework or doing research for other assignments. Lala was there as well as Jelly Belly trying to scavenge for homework like the bloated

vulture that he was. I could see that Lala was having trouble with the French homework, and, of course, Jelly Belly had not attempted to do his. Now was my chance. I could kill two birds with one stone. I could win the favor of Lala and cause Jelly Belly to lose points, possibly dropping him to a grade of C or worse. It was perfect; the gods could not be this gracious.

First, I slid over to Jelly Belly who was in more of a panic than usual.

"What do you want Clyde?" His words were being pushed from his mouth by the panic of losing his B and the resentment that I was coming over to gloat.

"I was just coming to see if you needed the answers."

His head tilted to the side in suspicion, "And why would you do that? I know that you don't like me."

Painted my face with the most vivid color of deception that I could find, I replied, "You are right Jelly…err…Joey; I don't like you. But, I had a talk with my grandmother yesterday, and she told me that I cannot let how you act affect how I act."

Although he knew that my words of wisdom were really an insult, he also knew my grandmother, knew the type of person she was, and he took the bait. Besides, a drowning man will reach at a sword for salvation. "Thanks man." He reached into his pocket for money, "Let me pay you…"

"Don't worry about that Joey. Man, we are seniors, which means that we

must start acting more like adults. If I can help my brother, I should."

Then something happened that I had not expected. Jelly Belly was actually touched. That high brow, stone-mask of superiority that he had chiseled on his face began to melt with genuine appreciation. He was moved. A breeze o humility swept across his face almost choking the words from him "Tha…thanks…thanks Clyde. Nobody has ever done that for me." His eye began to swell with what looked like tears, but before they could fall he turne away and left the library.

"Sucker" I said to myself and headed toward Lala, my main treasure. A much as I liked her, my fear of rejection would not allow me to be vulnerable wit her, so I used my ability to annoy her by being silly as a diversion. "Looka her sweet mama, let big daddy here do you a favor and help you with you homework."

That did not work. With a glance, her laser eyes said, "Fool please, get away from me."

"Okay, look, I know that I've been tripping all year. And the truth is I hav been acting that way because you are *so* fine. I like you. That's the truth. Now, you don't like me, that's cool. But, I think that you are cool people. Whether yo like me or not, you don't have to get a bad grade just because I get on you nerves."

"With all of your high grades, that is the smartest thing that you have said all year." I was just happy to have her talking to me and saying something other than go away. She continued. "So, what was up with you and Joey? Why did he leave here so happy."

"You want the truth?"

"That would be nice." Her half smile that flashed pearls almost caused me to lose my train of thought.

"I gave that fool the wrong answers to the homework. Now he thinks that he's going to make an A. I can't wait to see that fool's face when he realizes that he has all the answers wrong."

With a slight head shake of disapproval, she stated, "That's wrong, Clyde. You know, I know your grandmother, which causes me to have a hard time believing that you are in her family tree."

"Aw, come on Lala, as much as he mistreats people, he deserves what he gets."

"Are you the one who should be giving it to him?"

"He should have done his own homework. Now come on girl, let me give you these answers."

"No, I want to do my own homework. Just explain these instructions to me because it seems as if the book is asking for one thing, but when I read them…"

"Girl, we ain't got time. It's almost time for class, and I'm not trying to end up in D-Hall for being late again. Look, I promise I will explain it all to you later, but take these answers now so that you don't get a bad grade." I could see the wheels of decision turning in her head. As much as she did not want me to give her the answers, she accepted them, and we headed to class.

As we hurried down the hall toward class, someone called my name; I looked behind me and saw a pretty girl in white, standing in the middle of the students moving like ants to and from class. Her mahogany oak nut skin seemed to glisten against her all white clothing, a simple blouse that fell effortlessly down her flowing white skirt. For a moment, I almost forgot about Lala. I squinted to get a better look at this figure and was surprised that it was Shante. I did not remember her ever looking so lovely. She was not an unattractive girl, but she never seemed to glow either, not like other girls with their lip gloss, hair sheen, and blush. As I approached Shante, I never realized how regal she looked as if she could command an army with the wave of one of her gazelle like arms. Her eyes were like deep pools with their own stories. Fighting my urge to say "Damn, you look good," I settled for "Yeah, what's up?"

"I heard what you are doing to Joey."

"Isn't it great," I said, giggling like a mad scientist or a juvenile army general who thinks he has the drop on an enemy army.

Her face softened, he mouth relaxed with a slight smile, and her eyes seemed to allow a soft caressing light fall upon my face. "I am poor of money, not poor of spirit."

Her words hit me in the face like a soft pillow but failed to connect to my brain. "Okay, Shante, I'm sure that has a meaning of some kind."

"I know that I am poor, and I know that others make fun of me for being poor. But, that's their problem not mine. I'm not going to say that I feel sorry for them, but I have far more important things to put in my heart than hatred or revenge."

"Shante, that's the deepest thing that I have ever heard in these high school halls. Unfortunately, you are a whale of knowledge trying to swim in shallow waters, and no matter what you say I'm going to baptize that fool in his own mess."

"It's hard to push someone in the mud and not get dirty yourself."

"To make an omelet you have to crack some eggs." I knew it wasn't a real answer to Shante's point, but that's all I had at the time. "Shante, I don't want to be late…"

"I have forgiven Joey because he needs forgiveness. But more importantly, I refuse to allow him or anybody else to control or define me, which is what I do if I spend my time getting even with everyone who does me wrong."

"You know, when I get older, I'll date women like you, but for now I got to go see this fool fall in the mud." Shante started to speak, but I cut her off, "I know, forgiveness and all that jazz. I'm sure that you are right, but sometimes it feels good to get even."

"No one ever gets even Clyde; the circle just keeps turning." With that, she walked down the hall, disappearing into the sea of students, and as important as that discussion was, all I could think was "Damn, I didn't know Shante was tha hot."

I arrived in class just before the tardy bell, sliding into the class room like a running back slicing into the end-zone just as the final horn sounds. This was it the moment for which I had been waiting. Jelly Belly would finally get his jus reward, and I was the one who was going to give it to him. In an interesting move the teacher had us exchange papers; he wanted to announce the answers so that we

could grade each other's papers. He would collect them later, but now he wanted us to know our grades before the final exam so we knew what we needed to earn on the final to achieve our desired grade. Before he began to give the answers, he made an announcement.

"Class, I know you are wondering why I am giving so many points for such an easy assignment, but what you must know is that the assignment is based on a trick question. A lot of you have the tendency not to read the entire question, and for this assignment it was important to read the entire question. If you only read half the question, you may have thought that the question was prompting you to affirm the negative, but actually it was asking you to affirm the positive."

With those words, my heart leapt to my throat and then plummeted to my stomach. I frantically began turning the pages of my textbook to ensure that I had not made that mistake. When my eyes fell on the question, and I read the *entire* question, like an exploding volcano, I involuntarily released an "Aw Lawd!!!"

"Something wrong Clyde?" The teacher asked.

"No, sir," I responded, the words barely passing across my limp lips. In my mind I could see my grade sinking like the Titanic. It was as if my grade was a house build on shaky foundation, and I was the one who gave the final push to cause it to crumble to rubble. What was even worse, I had given the same wrong

answers to Lala. As the darkness of my error began to cover me like a late evening fog, I opened my eyes to face Lala. She could read my face and knew what was wrong. And her face became a book or a letter to the editor, and I could clearly read her face, and it said not to ever talk to her again. And then, just when I was about to sink into the swampy depths of my depression, I was awakened by the alarm clock yell of

"Alright, I got them all right!" Jelly Belly was ecstatic. From his seat behind me, his two pudgy hands grabbed my shoulders like he was lassoing a Big Mac, and he began to shake me back and forth. "We did it!!! We did it!!!. We got them all right!!!. I'm going to get an A for the class!!!" I could not believe this was happening. All I could see was my grandmother's face, better yet her words. Her words hovered just above my head and then slowly slinked into my ears. As Jelly Belly bounced his butt out the classroom, I just sat there, hearing my grade crashing to the floor, breaking into a million pieces of "I told you so."

ESSAY

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The Measurement of Love in Toni Morrison's Beloved

Paul D:Your love is too thick, Sethe.
Sethe: *Love is or it isn't, Paul D. Thin love ain't no love at all.(Morrison 164)*

These memorable lines from Toni Morrison's ***Beloved*** give insight into how many African-American slaves and former slaves felt about love. Most slaves were afraid to show love because they felt that love would bring about some type of tragedy. Paul D explains to Sethe that her love is too thick. Sethe tells him that thin love is not love at all. Love is, or it is not. The slaves had learned to ration love, and to hide it because they did not want the slave masters to punish them by taking away something that they loved since families were always being split apart, and relationships were often compromised.

Although relationships existed during slavery between slaves, many times slaves had to negotiate with their slave masters about whether or not they could have relationships with other slaves. Most slaves lived in fear that their loved ones could be taken from them at any moment. If slave masters saw slaves loving

something or someone excessively, typically, they would many times destroy or forbid that love. Slaves also learned not to love themselves because they did not own their own existence. In Toni Morrison's novels *The Song of Solomon*, and *The Bluest Eye* love seems to be a primary theme. In *Beloved* love seems to dominate the theme. Although love is in the title of Toni Morrison's novel ***Beloved,*** it is a theme that is often overlooked because most people focus on the supernatural content. Toni Morrison even quotes from the Bible, "I will call them my people, which are not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them. "You are not my people," there they shall be called children of the living God" (Romans 9:25-26). The novel discusses the measurement of love in different types of relationships.

Mother and Child

Slave mothers lived in fear because they never knew when their babies would be ripped from them. Since most females see their children as an extension of themselves, they often want to protect and love their children. This protection and love for children were often compromised during slavery, and women would often sacrifice themselves to protect their children. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* Mr. Haley explained that he did not like to separate children because he had seen a mother throw her child and herself in the river just to avoid the brutality

of slavery; however, Mr. Haley did not see slavery as being brutal. In *Beloved* Sethe's love for her children was different from the love the other former slaves in the story had for their children. Yet, women who loved their children but who hated slavery would often commit suicide and infanticide to protect their children. Sethe dared to love her children so much until, she felt that she had the right to protect them even if it meant killing them. The black people in the novel disliked Sethe because she has a certain pride about the love that she has for her children. Many people often saw love for children as a form of self worship. Sethe was proud of her attempt to kill her children because it kept them from returning to slavery. She even said that once she realized that she was free, she felt that her arms were so wide that they could hold all of her children. She felt for the first time that she owned her children. Sethe's love for her children was very real and pure, but her hatred of slavery was even stronger because she had witnessed slavery's brutality and its destruction of a person's self (Morrison 40-45).

Sethe's love for her children is the reason she attempts to kill them and herself. Her love for her children transcends the grave and time, and vice versa when her daughter Beloved is resurrected because she loves her mother. Sethe and Beloved are connected even after death. The name Beloved was given to the unnamed baby because Sethe heard the preacher use the word, and this was the word that was inscribed on the tombstone. The word Beloved actually means one

who is loved or who is liked. Beloved is loved to death. It is ironic that Toni Morrison entitles the novel *Beloved* because most of the former slave children were not loved completely because their slave parents had learned that they were not supposed to love their children excessively. Although slave mothers loved their children, they had to protect themselves and their children by not becoming overly attached to them.

Beloved was actually loved the way she was supposed to be loved before she was murdered, but Sethe who was living among people who did not understand how they were supposed to love their children had a deranged love for her children after she committed her crime. Denver lives in fear of her mother because she does not know what caused Sethe to commit such an act. Denver, however does feel love from her mother, but it is a love that she cannot trust. Although Sethe has a thick kind of love for Denver, it comes with a price. Denver is afraid to leave her front yard alone. Sethe's love for Denver is fully demonstrated when Paul D tells Sethe that he wants a relationship with her. He explains to Sethe that Denver seems to dislike him. Sethe tells him that Denver is" a charmed child" (Morrison 41-42), and that she has been that way since birth. She also tells him that if their relationship came to choice, that she would choose Denver. Denver, however, feels threatened by Paul D and Sethe's relationship. Sethe has an excessive love for her child which was often seen dangerous and unhealthy (41-42).

While the love between a former slave woman and her child may have been pure, it was affected by what slave mothers had learned during slavery, a slave child could be taken from its parents at any moment, and from the moment these children were born, their mothers believed that this parent/child separation could happen to them. Consequently, they lived in fear and guarded their love for their children as a way of self protection. They used a thin love to love their children just in case something might happen. Baby Suggs knew that she had to measure her love when she was a slave mother giving birth to children. "The last of her children… she barely glanced at when he was born because it wasn't worth the trouble to learn features you would never see change into an adult anyway, Seven times she had done that (Morrison 139). The baby could die because infant mortality rate was very high during slavery, or if the baby lived, the slave master could trade the baby whenever he wanted to. Many slave mothers had grown accustomed to having their babies snatched from them, so they loved their children just a little, but somehow manage to care for the children without getting emotionally attached (Jacobs).

Males and Females

The measurement of love can also be seen in Paul D and Sethe's relationship. Since slavery had an impact on the male and female slaves

relationship, Paul D often measures out his love to the females in his life, and he also encourages Sethe to do the same. "For a used-to-be-slave woman to love anything that much was dangerous, especially if it were her children she had settled on loving The best thing he knew {Paul D.} was to love just a little bit, everything just a little bit, so when they broke it's back or shoved it in a croker sack, well maybe you'd have a little love left over for the next one" (Morrison 45). Here Paul D. is really suggesting that slaves and former slaves hold back their love for their own protection, so that they can preserve love for others in the future. This belief about love affected Paul D in all of his relationships. When people love half heartily, they are free to cheat or pursue other relationships. Paul D really wanted the relationship with Sethe, but since he protects his "red heart," (117)all the time, he can't control himself when he sees other women. He believes that Beloved has the "sexual shine" (64-65) for him, and he eventually has sex with her. Moreover, he believes that Beloved has cast a spell on him instead of his being simply attracted to her. Furthermore, it is not his fault that he has sex with her. When she becomes pregnant no one including Paul D realizes that he has fathered a child, and the child thus becomes a fatherless child.

When the novel reaches its conclusion, Paul D suddenly realizes how a man should love a woman. He recalls an incident when Sixo was asked about why he walked so many miles to see the thirty- mile woman. Sixo replied, "She is a friend

of mind. She gathers me man. The pieces I am, she gathers and give them back to me all in the right order. It's good you know when you have a woman who is a frien of your mind" (Morrison 272-73). Paul D now believes that this is the type of relationship that he wants with Sethe. He realizes that he has to have genuine love to have a successful relationship. He needs that "thick kind of love" (164) because as Sethe tells him, "Thin love ain't no love at all. Either love is or it isn't." (164). It is Paul D's measuring love that prevents him from having a relationship, and he wanders around for many years lost without love and without a family.

Self Love

Slavery also destroyed self love and self esteem among the slave. Baby Suggs, the churchless preacher reminds the slaves in her woodland services to love themselves. She says to the former slaves,

> Here in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they just as soon pick them out, no more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only want to use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them raise them up and kiss them, touch

> others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face' cause they don't love that either. You got to love it, you. (Morrison 88)

Baby Suggs, who is a nontraditional preacher, preaches in a nontraditional way, and breaks with the established church because it is reminiscent of the white-male controlled church which some believe is responsible for the self-loathing among former slaves. Even though Baby Sugg's spirit is damaged while she is trying to teach others to love themselves, her form of preaching seemed more like counseling because the former slaves had been traumatized during slavery, and they were taught that they were not humans. The schoolteacher tried to convince Sethe that she was an animal and has animal instincts. Baby Suggs was a counselor who was trying to restore self love to the former slaves. Baby Suggs was trying to get the former slaves to love self because self had been traumatized, brutalized, and dehumanized during slavery.

The slaves needed psychological and spiritual healing. Harriet Jacobs recalled many incidents where slave masters tried to take away the dignity of the slaves. "That anybody white could take your whole self for any thing that came to mind. Not just work, kill or maim you, but dirty you up. Dirty you so bad that you couldn't like yourself any more" (Morrison 251) . Morrison is suggesting that slavery caused many of the slaves to have psychological and spiritual problems.

the characters in *Beloved*, Paul D., Sethe, Denver, and Beloved had to learn how to bring the fragmented pieces of their personalities back together so that they could learn how to love themselves as human beings because slavery had destroyed the human psyche in the former slaves and their descendents.

When the slaves met each other, they could experience the other slaves' painful re-memories and experience each others' pain. The pain that the slaves experienced became a spiritual and mental pain that they could discern just by being in the presence of other slaves who had similar experiences. African-Americans during the post-slavery period still had memories of the brutality of slavery that were so intense until their pasts often collided with each other which sometimes had very negative and horrific effects on the slave descendents. Toni Morrison seems to be suggesting that in order for slave descendents to be free from the negativity of slavery, they must put themselves together again by learning to love completely. Thus the unloved becomes the beloved.

Tony Morrison sends each character through a healing process. She begins with Baby Suggs preaching to many former slaves and their children in her woodland services; however, Baby Suggs therapy is interrupted and halted when Sethe murders her baby. Sethe who has buried her past like she has buried her baby starts to have re-memories of the past when Paul D. walks into her yard. She

states that she promised herself that she would not let her past enter into her front yard; yet when Paul D. enters her yard, she is happy to see him, but her memories of Sweet Home and the brutality she experienced there floods her mind, and she has to face the complications of her past because they are still having an effect on how she sees herself, her children, and her environment. Sethe tries to "disremember the past," (54), and she manages to push the past into the farthest corners of her mind, but when Paul D comes her memories suddenly start to haunt her. Thus, the buried past becomes a spirit, and it begins to haunt her in the form of a person Beloved. The bad memories of the past must be reconciled before people can live successfully in the present and then move on the future. Toni Morrison's novel seems to be fragmented, because she maybe suggesting that we face the past in fragments, so that we can put it back together again like a puzzle. Once the puzzle is complete, then maybe her readers can be complete.

Paul D also has to deal with his past. He recalls incidents where he was treated inhumanely. He describes a moment from his past when the rooster had more freedom that he had had. Sethe and Paul D both are haunted by the past. They both deal with the self loathing, and each person has to learn how to love self before they can love others. The slaves who were treated worse than barnyard animals had to learn how to love themselves and others in the correct way.

Denver and Beloved who never experienced slavery had to go through a healing process because slavery affected the way Sethe treated them. Sethe murders Beloved and tries to harm all of her children because she hated the brutality of slavery. Denver is afraid to go out of her front yard because of what her mother had done. Beloved's baby ghost spirit is trapped inside the house; however, when Beloved is resurrected she seems to be many persons in one. She is Sethe, Sethe's mother, and Sethe's grandmother. She tells Sethe I am you, and you are me. She recalls being on the slave ship like Sethe's mother and grandmother. She knows about things that happened in the past. For instance she knows that Sethe's mother never combed Sethe's hair, she knows about Sethe's crystal earrings. It seems that Beloved's appearance represents the healing that needs to take place within each character. She forces them into the present. She gets Sethe to look at her past crime, she forces Paul D to remove the tobacco tin from his red heart, and she forces Denver to go out into the world. Beloved's presence, which seems to represent the past brings about a healing and an acceptance of self among the main characters.

The Bible teaches us to love God and to love others. It never mentions to love only self. Yet Baby Suggs seems to feel that it was her duty as a preacher to teach the former slaves and their descendents to love every part of their bodies, minds, and spirits. Baby Suggs method of preaching seemed to suggest that

something outside of the traditional church was needed to help the former slaves to love themselves.

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ESSAY

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Implications of Religious Fanaticism in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

One of the outcomes of post-colonial Africa is the growth of Christianity across the continent. Although earlier literary works have portrayed the colonizers' disregard for African spirituality, few if any writers have depicted a character's callous disregard for African religion quite like Chimamanda Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus*. Of special note is her intricate and poignant tale of a Catholic extremist who, among other failings, dismisses the authenticity of the age-old traditional religion of his ancestors. In this paper, perceptions of a misguided Catholic fanatic and his contempt for African traditional method of worship are examined to show the negative implications of religious zealotry.

The novel begins with an unpleasant encounter between Eugene Achike and his son Chukwuka (henceforth called Jaja). Unexpectedly, Jaja refuses to receive Holy Communion at mass on Palm Sunday. As his sister, Kambili declares, "Things started to fall apart when my brother, Jaja, did not go to Communion and Papa flung his missal across the room and broke the figurines" (3). This outward display of uncontrollable anger foreshadows the fanatical tendencies exhibited by

Eugene throughout the novel. Jaja's explanation that the wafer gives him "bad breath" enrages his father who quickly reminds him that, "It is the body of our Lord. You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that" (6). Despite the threat of eternal damnation, Jaja indicates his willingness to die rather than be subjected to the distasteful wafers and the nauseating feeling he gets when Father Benedict touches his mouth. What his father fails to understand is that Jaja's refusal of the communion is an indication of a bigger problem that is quietly but surely destroying his family. His young son seems to "have had it" with his father's dictatorial parenting style, so he is no longer afraid of any abuse, physical or mental. At ten years old, Jaja is severely punished for missing "two questions on his catechism test," and not being "named the best in his Holy Communion class." Eugene teaches his young son a bitter lesson he will always remember whenever he looks at his "gnarled finger, deformed like a dry stick" (145). Obviously, he has no tolerance for shortcomings, however small, at school and elsewhere.

Adichie's reference to love is noteworthy. In an abusive home that ideal of sentiment, unconditional love, is usually patently absent. The fifteen-year-old Kambili is overcome with fear that pushes her to retreat into a silent world where she can only observe and wonder about a number of conflicting issues in her young life. Even though she believes that her father's love is seared into her burnt tongue by simply taking the "love sip" from his hot tea, she wonders about his

maltreatment of her mother, paternal grandfather, and brother. As she watches her mother pick up the broken pieces of the figurines shattered by her father in his senseless rage, she notes the inscription *GOD IS LOVE* on the T-shirt her mother wears "every other day." One can infer that she wears this shirt either to pacify an easily agitated, unpredictable husband or as a silent reminder of the essence of God's selfless love—the kind that she and her children crave and, quite frankly, deserve.

Kambili's discomfort with oncoming menstrual cramps make no difference to a father bent on exacting undue punishment for what he perceives as sinful. So, when Jaja suggests that she eats cereal to avoid any stomach ache that the pain-relieving medication may cause, her paranoid father angrily asks: "Has the devil asked you all to go on errands for him? …Has the devil built a tent in my house?" (102). He is further enraged that his wife does nothing to prevent their daughter from breaking the Eucharistic fast ten minutes before mass. As Kambili recalls:

> He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers o brown leather with a sedate leather-covered buckle. It landed on Jaj first, across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as it landed o her upper arm… I put the bowl down just as the belt landed on m back…Papa was like a Fulani nomad… as he swung his belt at Mama

> Jaja, and me muttering that the devil would not win. We did not move more than two steps away from the leather belt that swished through the air. Then the belt stopped, and Papa stared at the leather in his hand. His face crumpled; his eyelids sagged. "Why do you walk into sin?" he asked. "Why do you like sin?" (102)

In his indignation, Eugene forgets the basic Catholic definition of sin as "the deliberate, freely chosen transgression of divine law" (*Basic Catholic Beliefs and Practices* 1). Although he perceives the situation differently, there is no intention on anyone's part to break God's law.

The same violent outburst surfaces when Kambili brings home a painting of her grandfather. All her life, her grandfather has been described as a sinful heathen who should be avoided at all times. Punishments range from fifteen-minute visitations at grandfather's place where no food or drink is allowed to the scalding of feet. Kambili is given the latter punishment for staying in the same house with Papa-Nnukwu at Nsukka. Eugene's justification of his brutal punishment is that his daughter "saw the sin clearly and …walked right into it" (194).

Typically, Eugene does not allow his children to travel away from home. Nonetheless, he makes this one exception when his sister, Ifeoma, asks his permission to take her niece, nephew, and her own children to see Our Lady's

apparition at Aokpe. Before the planned visit, they spend some time with her at Nsukka. This visit changes everything. Papa-Nnukwu's relationship with her Aunty Ifeoma and cousins Amaka, Obiora, and Chima lets her see her grandfather as a loving, caring man. All she could do to rectify lost times is to bring home his painting. Unfortunately, her father violently disapproves. He rips the painting and throws the pieces of paper on the floor. Kambili recalls his reaction when she attempts to pick up the pieces of paper littered on the floor:

> "Get up!" Papa said again. I still did not move. He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. …Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hell fire. The kicking increased in tempo… I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of painting; they were soft, feathery. …The stinging was raw now, even more like bites, because the metal landed on open skin on my side, my back, my legs. Kicking, kicking, kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy. …I could hear a swoosh in the air. …I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet. (210-1)

With such senseless beating, Kambili wakes up in a hospital room with internal bleeding and a broken rib. Clearly, the so-called sin does not match the

severe punishment meted out. All she has done is bring home a portrait of a grandfather she is just beginning to know, appreciate, and love. Once again, Eugene, the practicing Catholic, seems to have forgotten God's message on mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. According to Firman and Gila, experts in spiritual psychosynthesis, religious fanatics like him "claim that God is on their side. …Such individuals are driven by their certainty that they are privy to sacred truths and are therefore morally obligated to do everything in their power—no matter how many people may suffer—to act upon these truths" (1).

Beatrice, Eugene's wife, provides the only source of reassurance for her children in a household where terror lurks at every imaginable corner. She is also a victim of her husband's mental and physical abuse. The reader meets her after mass on Palm Sunday when she walks into a tense situation between her husband and her son. Without saying a word, she kneels down to pick up the pieces of the figurines her husband has broken out of blind fury. It is obvious that she tries to maintain some semblance of normality in her house, and comfort her children as much as the difficult situation will allow. But the young Kambili thinks that her mother "… did not mind; there was much that she did not mind" (19). The reader can only imagine the mental anguish tormenting Beatrice. Outwardly, she seems grateful that even after several miscarriages, her husband has not married some of the "willing women" out there for the taking. He would have preferred to have

more children than the two they currently have. Obviously, she is not happy about that, and the situation is further complicated with the news of her pregnancy which is soon shattered by a miscarriage. As one would expect, the children are saddened by the loss of the baby; Jaja even says a short prayer for their unborn sibling after dinner. It is not surprising, though, that their father's reaction is different and downright heartless. At dinner, he orders a recitation of "…sixteen different novenas. For Mama's forgiveness" (35). Additionally, more novenas are recited on the first Sunday of the Trinity with a special plea to Saint Jude. Neither his children nor the readers understand why his wife needs forgiveness and not love and understanding during such a difficult time. Eugene's twisted views on sin and forgiveness might make the reader wonder who is the greater sinner. The second miscarriage is even more sinister than the first. Six weeks into the pregnancy, the physical assault on his wife is so severe that she loses the baby. In her confusion and deep sorrow, she pays her sister-in-law a surprise visit—probably to find solace in the company of loving family members like Ifeoma. As Kambili remembers:

> Mama looked around the room. She stared at the wall clock for a while, the one with the broken second hand, before she turned to me. "You know that small table where we keep the Bible, *nne*? Your father broke it on my belly." She sounded as if she were talking about

> someone else, as if the table were not made of sturdy wood. My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said that there was nothing he could do to save it." Mama shook her head slowly. A thin line of tears crawled down her cheeks as though it has been a struggle for them to get out of her eyes. (248)

Interestingly, she returns to Enugu and exposes herself to further abuse as most abused victims typically do.

One other important character affected by Eugene's fanatical religious attitudes is his own father, Papa-Nnukwu. As a proud "traditionalist," he refuses his son's bribe to convert to Catholicism. So, he is deemed a heathen, treated with disregard, and given very little financial support. Eugene's misconception of what constitutes a "heathen" is noteworthy. According to Sarpong, "The word heathenism…is a misnomer when applied to traditional African religion. A heathen is somebody who is supposed not to know God, one steeped in the worship of idols" (4). Evidently, Papa-Nnukwu does not fit this description. He leads a good life and believes in the existence of God.

Even before colonization, traditionalists like Papa-Nnukwu recognized the existence of God and knew the difference between right and wrong. Why else would they have had a word for God (*Chukwu*) if they had no knowledge of a

Supreme Being? Similarly, why else would they have had a name for Satan (*Ekwensu)* if they had no knowledge of evil? In "Igbo Culture and History," an introductory article to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Ohadike expresses the same sentiment when he says that the novel "tells about the Igbo people's belief in a supreme God (*Chukwu)* who created all things and demanded obedience. It also suggests that religion has long been an integral part of Igbo life" (xxi). Even in modern societies, Igbos give their children names that reflect their deep sense of the presence of a Supreme Being in everyday life. The so-called idol worship has also been misinterpreted by people, like Eugene, who fail to see the similarity between the statues of the Blessed Virgin or the Saints and the so-called traditional idols. According to Ohadike:

> Igbo people had no symbols of Chukwu because no one knew what he looked like. They rarely kept special altars or shrines for his worship, since he was everywhere at the same time. Every transgression was ultimately an offence against him, and they constantly prayed that those trespasses that they might unknowingly have committed be forgiven them. The Igbo people nursed a deep reverence for the mysterious nature of Chukwu. They were not sure how to approach him but they knew that he was a spirit and that those who worshipped

> him must do so in spirit. They, therefore, communed with him through the major spirits and ancestors. (xxxiii)

Just as Catholics ask the heavenly hosts to intercede on their behalf during prayer, the traditionalists ask for similar favors through their ancestors. So, it is quite hypocritical that Eugene denounces the idols used as vehicles of traditional worship, but accepts the "blond life-size Virgin Mary mounted at St. Agnes's Catholic Church" (4). When Kambili asks why Our Lady would intercede on behalf of a an Igbo heathen like her Papa-Nnukwu, Aunty Ifeoma explains that "…Papa-Nnukwu was not a heathen but a traditionalist, that sometimes what was different was just as good as what was familiar, that when Papa-Nnukwu did his *itu-nzu*, his declaration of innocence, in the morning, it was the same as our saying the rosary" (166). She notes that Papa-Nnukwu's prayer undoubtedly recognizes God's existence in his daily life and the lives of his loved ones. Despite his poor financial situation, he is grateful for the little he has and prays for the well being of his entire family. In his invocation, he implores:

> Chineke! I thank you for this new morning! I thank you for the sun that rises. …Chineke! I have killed no one, I have taken no one's land, I have not committed adultery. …Chineke! I have wished others well. I have helped those who have nothing with the little that my hands can

> spare. ...Chineke! Bless me. Let me find enough to fill my stomach. Bless my daughter, Ifeoma. Give her enough for her family. ...Chineke! Bless my son, Eugene. Let the sun not set on his prosperity. Lift the curse they have put on him. ...Chineke! Bless the children of my children. Let your eyes follow them away from evil and towards good. (167)

His earnest prayer is all-inclusive. Kambili is surprised that he also prays for her father who usually dismiss Papa-Nnukwu as ungodly and unworthy. His prayer to God for mere sustenance is heartbreaking. It is sad that the *Omelora*, "the one who does [good deeds] for the community" (56), would let his own father go hungry because he prefers the religion of his forefathers to the foreign Catholicism. As rightly noted by Obaze, both father and son coincidentally worship "the same Chineke-God in their different ways, with each using different symbols as means for intercession" (*Book Review* 3).

It is important to note that even the changing attitudes of the Vatican also elude Eugene. Pope John II's address to the bishops of Kinshasa calls for the preservation of African traditions. The same sentiment is echoed in his address to the students of Côte d'Ivoire in Yamoussoukro when he advises them to:

> Preserve carefully your African roots. Safeguard the values of your culture. You know them and are proud of them: respect for life, family solidarity and support for relatives, respect for the old, the sense of hospitality, judicious preservations of traditions. …All that is a real treasure from which you can and must draw something new for the building up of your country, on an original and typically African model, made up of harmony between the values of its cultural past and the most acceptable elements of modern civilization. (7)

Of course, these words of wisdom make good sense to Catholics like Aunty Ifeoma, Father Amadi, and even traditionalists like Papa-Nnukwu. Only a fanatic like Eugene would dismiss the traditions of his ancestors so completely and resort to abusive treatment of those whose religious beliefs are different from his. It is shameful that a man of his standing does not even understand the importance of respect for the elderly in African communities, especially in traditional Igbo societies. So, the sadness Papa-Nnukwu feels at his own son's mindless contempt is deep and heartfelt. This is exemplified in his brief conversation with Father Amadi when he advises him to stay true to his converts and "…never lie to them," or "teach them to disregard their fathers" (172). In his pain, he can only infer that his son must have learned his bad, foreign habits from the missionaries. In *The Way of the Elders*, Doumbia and Doumbia remind us that "If we do not show

proper respect and appreciation for those who brought us into this world, for those who cared for us, we will not find true contentment" (157). Unfortunately, Papa-Nnukwu does not get the consideration he truly deserves in life. This sad situation stays the same even when he dies. News of his father's death does not move Eugene, whose main concern is the administration of the sacrament of Extreme Unction before death. He even insists on a Catholic burial, much to his sister's disappointment and disapproval.

Adichie's contrasting portrayal of Ifeoma and Eugene is quite telling. Even though both characters have been exposed to western education and converted to the same Catholicism, their life styles are totally different. On the one hand, Ifeoma's household is a safe place where her children express themselves freely and love their grandfather unconditionally. After her husband's death, she manages to raise her three children with the meager salary she receives as a professor at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. As good Catholics, they attend St. Peter's church on campus, say their morning prayers, say grace before meals, and even say the rosary with songs of praise. She understands the value of true happiness and even prays for laughter. When her brother insists on a Catholic burial for their father, Ifeoma stands up to his foolish antics when he indicates that he does not want to be associated with "a pagan funeral." Unlike Eugene, her Catholic faith does not

cloud her clear understanding of the simple fact that their father deserves a burial befitting a loving, caring, and respectable traditionalist.

On the other hand, Eugene's household is depicted as one raging with silence and seething with fear. His wife and children are not allowed to express their own views. There is neither joy nor laughter in a household ruled with a clenched iron fist. In his myopic world of religious fanaticism everything is sinful. According to him, it is sinful to say the rosary with songs. It is sinful to sleep in the same room with the so-called non-believers like Papa-Nnukwu. It is sinful for a girl to wear trousers. It is sinful for his wife to lose two pregnancies, even when he is solely responsible for the second miscarriage. It is also sinful to eat before the Eucharistic fast even when one is ill. Ironically, Eugene keeps a watchful eye on an endless list of sins other people commit while ignoring a multitude of sins he commits consistently. His arrogance and dictatorial attitudes do not allow him to see the unbearable pain he causes members of his own family.

Obviously, Eugene's tyrannical imposition of his religious views on his family negatively affects everyone. Jaja's defiance and refusal to receive Holy Communion is noteworthy; it marks the very moment "Things started to fall apart." After the eye-opening Nsukka visit, he is no longer afraid to come in close contact with his grandfather or to bring home the purple hibiscus to plant in their

yard. He sheds the shackles of bondage and is not afraid to take responsibility for Papa-Nnukwu's portrait their father finds in his sister's possession. Even though he is innocent, he takes full responsibility for killing his father in an attempt to spare his mother additional pain and the embarrassment of going to prison. One can safely assume that, at this point in his life, Jaja prefers physical confinement to the mental imprisonment he has known all his life.

Kambili's conflicting feelings about her father and her usual unthinking compliance eventually give way to a clearer understanding of a number of issues. She now knows that her grandfather is not an ungodly man. He is a loving, caring, and selfless man. With her grandfather now deceased, she is saddened by lost opportunities for special moments with him like the ones her cousins had. Left with nothing else but a portrait of him, she is no longer afraid to defy her father's rigid and senseless rules. Her uncharacteristic defiance is exemplified in her dire attempt to recover torn pieces of the portrait on the floor undeterred by the physical abuse meted out by her lunatic father.

Beatrice's reaction is lethal. Years of physical and mental abuse change her from a woman who had "so much that she did not mind" to a woman who methodically poisons her husband's tea without any qualms. With her husband

dead, and her innocent son imprisoned, the lives of the long-suffering members of her family literally fall to pieces as foreshadowed at the onset of the novel.

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a cautionary tale about the negative implications of extremist beliefs on families and even the greater communities. As rightly stated by Firman and Gila, religious fanatics "…need not be wild-eyed or deranged; quite the contrary, they can present themselves as thoughtful and responsible people inspired by the loftiest ideals" (1). True to form, Eugene's outward show of kindness and community service endear him to people outside his immediate family who regard him as an upstanding, responsible, and caring man. This perception starkly contrasts with the physical and psychological abuse his family members have endured. In their hellish existence, the only picture they see is one grossly distorted by Eugene's extremist religious beliefs and his imposition of those beliefs on them.

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ESSAY

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Eliza's Dilemma: Parsing the Language of *The Coquette* through the Filter of Literary Darwinism

Hannah Webster Foster's sentimental novel *The Coquette* has been given special status in the feminist canon. It instructs students and critics on the quandary that single women in early America faced: to marry quickly and safely or to hold out for an ideal mate and enjoy the freedom of courtship while doing so. Cathy Davidson notes in her introduction to the novel that *The Coquette* is based on the true story of Elizabeth Whitman, a story that was interpreted by late 18th and 19th century American readers as a cautionary tale against the "dangers of female rights and female liberties" (ix). *The Coquette*'s author, Hannah Webster Foster, alters the focus of Whitman's story to show that the main character's ideal of an egalitarian marriage is possible—as can be seen in the marriage of her friends the Richmans—but is difficult to find, providing a slightly more nuanced kind of warning to her readers. Foster's depiction of Eliza Wharton, Elizabeth Whitman's fictional self, in *The Coquette* owes much of its significance to the fact that it is based on Whitman's true story. Foster's contemporary readers recognized both Whitman's story and the dilemma of the unmarried woman in late eighteenth-

century America. Thus the story is infused with the language of sentiment, both that which reinforces the cultural norms of Foster's audience and that which questions those norms.

Understanding the social realm that produced Elizabeth Whitman and her alter ego Eliza Wharton is essential to accepting the probability of Eliza's actions, particularly because the choices Eliza makes are privately expressed to her friends, who serve as her public. Waldstreicher explains that the concept of the "public is crucial in *The Coquette* because it is the arena of Eliza's bid to rise in the world" (206). If, as Cathy Davidson asserts in *Revolution and the Word*, *The Coquette* is "solid social realism" (200), then certainly the limits and consequences of female agency appear to be essential to the sentimental heroine in general. Readers expect strife within the female character and a power struggle between the female character and her protectors, because that is what they know the cost of expanding female agency in courtship to be. The language of *The Coquette* as a sentimental novel imparts information to the reader on making choices about reproduction. The gap between Eliza Wharton's language and that of her friends and family proves Eliza to be a woman who fails to heed her friends' correct reading of the social situation, not because she is wanton or because she dismisses their concerns as unfounded. Rather, her drive for autonomy and the status she instinctively

perceives as part of self-determination are in conflict with the social norms of her era.

In this epistolary novel, the language of Eliza's letters foreshadows her actions, especially that language that her character uses to explore her emotional responses to the men who have entered her life after the death of her fiancé. Despite all of the warnings Eliza receives from her friends, she moves steadily and inexplicably toward ruin. The gap between the advice Eliza Wharton receives and the choices she makes can be bridged by considering the character's biological impulses in the critical exegesis of this narrative. In the language of the character, we find awareness of the tension between her natural inclinations and the expectations of her social milieu. In one letter to her friend Lucy Freeman, Eliza identifies this conflict between her innate desires and the strictures placed on her by society. Eliza tells her friend Lucy, "Let me have opportunity, unbiased by opinion, to gratify my natural disposition" (8). By parsing the language of Eliza and the other characters, we can begin to see the underlying innate or even instinctive mechanisms that both drive Eliza and inform the expectations of her friends.

The usual critical approaches to *The Coquette* privilege the proto-feminist aspects of Eliza's character. I do not wish to dismiss or dispute these approaches.

Rather, I seek to complicate them. The issue of gender and its relationship to republican identity are often at the forefront of critical exegesis of the novel. Whether gender paradigms are shifted, ignored, challenged, or reconstructed by the ideology of republicanism is a matter of some debate. That the novel explores the place of female desire is a commonplace, but what that desire suggests or represents in the early national period is less certain. Are the connections that tie the rebellious female character, American identity, social norms, and republican ideals together the primary point to be taken from *The Coquette*? The epistolary form does allow a view of these connections, yet it also provides discernment into the actions of the main character.

What is unexpected in Foster's portrayal of Elizabeth Whitman's story is the insight into Eliza's feelings and deliberations. In an article on Richardson's *Pamela*, Kristina Straub, suggests that *Pamela*, as a sentimental novel, creates a "spectatorial complacency" (420), that the reader expects the female character to suffer even though she may be a sympathetic heroine. For Straub, the novel creates a "social/sexual dynamic in which seeing and being seen are components in the characters' struggle for power" (420). The reader is party to a literary schadenfreude, the human tendency to revel in another's suffering. Certainly the contemporary readers of *The Coquette* expected such a role, as they already knew the ending of the real life Elizabeth Whitman's tale. What Foster adds is an

understanding of how the freedom to choose a marriage partner may be a chimera in a society that strictly limits acceptable reasons to marry to those that uphold the status quo.

That Eliza Wharton enjoys agency in the process of courting is clear in the language of *The Coquette*. After the death of her fiancé, a young minister her parents had encouraged her to wed, Eliza finds herself a thirty-something woman freed from the constraints of a respectable relationship, one forced on her by filial duty. The novel chronicles her struggle with ambivalence toward two suitors, the Reverend Mr. Boyer, a man of good repute who would make her his wife, and the dashing Major Sanford with whom Eliza's friends warn her not to form a connection. The freedom that Eliza has in choosing a new suitor is predicated upon the belief that Eliza wants to make a match soon and will make her selection with care—an erroneous belief as her letters reveal. When Eliza writes to her friend Lucy after Boyer has declared his intention to court her, Eliza repeats to Lucy that she impeded the progress of Boyer's courtship by telling him that she was not prepared to give up her new-found freedom after so short an acquaintance. She writes that she asked him to "leave me to the exercise of my free will" (29). Boyer accepts this limitation with grace, although one wonders if he sees it an aspect of coquetry or courtship. When Eliza recounts to her hostess Mrs. Richman the conversation with Boyer, Mrs. Richman suggests that they are "somewhat

engaged" (30), an assertion Eliza resists. The power of the female character at this point in the novel seems to arise from the liberty available in the choice of suitors.

The expanding freedom of choice in marriage partners for women does reflect a trend in early America. Gareth Evans views the role of the sentimental novel in early America as part of the development of middle-class values. He suggests that by aligning the rake, Sanford in *The Coquette*, with aristocrats, and the suggestion of English and French debauchery, a new form of patriarchal authority is formed, one that "depends on grounding male power in consent rather than coercion" (Evans). In letters from both Boyer and Sanford, the reader is presented a view of Eliza as the more than a mere object; she is the agent of her suitors' desires. In one letter to his friend Charles Deighton, Sanford indicates that he is aware that Boyer is his rival and that this contest makes him more interested in Eliza: "I am likely to meet with difficulties; and it is the glory of a rake, as well as a Christian to combat obstacles" (34). Sanford awareness that the Richmonds suffer his presence only to please Eliza also gives him a sense of power. That Eliz is willing to entertain two serious suitors at once does not automatically condemn her as a coquette, for she must choose the best spouse possible. For Evans, female desire in the sentimental novel is morally equivocal only when it veers from the pattern of marriage *as a key to social mobility*. Thus, Eliza's concerns about rushing into marriage with Boyer seem conventional. At least they appear so until

we examine Eliza's misunderstanding of and disconnection from the middle-class values Evans identifies and that Mrs. Richman represents.

After Mrs. Richman scolds Eliza about her duty to Boyer, Eliza asserts that she will not tie herself to one man until she is married. She writes of this conversation in a letter to Lucy:

> I related to [Mrs. Richman] the conversation, and the encouragement which I had given to Mr. Boyer. She was pleased; but insisted that I should own myself somewhat engaged to him. This, I told her I should never do to any man, before the indissoluble knot was tied. That, said I, will be time enough to resign my freedom. She replied that I had wrong ideas of freedom, and matrimony; but she hoped that Mr. Boyer would happily rectify them. (30)

If you have not read the novel—I can tell you that Mr. Boyer does not correct Eliza's misapprehensions.

Eliza resists the pressure of her society to accept its view of marriage. It is his resistance that stands out to most critics of the novel. The area of agreement mong most readers of *The Coquette*, according to Laura Korobkin, is that "Eliza's esistance to the constraining forces of bourgeois marriage and the conformist dvice of her social cohort mark her as a powerful champion of personal freedom

and political autonomy" (79). Eliza certainly expresses quite fully the conflict a mature woman feels when choosing a marriage partner. But the fact that she becomes a victim of seduction calls into question the scope and consequences of her agency.

Elizabeth Dill's article titled "A Mob of Lusty Villagers" suggests that the seduction novel in post-revolutionary America is an attempt to explore the connection between the ideology of republicanism and the "seduced woman, as an object *and* as an agent of desire [emphasis in the original]" (256). This is obviously the position we find Eliza in in *The Coquette*. Her friends warn her of the dangers of being a coquette and, though she denies the role, Eliza herself feels the burden that choice brings to bear. In the language of the secondary characters, the other eight authors of forty-three of the seventy-four letters that comprise the novel, we see that each character's advice on marriage or attitude toward marriage is reflective of her or his current social situation. Eliza's widowed mother, for example, was the wife of a minister, a very public social role. She exhorts Eliza to remember her dependence on her place in the "great chain of society" (41). Mrs. Wharton's assessment of the value of marriage is entirely a consequence of her own acceptance of solid, socially appropriate marriage as a requirement for what she terms "domestic enjoyment" (41).

Lucy Freeman, as one of Eliza's most regular correspondents, often speaks for the community. As a soon to be married woman, Lucy has recently passed through the courtship phase which Eliza desires to prolong; therefore, she is in a position to provide Eliza with empathy as well as level-headed advice. When Eliza admits some indecision about her preference for Boyer or Sanford, Lucy states plainly to her single friend the perils of this indecision:[she writes]

> I am a little apprehensive that your fancy will mislead you. Methinks I can gather from your letter, a predilection for this Major Sanford. But he is a rake, my dear friend; and can a lady of your delicacy and refinement, think of forming a connection with a man of that character? I hope not. Nay, I am confident that you do not. You mean only to exhibit a few more girlish airs before you turn matron. (26)

Lucy recognizes the social disaster that Eliza is inviting and the personal desires that underlie Eliza's inconsistency. Further on in the same letter, Lucy rebukes Eliza, but gently, for using courtship in an attempt "to make a distinguished figure in the first class of polished society" (27). Eliza believes she can find a husband when she is ready, but she wants this basic reproductive decision to yield more than a spouse. She wants to improve her social status, as well, during and after courtship. However, the apparent agency Eliza practices in the choice of a

marriage partner has blinded her to her condition as an object of desire. Eliza has come to see courtship as a process that grants her authority over her life. Her friend Lucy vaguely recognizes this attitude in Eliza when she remarks on Eliza's desire to be a "distinguished figure" and "to exhibit" herself in society (27, 26).

Eliza is an example of what happens to a young woman who misreads the social signals and fails to conform to social norms. When she does not see the connection between reproductive choices and status, Eliza is doomed to lose what status she has. Eliza comes to desire status through the process of choosing a mate, and she is not the only character who sees courtship as empowering for the woman In a letter to one of Eliza's suitors, the Reverend Boyer, Boyer's friend Mr. Selby writes that he has observed Eliza in company and has heard that "she has many admirers" (44). Mr. Selby identifies Major Sanford as possibly one of the admirers but he dismisses Sanford as beneath Eliza's notice. The suggestion in his letter is that Eliza is directing the wooing, choosing her own partners and making her own, to use Selby's word, "conquests" (44). Eliza says the same thing in a letter to Lucy In this letter, she is explaining why she no longer mourns her late fiancé, and she reveals her mindset with regard to courtship. She writes:

> Is it time for me to talk again of conquests? or must I only enjoy them in silence? I must write to you the impulses of my mind; or I must not

> write at all. You are not so morose, as to wish me to become a nun, would our country, and religion allow it. I ventured yesterday to throw aside the habiliments of mourning, and to array myself in those more adapted to my taste. (8)

Eliza's "taste" is for pleasure and for the thrill of "conquests." Is this a product of her upbringing? Or is it human nature, an innate need for status that Eliza indulges despite the constraints of her society. The end result of allowing her nature free rein is that Eliza fails to understand that marriage as part of the reproductive process must come first, for a woman of her era, before status can be achieved.

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Poetry

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ODE TO YAW ACKAH

Was it not some few days ago

When I saw you passing by my house

Adorned in your gorgeous traditional majestic kente cloth

You were walking majestically as the chief you are

You had your page carrying the traditional

Chief's umbrella over your head

Did I not run to pay my homage to the chief

And did you not kiss me on both cheeks

It was dawn and the morning was dawning

I held your hand tight never to let you go

I wanted all and sundry to come and help me

Snatch you from the cold hands of the enemy

You told me you were just passing by

I still held you and yelled for help

When I turned to call for more help

There I was surrounded by the four walls of my room

I wish this had been real

I wish this had not been a dream

Now I know this was a dream

For here you lie

Here you lie with your arms on your chest

Here you lie surrounded by loved ones

Loved ones are calling you

Loved ones are waking you

You have fallen into a deep sleep

You have deprived us of your sweet voice

Awake from your slumber

Awake from your sleep

Why this silence

Why this calmness

I don't blame you for your silence

I don't blame you for your calmness

I blame that cruel monster

I blame that indiscriminate sniper

That unmerciful kidnapper bears my blame

That unrelenting abductor bears my blame

It is death

That has turned the waters of the Sobre River into blood

It is death

That has poisoned the waters of Annaku River into a toxic potion

It is death

That has dried the Soro River into a sandy soil

What water will Sefwiman drink

What water will Bekwaiman drink

And what water will Adobeworaman drink

Your generosity surpasses all imaginations

You are the fountain to which all and sundry come to quench their thirst

You are the Amoawisi who has thirty children

And still adopts other people's children

You are that large cooking pot

Which is always ready to accept the stomach of the stranger

You are the guard and guide

Who guards and guides the lost ones to safety

You are the defender of the defenseless

You are the father of all and sundry

You are the Ant Queen who holds the fort together

You are Asiemmire the hunter

You always hunt the elephant to feed all and sundry

You belong to the Ekoona clan

Your totem is the Buffalo

And you are as strong as the Buffalo

Yaw

The nations are mourning you

The women are singing your dirges with the Adowa

Drums in Adobewora nation

The warriors are listening to the sounds of the Nkrawiri

Drums in Bekwai nation

The brave youth are dancing to the tunes of the Kete

Drums in Sefwi nation

And the royals are rendering their majestic moves to the beats of the Fontonfrom

Drums in Ghana nation

Yaw

Your students and colleagues are mourning you

The rivers of Delmarva are mourning you

The corridors of Washington are mourning you

The juju drums of Nigeria are mourning you

And the hills of Mampong Kontonkyi are mourning you

Yaw Fosu

Into whose hands have you left the children

Your children are mourning for you

Ernest and Ellis are earnestly yearning for you

Thomas and Sam are sorrowfully seeking for you

And Eric the Doctor is courageously looking for you

What hurricane has hurried you away from the children

And what tornado has torpedoed you away from the children

Yaw Fosu

Yaw Ackah

Into whose hands have you left Adwoa

Adwoa Badu has never known anyone but you

Why have you deserted Georgina in the middle of the stream

Why have you made your Sefwi royal drown herself in the stream of tears

You have made the other side of your and her bed permanently cold

Whom is Georgina going home with

Whom is Georgina going to share the mansions with

You have made Adwoa a fatherless child

You have made Adwoa a husbandless woman

You were her father

You were her uncle

You were her brother

You were her husband

And you were her all-in-all

Yaw

I am happy for you

I know you've been welcomed home

Diana has welcomed you home

You and Diana are having your jokes

You are selecting her dresses for her

You are taking pictures of her

Yaw

I am envious of your reunion

Your beloved mother Amma Ataa has heard of your arrival

She has informed your beloved father Kwadwo Ackah of your arrival

Oh what a happy reunion

My Brother Yaw

I know you are happy

For there is no more pain where you are

There are no more hassles where you are

There are no more bustles where you are

Bliss is your happiness

Professor Yaw Ackah

Your legacy has immortalized you

Your immortality lives in the knowledge of your students

Your immortality lingers on in the discussions of your colleagues

Your everlasting tongue is forever in your children's mouths

And your everlasting genuine love lives in the heart of Georgina

Yaw,

I will mourn you in the morning

I will mourn you in the afternoon

I will mourn you in the evening

I will mourn you in the night

Yes even in my dreams

I will mourn you

Yaw

May the sun brighten your days

May the moon illumine your nights

May the stars twinkle your darkness

May petals of roses sprinkle your paths

Me Nua Yaw

Dammirifa

Dammirifa Due

Due Due ne Amanehunu

Okwan so kosekose

Nante yie oo

Da yie

My brother Yaw

Fare thee well

Sleep well

Walk majestically

Walk gently

Goodbye

Fare thee well